Soften up for success

By DON KREGER
Freeman Staff

Gary Laszkiewicz, an IT security manager for the Brady Corp. of Milwaukee, turned to his emotions to improve his career.

"It was about understanding and recognizing my own emotions," he said, "and knowing what to do about that. This is especially important for me in my business environment and in my professional career."

"I can better understand how to deal with people in different circumstances," he continued, "recognize their emotions and deal with them appropriately."

Laszkiewicz is part of a growing group who are taking part in emotional intelligence seminars.

The concept of emotional intelligence, which has received a great deal of attention from the professional and nonprofit world for almost a decade, started with psychologist Daniel Goleman's book, "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More Than IQ" and with his second best-seller, "Working with Emotional Intelligence."

The books claimed brainpower alone is not sufficient for success in either the business world or in life generally. What is needed instead, according to Goleman, is the ability to develop and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships.

Emotional intelligence training is supposed to improve productivity and profitability higher morale, less turnover and greater customer satisfaction.

Patricia Clason has helped business people throughout greater Milwaukee with their interpersonal skills for the past 30 years.

Clason, who conducts seminars at the Center for Creative Learning at the Barnabas Business Center in Glendale, offers a range of seminars on business relationships. But she considers the emotional intelligence or EI training the core of all their offerings.

"EI is very complex," said. "It's a very high order and important skill. People with the ability to communicate and manage relationships often succeed better than people who are just smart."

She said most people are not taught emotional intelligence skills and instead learn by watching and modeling themselves after others.

"The fact is that the majority of people are not good communicators or good at relationships," she said. "Take the divorce rate, for example. The fact that it's so high shows that we're not very good at managing relationships or communicating well with the people we want to be in a relationship with."

The EI seminar consists of two four-hour sessions or a weekend session that runs from Friday night through Sunday.

"It's not just lecture," Clason said, "it's interactive and experiential. There are activities between two people and between small groups, and the participants can be employees on the same level or on different levels of the business structure."

Clason said the seminars can be customized to meet the needs of an individual or organization.

Diane Eisold, a project manager at US Bank and one of Clason's seminar instructors said participants keep their group posted on their progress.

Giving a seminar on emotional intelligence, Patricia Clason quizzes the audience on recognizing the emotional states of others.

Improving Your Emotional Health

Tips from emotional intelligence expert Patricia Clason:
- Identify your own emotions accurately. Express them in healthy and safe ways.
- Do really check when you generalize and use words such as everyone, always, every time, etc.
- Don't assume what other people are feeling.
- Ask.
- Motivate yourself. Acknowledge what you do well and use your strengths wisely.
- Be with others in their emotions rather than ignore them or try to soothe them over.
- Be consistent so others will trust you.
- Don't try to suppress conflicts and upset. Address them with care until they can be resolved.
- Stay in the present moment and observe so you can work with reality rather than reaction and assumption.
- Lighten up! Laugh! Humor does wonders for your physical and emotional health.

Emotional intelligence seminars teach five core competencies:
- Self-awareness and self-understanding.
- "It's about knowing yourself and understanding your strengths, weaknesses, what makes you tick, what you like and don't like, and understanding where you are relative to other people," Clason said.
- "We don't just look at a person's IQ. It's not just about intelligence. "
- Mitigate emotions.
- "I think the most common comment from people taking the course," Eisold added, "is that prior to enrolling they were unaware of how much emotional responses impacted their day-to-day life."
- Self-motivation.
- "Recognize the emotions of others, what other people are feeling.
- Handle relationships and respond appropriately to the emotions observed in other people.

"Everybody who is a member of the group," she said, "reveals how they're doing in terms of their focus and their energy level on a score of one to ten. What's more, if they wish, they can share with us a little bit of what's going on with them.

"The idea," she continued, "is to set a context for the group working together and an understanding of where they are emotionally..."
Introspection and empathy are making in-roads into the oftentimes cut-throat and impersonal business world

by Don Kroger

Ozaukee County — For almost a decade, the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) has received a great deal of attention from corporations, nonprofit organizations, and governmental agencies nationwide. It began in the mid-1990s with the publication of psychologist Daniel Goleman's book, "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More Than IQ." This was followed shortly thereafter with his second best-seller, "Working with Emotional Intelligence."

