**How organisations kill engagement through poor emotional intelligence**
**Audio transcription of a PersonnelToday webinar in association withe Emoquo.
A video of the webinar and the slides are available on demand at** [**http://www.personneltoday.com/webinars**](http://www.personneltoday.com/webinars) **Original webcast: 18 May 2016 14:00pm BST**

Rob Moss: Hello and welcome to this PersonnelToday webinar, brought to you in association with Emoquo. I’m Rob Moss, Editor of PersonnelToday and over the next hour we’re going to be discussing the topic of employee engagement and the influence that emotional intelligence has over it.

 Highly engaged businesses are often found to have high levels of trust and authenticity across their workforce and as companies attempt to fix engagement problems amongst staff, many are actually guilty of making matters worse.

 Large organisations are often full of high performance, employees who say what the management wants to hear. Could they be made to feel safe to say what they really think and can HR create the right environment to enable this?

 Well over the next hour we’re going to be exploring this topic in greater detail by looking at how a greater awareness of emotional intelligence can improve trust and with it employee engagement.

 I am joined this afternoon by two experts in this field. Tony Crabbe is a business psychologist who works with companies such as Cisco, Disney and HSBC. He focuses on how people think, feel and behave at work. He helps organisations deliver behavioural change to uniquely design learning experiences which engage people and create momentum for personal change. His bestselling book, *Busy: How to Thrive in a World of Too Much* was recently cited as one of the top three leadership books of this year.

 My other guest is Abigail Rappoport. Abigail is CEO of Emoquo, an HR tech company which delivers a refreshing approach to positively changing people’s behaviours at work. It’s a cloud-based digital coaching tool that increases people’s emotional intelligence. Before joining Emoquo last year, Abigail held various senior roles at Microsoft.

 Before we begin, I will briefly outline the format for today. We will listen to Tony and Abigail’s presentations for the first 45 minutes or so, after which we will run a question and answer session until we finish at around three o’clock. We’re keen to receive all your questions as we go along and I urge you to submit these at any time using the chat pane. Don’t be shy – send us your questions as and when you think of them. And unless there’s anything particularly pressing, we’ll save those for the Q&A session at the end.

 We are recording the webinar and an on-demand version will become available in the next day or so, and we’ll also distribute the PowerPoint slides and a full transcript.

 Okay, let’s begin. Tony, welcome. Over to you.

Tony Crabbe: Hi. Great to be with you. So in the industrial age, they had a problem. Suddenly machines could do a tonne more stuff than individuals could do. So how did they deal with that? Well they thought, ‘Well the primary focus of our management, the primary focus of our organisation, has to be on the thing that’s slowing us down, and that’s humans. The people that are coming from the fields, used to working so hard and so fast.’ So management obsessed about, and organisations were built up around, ‘How do we make people more productive, to do more faster?’ Because that’s where success came from.

 But our world has changed. At the time of the Industrial Revolution, the world’s knowledge was doubling every hundred years. IBM recently estimated that in a couple of years’ time, the complete knowledge of the world will double every eleven hours. In the face of that kind of information tsunami, we’re in a completely different environment. The things that used to matter don’t matter anymore.

 Take one example. Let’s look at productivity. We’ve got really good at being productive. But is it useful? Just to give one data point, since the mid-‘80s, the average knowledge worker is consuming five times more information than they did in the mid-‘80s, today. But that pales into insignificance compared to the amount of content they produce. The average office worker today is producing 200 times more content than they did in the mid-‘80s. if you hold those numbers together, five times more consumption, 200 times more production. That’s just an awful lot of our productivity is white noise – it’s not valuable.

 So what is valuable? Well the World Economic Forum in Davos looked at this. They had lots of brains from economics, politics, business grappling with this question, and particularly in the context of, in their language, the fourth Industrial Revolution – so that’s the coming of robots, the coming of artificial intelligence. In that world, what’s the role of humans? What do our people really do that’s valuable?

