

TOOLS OF THE TRADE



In a regular series, **Carol Wilson** identifies the tools and models frequently used during coaching projects. This month, she looks at the Reuven Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory

Reuven Bar-On is the American clinical psychologist often credited with having originally coined the term EQ (Emotional Quotient) during his doctoral studies in the 1980s, to refer to a type of intelligence that is different to IQ (the Intelligence Quotient model popularised during the middle of the last century).

In the workplace, two of the key applications of EQ are in management and leadership skills, in terms of motivation and teamwork; IQ would cover knowledge, skill and experience.

In the public arena Daniel Goleman's work is better known since the publication of his best seller *Emotional Intelligence*, although Goleman recognises Bar-On's contribution to the field. There is some controversy over who, in fact, coined the term EQ; its popular usage probably started with a *Time* magazine headline in the 1980s, but this is inconsequential in terms of the high value of the Bar-On tool.

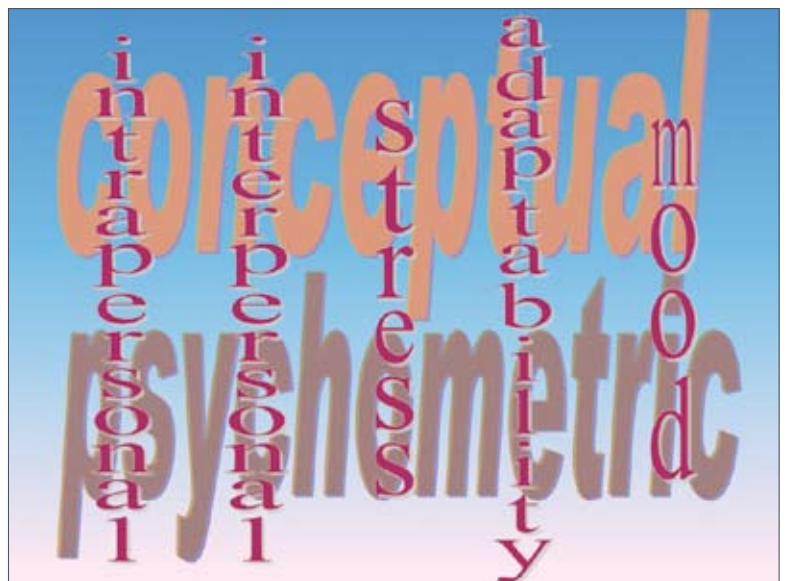
The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On EQI) can be divided into two main parts: the first is the theory of emotional intelligence and the second provides a means for measuring it.

The first is sometimes referred to as the Bar-On conceptual model and the second as the Bar-On psychometric model (see below).

The Inventory assesses EQ through a series of questions, similar in structure to an IQ test, comprising 133 short statements. Participants are asked to mark their preferences on a scale from 'very seldom or not true of me' (1) to 'very often true of me or true of me' (5). Many of the questions are similar but asked from a slightly different perspective, which helps to self-correct answers that may be consciously striving towards a desired image rather than the true personality of the participant.

Participants are graded both on an overall score and a score for each of the following sections:

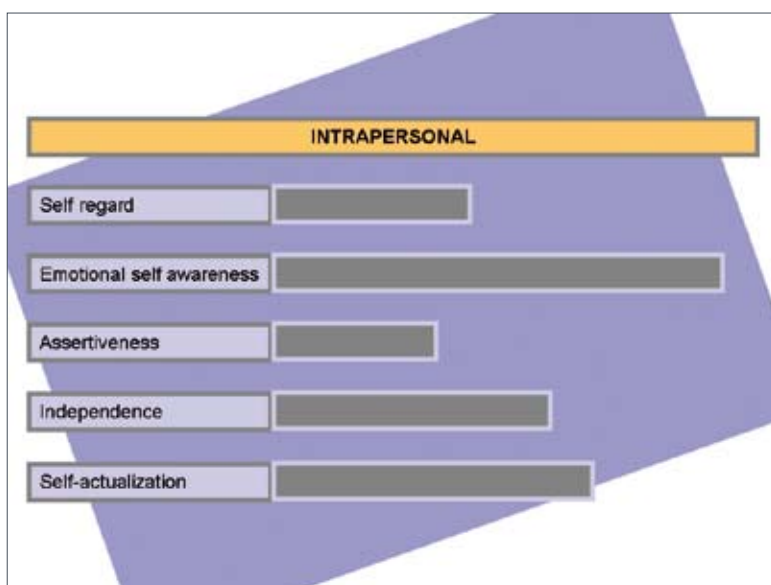
- **Intrapersonal** deals with one's understanding of oneself, eg self-esteem, self knowledge, confidence and self-actualisation
- **Interpersonal** is about the effect we have on others and measures aspects like empathy, social responsibility and the ability to manage relationships
- **Stress management** looks at our tolerance to stress and to what extent we are able to control our impulses when under stress



- **Adaptability** is concerned with how flexible we are when faced with changes and challenges, how well we are able to distinguish between reality and our own perceptions, and our ability to come up with solutions
- **General mood** measures our ability to be optimistic and happy.

difficulty with controlling impulses when under stress.

However, as with any psychometric tool, it is worth taking into account that people who are suited to one type of work may require different emotional skills to those suited to another. For example, put a



A pitfall with such a test is the possibility, or even probability, that people will skew their answers to come out with the profile that might be regarded as most valuable to the organisation that has sat them in front of the test. To rectify this, four validity indicators are included that look at how many responses have been missed out, occurrences of inconsistencies and tendencies towards over-positive or over-negative responses to the questions. The resulting built-in correction factor reduces the likelihood of distortions and hopefully increases the accuracy of the results.

As one might expect, high scores indicate a person who functions well in terms of relationships and social exchanges, while low scores suggest some difficulties that might include a distorted perception of reality, an inability to solve problems, low stress tolerance, and

highly successful sales director who enjoys socialising and competitive situations into a job where she has to manage a team of IT engineers, and she may very soon start exhibiting a lower tolerance to stress and difficulty in controlling her frustration with their different way of thinking.

Similarly, put an IT executive in charge of a team of sales people and both sides will be complaining before long.

The latter type of situation is more common than the former, particularly in times of recession, when innovative companies suddenly feel the need to have a 'safe' pair of hands on the rudder. In my own experience in the music business, I saw, for example, accountants appointed as CEOs of successful record companies and within a few years the innovation would be crushed and sales would start to fall.

My personal view is that Bar-On's tests give their best value when used as an awareness tool for the benefit of the subject, but that there are pitfalls if they are used as a tool for managers to learn about their staff. There is no right or wrong social behaviour – would anyone question the famously autistic Andy Warhol for behaviour that nurtured some of the most original artistic innovation of the twentieth century?

Another caution to be aware of is a practice I have come across not infrequently in today's widespread use of psychometric tools: people are asked to complete the process, then simply handed the results and expected to get on with correcting any limiting behaviour the test reveals. Such tests should only ever be conducted with the pre- and post-support of a coach or similar practitioner, who can ensure that the experience is a productive and stimulating learning curve rather than a blow to confidence.

Used in *this* way, Bar-On EQI can be a revealing and productive measure in management in the workplace today.

Bar-On also devised a correlating 360° feedback model, called the EQ-360, and a youth version of the original inventory called The EQ-i:YV (Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory Youth Version) for ages seven to 18. He currently spends his time writing and speaking about emotional intelligence. ■

Further information

<http://www.reuvenbaron.org>

Carol Wilson is managing director of Performance Coach Training, a joint venture with coaching pioneer Sir John Whitmore's Performance Consultants International, and head of accreditation/honorary vice president at the Association for Coaching. She can be contacted on + 44 (0)1784 455297, at caro or via www.performancecoachtraining.com or www.associationforcoaching.com