The thesis of these books was that wisdom is no longer sufficient for success in either the business world or in life generally. Where it was needed instead, according to Goleman, is the ability to develop and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships.

Organizations that have undergone emotional intelligence training have seen improvements in productivity and profitability, higher morale, less turnover, and greater customer satisfaction.

Over the last thirty years, Patricia Clason has been intimately involved with the field of interpersonal skills and conducted seminars on this topic throughout Center Market, Milwaukee, including Ozaukee County.

These seminars take place at her facility in the Center for Creative Learning at the Racine Center for Creative Learning in Glendale, or in the conference rooms of client organizations.

While the Center conducts a variety of seminars on business relationships, Clason recommends EI to be at the core of all business communications.

"It is very complex," she said. "It is a very high order and important skill. It has to do with the ability to communicate and manage relationships to get better than people who are just smart." Most of us, she continued, "are not as smart as we were growing up. We learn from watching what others do and reacting to situations that are not really ours. The fact is that the majority of people are not good communicators or good in relationships. We learn from the role models around us and the people around us are not very competent, then we learn how to communicate or integrate very competent skills."

The EI seminar at the Center for Creative Learning consists of two four-hour sessions given a week apart. There is also a weekend session that runs from Friday night through Sunday.

"It is not just memory," Clason said, "It is interactive and experiential. There are activities between two people as well as small groups, and the participants can experience how to work on the same level or on different levels of the business structure." However, a project manager at US Bank, one of Clason's seminars participants, demonstrated the process of checking perfect pairs into the seminar.

"Each person is a number in a group," she said, "for example, they compare their tolerance levels and their energy levels to see how they rate in the group. What's more, they can share it with a little bit of what's going on in their personal life." The idea, she continued, "is to set a context for the group work and to understand how people are emotionally interacting."

Gary Lushekian is an IT security manager for the Brady Corporation. He has attended the EI seminar and has the following comments.

"I don't know about understanding or recognizing my own emotions - I just have them." He continued, "I don't know what motivates other people, she continued, "you can get them to think the way you think by giving them incentives that will motivate them to do what needs to be done in order to complete the project successfully."

Clason described the fourth competency of EI as the ability to recognize the emotional states of others, which other people are telling us. This is where empathy comes in.

"We see it as a skill that many people have," Clason said. "We have to be able to read other people's feelings accurately. In fact, some claim this happens as much as 90 percent of the time."

The fifth competency in the ability to handle relationships and respond appropriately to the emotions observed in others.

"From that point on," Clason said, "the process of getting into how this affects leadership, how it affects upper management and staff. We talk about how people understand the impact of what they are doing to others, what their weaknesses are and what their strengths are, and we're going to deal with these weaknesses and strengths."

"If you can't interact and communicate well with other people," she added, "you won't succeed in the workplace. It isn't just about how your computer skills are or how much leadership you need. It's about your ability to interact with people."

Clason recognizes that there's a lot to EI and that doesn't believe it's something that can be taught. "You can't just teach a person," she said, "you can only be shown what to do and communicate the details. Be honest with others and be fair. Be fair with others and be kind. You have to be able to interact with people and be fair with them and do the right thing."

"It is very complex," she said, "you can't just teach a person to interact with people. You have to be able to interact with people and be fair with them and do the right thing."

"In order to change for the better," she continued, "there has to be a shift in how people think. We would have no progress if there was no conflict. Relationships that have not developed and are not powerful if there were no conflict.

"For those who would like to know more about EI and the Center for Creative Learning, you can contact her at her Web site at www.lichtlight.com."

"The idea," Clason said, "is that when you're working in an organization, you need to take things slowly. We need to be patient and learn from the weight of the world on our shoulders and have a hard time enjoying life."

"But when you understand how emotions work, you can understand the difference between how they work and, in fact, take it less lightly."

"It's a very high order and important skill. It has to do with the ability to communicate and manage relationships to get better than people who are just smart."