 Now actually, as an aside, you’ll be glad to hear that one of the professions that they identified as being relatively safe when robots turn up is HR, which is a relief for most of us, I think. Except of course in Silicon Valley the first robot has been introduced – let’s see how that gets on.

 But more generally, they identified three core capabilities that were essential for success in the future, individually and corporately. And that was complex problem-solving or deep thinking. The second one was creativity. And the third one was relationships or empathy, genuinely connecting with people so that knowledge-sharing and ideas happen. They’re the three areas.

 But are organisations set up to generate those things? My view is that actually, organisations are still set up like factories. They’re still set up to be primarily focused around productivity, getting people to do more, quicker. And the problem is that actually, without emotional engagement of your workforce, all the stuff that is going to lead to success in the future doesn’t happen. You don’t get complex problem-solving without the focused attention of your people. You don’t get creativity without inspiring the imagination of your people. And you actually don’t get relationships and empathy without encouraging people to genuinely connect with people. And yet we create environments that make all three of those more difficult.

 Engagement is critical for success in the future. It’s the gatekeeper of these three skills of success. Let me go into a bit more about how.

 Just as a question, when was the last day that you left work thinking you’d really achieved what you wanted to achieve that day, rather than have your energy dissipated on 1001 things? There’s so much stuff and noise going on at work, do we ever actually achieve and make progress in the areas that we want? Just a few data points that lead to this frustration, and the overwhelming feeling for a lot of people in organisations is just deep frustration. One study found that 77% of knowledge workers feel they’ve had a productive day but all they do is empty their inbox, so they’re not thinking. Which isn’t very engaging.

 One study found that 58% of knowledge workers are spending less than fifteen minutes a day thinking. The average knowledge worker – because there are so many distractions – is switching tasks every three minutes and the brain can achieve nothing in three minute. And we know that switching backwards and forwards reduces your output by 40%.

 All of this environment and this real-time communication that’s going on in noise, what it’s doing is it’s putting us into what we call ‘shallow work’. We skim over stuff and rather than really focusing and thinking properly on the stuff that’s going to matter and doing complex problem-solving.

 And we know when people are spending time in shallow work that they’re much less engaged and actually are much more likely to suffer from things like depression and anxiety.

 So how do we create in the organisations an environment that allows people to think again?

 The second area in which we kill engagement is anxiety. Now I could talk about stress and the levels of stress and you’ll know all those things. I want to talk about something a bit more subtle. If you try to combine this urgency and demand for getting stuff done and the level of visibility of everything at the moment, you create a kind of perfect storm of anxiety. Suddenly everything that we do is super-visible and we talk about how you’re going to create the right presentation and talk about personal brand all the time.

 Even just take one example – our mania for open-plan offices. Now you never actually get the senior people sitting in the centre because no one likes to have their screen exposed. Because actually we know that there are higher levels of cortisol generated from people sitting in open-plan offices where people can see their screens. Suddenly work is visible.

 When you actually have everything you’re doing on email or social media and therefore can be judged, all that happens is we actually get into a state where we constantly want to succeed at everything we do and that creates something that’s known as ‘success syndrome’, where we start playing it safe. In psychological terms we call that a ‘prevention strategy’. A lot of what you do is about avoiding bad stuff happening, as opposed to trying to generate opportunities.

 Now the picture of the mouse there is about a nice little study to show how easy it is to trigger a prevention strategy. They gave people a picture of a maze and there was a mouse in the centre. And one version of the maze, what you had to try and do was get to the cheese. Another version was to get away from an owl. Actually, people solved twice as many mazes when the task was to get to the cheese rather than escape the owl. What we know is, when people are in a prevention strategy they’re much less likely to express themselves, and you can’t engage with an organisation unless you feel you can express yourself.

 The third area is, again in our rush to get stuff done, emotions have become a bit like speed bumps. They’re a bit inconvenient. There’s this mania for always being positive and always being happy. I worked with one organisation and one of the fundamental problems was it was a Be Strong culture. People weren’t allowed to express how they genuinely felt. It was somehow inappropriate.

 But we also know at the same time, if you can’t express how you feel – bad as well as good – what happens is we bottle things and we hold things up. And when you bottle things inside, you actually therefore have lower wellbeing, you engage in less relationships and you are less creative.

 Even diversity, the way we engage with diversity, a lot of it is about engaging with difference. But what do we do when we deal with diversity? We treat everyone the same. Because we haven’t got the time to understand people in all their nuances.

 So what it means is we’re actually less authentic in organisations and therefore bring less of ourselves into those businesses.

 Now I think there’s a clue to what to do about this. I just love this study. So a study of basketball players found that you could predict the success of a team at the end of a season by how often they touched each other in the early pre-season. I’m not suggesting we go touching each other necessarily, but I think it points to something here. What it points to is actually a lot of the solution isn’t to be found in big, organisational initiatives. A lot of the solution is in simple humanity, simple human gestures.

 Now the Gallup organisation who are well-connected to engagement have done a lot of research and one of the things they’ve found is one of the biggest things that allowed organisations to change their level of engagement weren’t big initiatives. It was actually the quality of the conversations that happened in those organisations. So I want to talk about conversations because I actually think conversations are a great place to start when it comes to increasing engagement in our businesses.

 Now if we’re talking about conversations, ask yourself for a moment, ‘How effective are the conversations in your business?’ I love this picture. I love the term ‘phubbing’. I’m not sure if you’re familiar with the term ‘phubbing’. Phubbing means snubbing people with your phone. And there’s quite a lot of research around this. How many of our meetings do we go to where there are laptops open, where there are phones on display? Now even on a personal level, we know that when you put your phone on the table, the other person likes you less. We also know that when there’s a phone in sight, actually the level of the conversation is less deep. People are less engaged. Less creativity happens in that conversation.

 I actually had a psych-analyst friend of mine who got so frustrated with being phubbed, he used to carry a book of poetry and at a random point in conversation, he would pull out this book of poetry and read a few pages just to demonstrate how odd it was, how okay it is for us to just disappear from a conversation to look at the phone.

 But actually, if we want to engage with people, with all their uniqueness, and get into a conversation that’s even vaguely likely to trigger something that’s deep and personal and emotional with them, we have to build some disciplines around how much we encourage presence in our meetings, how acceptable it is for our leaders and our managers to not be present with the people in their teams.

 Just as a data point, it’s becoming so normal that American universities have tracked this and they reckon that the level of empathy they’re finding in current graduates is 40% less than it was twenty years ago because so many of their relationships are transacted over phone and social media. So how do we just increase the presence? By getting rid of technology.

 The second one speaks for this anxiety piece. There are lots of ways of dealing with anxiety but one of the ways is actually increasing the stress rather than reducing it. One of the best predictors of increasing people’s tolerance of risk and willingness to actually express themselves is exposing them to challenge, exposing them to risk. And then supporting them around it. And so I quite like this story about a guy called Edwin Link, who built the first aeroplane simulator because in President Roosevelt’s time they were finding loads of pilots were just dying whenever the weather got bad because they’d never practised flying in bad weather. What the simulator does is it allows you to practise at the extreme situations all the time. And in doing that you grow, you learn quicker, you become a much more confident and resilient pilot.

 What we need in organisations to help address the anxiety of everything being so visible is to equip managers to have conversations about risk, conversations about helping people to experiment with different ways of being, with expressing themselves properly, and failing at times but supporting them around that, emotionally.

 And the final area is when it comes to motivation, Theresa Amabile did some great work around motivation and engagement and she looked at 12,000 different diary entries of people and asked the question, ‘When are people most engaged and most motivated?’ And what she found wasn’t about complex stuff. She found that people were most motivated when they felt they were making progress on the projects that really meant something to them.

 Now organisations today, it’s so difficult to get stuff done, to really make progress, and in the work I do, I find that people can very quickly tell you the stuff that’s important and yet day after day they find themselves pushed away from that and not make the progress and therefore get frustrated.

 One of the things that managers need to be really equipped to do is not on an annual basis or even a quarterly basis but be regularly sitting down with their employees to help them make the tough priority calls around what’s more important – is it this or is it this? And therefore free them up from the distraction. And also help them build some discipline around simple practices around technology addiction et cetera, that allow them to focus and make the progress that’s important to them and is critical to the organisation. ‘Cause actually, when people feel they’re moving things forward, when they get that sense that, ‘At work today I’ve moved forward on the projects that really matter to me,’ that’s where engagement is. So how do we equip our managers better to do that?

 So what is the future for humans? So clearly our businesses, our organisations are going to be massively disrupted over the coming years with the coming of robots and with artificial intelligence et cetera. But where will we succeed? So I’ve already talked a bit – it’s complex problem-solving, it’s creativity and it’s relationships. In a funny way, up to this point our technology since the Industrial Revolution, and our focus on productivity, has made us more machine-like. Our organisations are giant machines for getting things done. Personally I think if we want to succeed going forward in the next five, ten, fifteen years, the only way of doing that is to start becoming more human again. I actually think one of the major trends in business over the coming five years is going to be friendship. I think friendship is going to become one of the buzzwords. Because why do we collaborate? We don’t collaborate because we’ve got Yammer or some social media tool. We collaborate because we like the people we work with. There’s a human nature and emotion at the centre of all of our engagement and all of the stuff that we do best as humans, and if we want to bring out that stuff and inspire our people to do the things that we need them to do and that will engage them, we’ve got to get used to talking about emotions, and we’ve got to create better conversations in our organisation.

Rob Moss: Thank you very much, Tony. What an interesting talk. A really good insight into some elements of engagement there and how we need to think a little bit more about how we approach things.

 Next up we have Abigail Rappoport, but before I hand over to her, just a quick reminder that at any point you can submit questions in the chat pane on the left-hand side of your screen. Do feel free to use this as many times as you like and that will help to feed our discussion at the end.

 Okay, I’m now going to welcome Abigail. Over to you.

Abigail Rappoport: Thanks a lot, Rob. I’m really proud to be part of this webinar. This is a topic that’s very dear to my heart, it’s one that I feel very passionate about, and we’ve also been overwhelmed by the amount of response we’ve had to this topic. So it’s clearly something that’s on people’s minds and everybody’s grappling with it.

 So where I’d really like to start is just a personal story. This is something that happened to me. So it happened to me a few years ago. It was a situation that happened to me at work that had a big impact on the way that I felt and how engaged I was.

 So I’d been in this company for a number of years and it was a really good company to work for. I’d been there for several years, I was engaged, I was producing great work and I was really, really highly energised. And then I got a new manager and this manager was very, very different to any of the previous managers I’d had. They seemed to be completely unaware of the impact of their behaviour – it came across as negative, it came across as disruptive – but this person genuinely didn’t realise the impact that that behaviour was having on all of the people around them, their direct reports and then people more widely in the organisation.

 And so that behaviour suddenly appeared in my life. It was somebody that I was seeing almost every day and it really, really was getting me down. And it really affected how I felt about the organisation and it really affected how engaged I was.

 Now at that point in time I had a choice. I could have just ignored it and let it fester. I could have tackled it head-on. Or I could have tried to distance myself from it. I had a choice. And really the point that I want to run through my section of this webinar is that we have choices about how we respond to things, how we respond to situations like this. Whether we realise it or not, it is in our power and it is in our control. We can’t change other people but we can change the way we respond to situations and people’s behaviour.

 So at Emoquo, what we understand (what we like to think we understand) is how people’s everyday behaviour at work has this profound impact on people. I’ve shared with you a personal story but these stories are happening every day across every organisation around the world. So what I’d like to do is focus on three things. One is just to give you a little overview of what Emoquo is about and what we do. Then I want to look at how emotional intelligence is for everybody, not just senior managers and executives in an organisation. And then what I want to leave you with is how organisations are now starting to take a new approach around emotional intelligence and employee engagement with digital coaching.

 So we have a poll question, so I’m just going to hand back to Rob for this one.

Rob Moss: Thank you, Abigail. Okay, so the poll is simple. What is the top issue affecting employee engagement in your organisation? You’ve got four choices. Click the round circle next to each choice. So the top one is manager effectiveness, the second one change or transformation, third is culture, and the fourth one is something else. So I can see lots of you are voting already. Do keep your votes coming in and then we can have a look at what the result of that poll is.

 Okay, I’ll just give that a few more moments. I can see now that most of you have voted, so let’s have a look at the results. Abby, is that roughly what you were expecting?

Abigail Rappoport: Yeah. Well that’s really interesting. So just over 40% are saying manager effectiveness is by far the top issue, and that’s what we see a lot with the clients that we work with. So that isn’t surprising. Change and transformation – it’s happening across the board, across so many industries and we see that a lot. So yeah, this is what I was expecting and it’s reassuring to see that that’s what your view is as well.

 So if we move forward, let’s connect that back to Emoquo. So what is Emoquo? There are two sides. One is the individuals at work, and then the other side is the organisation as a whole.

 If we think about the individuals, imagine health and fitness apps. It’s something that’s with them every day, it’s tracking them, it’s helping them monitor how they’re getting along from a physical wellbeing point of view. Now think about Emoquo for emotional wellbeing and being that digital coach in your pocket that’s there with you every day, helping you deal with situations and tracking how you’re getting on.

 If we move now to the organisational view, the analogy here really is antivirus. So think about antivirus and how that works for fixing software. It’s there running in the background all the time – you’re not even aware that it’s there. A problem occurs, the software will fix the problem and you’ll get a report to tell you what the problems were and how they’ve been fixed.

 So think Emoquo, in effect, as the antivirus of fixing people risks. Emoquo’s there in the background, running all the time, people are accessing it whenever they have a problem that they need to fix, they get help to fix it and then the organisation gets a view and insight and analysis about what the problems are, when they’re happening and how people are self-serving to fix those problems. So that’s really the power of Emoquo.

 So we have 25 experts like Tony, helping us create highly relevant content that really covers the most common people challenges in the workplace. It’s very, very practical, very, very tangible, and above all it really helps people change their behaviour at a very granular, personal level.

 And the technology is that it’s available on any device because it’s in the cloud, which means that people can access it whenever they need to. We find that 75% of people actually use it out of working time. Because it’s something that’s very, very personal, they don’t want other people to see what they’re doing. The content itself – the scenarios, as we call them – are just ten minutes, so it’s very quick and easy to use. It doesn’t eat into your day too much. And above all I think the thing that’s really powerful about the tool is that it’s anonymous and confidential. So there’s that element of trust that people have that they can go into the tool, they can find solutions to the problem that actually they wouldn’t really talk to other people about in the workplace.

 So let’s look at some high-level numbers around this. So Tony mentioned Gallup. You probably know this statistic. About 68% of people are disengaged in the workplace, and that’s across thousands of companies, across all industries and this is global. And the sad fact is that it really hasn’t changed over the last fifteen years. I think some of the insight that Tony’s given us is very, very helpful to help us think through and reframe the problems, that we can start doing stuff differently, so we can change the 68% and make it 30% over the next few years.

 But the only way we’re going to do that is to do something differently. Einstein’s famous quote is absolutely pertinent here – the definition of madness is doing the same thing again and again and expecting different results.

 So I think part of the problem is that we’re measuring. We’re measuring a lot. We did this at Microsoft. We measured everything that you can possibly imagine around people and talent. I think that the problem is that we’re not changing fast enough, as the 68% not changing in fifteen years tells us. And I think the other problem is people tend to tell you what they want you to hear. They’re not willing to take a risk and talk about what’s really going on underneath the surface. And of course there’s the other thing with things like employee surveys, engagement surveys – they happen once a year or twice a year. It’s a snapshot in time and what we really need is to have the understanding about how things are changing over time and when we make changes and implement new things, how that’s landing.

 So to give you an example of how we can track behaviour and people-related issues over time, I’ve looked at some insight from a sample of 2,200 Emoquo users over a twelve-year period, and we are seeing that time and time again, the most accessed scenarios are conflict, performance and diversity.

 So around conflict, there are a number of scenarios within that, but 55% of people are accessing scenarios about poor behaviour within teams.

 If we think about performance, we’re seeing that over 50% of scenarios are all about getting the most out of a team.

 And then around diversity, we see 45% of people wanting to solve problems around harassment and 30% around inappropriate joking.

 So these are things that are really troubling people and that are by far over and above the most issues of concern.

 And something that Tony was talking about earlier was how little things, if they’re not dealt with, can become much bigger. And the way I see this is that there are three major, major things that we need to do in organisations today to help change this.

 So firstly we need to empower each and every individual within the organisation to take responsibility for their own personal improvement and changes. They need access to something that allows them to do that easily and confidentially. This whole idea of anonymous and confidential, I think that’s absolutely critical. I came from a large global corporate where we measured absolutely everything – how many people had taken which course, what their completion rate was, what the average results and pass rates were et cetera. When people know that you’re measuring them in that way, they behave in a certain way, and they will only ever tell you what they think you want to hear.

 And I think the other thing is this on-going being able to capture real-time how people are really feeling, what’s holding them back, how they’re trying to solve it themselves. But then as an organisation you can have that visibility now to know what prevention or interventions are needed to really make a change in the organisation. So whether it’s a passing comment in the corridor, whether it’s a conversation that goes wrong, whether it’s an unwelcome stare or even the tone of somebody’s voice, all of those things are having an impact on people’s emotional wellbeing and how engaged they are going to be in the workplace.

 So this is really why at Emoquo we believe that emotional intelligence has got to be for absolutely everyone, because so often we see budgets being spent around emotional intelligence learning on senior managers and executives. Well actually it’s time now to democratise that EQ learning and access to those sorts of tools and that sort of knowledge, because everybody needs it every day at work. It’s not just for managers because if a manager behaves in a certain way, like my personal example that I mentioned before, you need to give people the tools to deal with those things that happen, because it happens all the time.

 I think something that will help bring this to life are some really stories. So here’s an example. It’s a very large utility company and I’ll share the individual’s view and the organisational view. So this individual – I’m going to call him Pete – had been in the organisation for a number of years. He was technically brilliant at the work that he did, and due to him being so technically competent he was made manager, and he rose up through the ranks being a manager, managing more and more people. But he was never actually given the people skills to be able to do that job correctly. So the impact of his behaviour was that people in his team were becoming disillusioned, disengaged, there was a lot of absenteeism in that organisation in that division.

 And so from an organisational point of view, they were going through some other changes. They were bringing three different parts of the company together. They were creating this product across three companies. They needed to give everybody the ability to work more collaboratively across sites, something that they hadn’t been able to do before. They needed to up-skill all those managers, like Pete, who were just not hitting the mark when it came to people skills, and they really had to seriously address their staff and increase their talent pipeline and significantly increase their levels of engagement. And that’s why they chose Emoquo.

 And the second customer example here is a large public sector organisation. So this is the senior manager. And she was at a point where she was in a new role taking over a very large team and she’d been working with them for six months and she couldn’t figure out what was going wrong. She went to see her HR business partner and she said, ‘I just don’t understand why my team is so dysfunctional. They’re not communicating with each other. There’s no trust. I just don’t know what to do.’ And the HR business partner said, ‘Well look, we’ve got this tool called Emoquo. Why don’t you just go and have a look at some of the scenarios? Some of them might resonate and might help you think this through.’ So she went away. Two days later she came back to the HR business partner and said, ‘You know what? I think I know what the solution is. The problem is actually me.’ And it helped her realise, put a mirror up in front of her to help her realise what she was doing wrong and the impact of her behaviour on other people.

 So we now have another poll question, so I’m going to hand back to you, Rob.

Rob Moss: Okay, thank you. This is our second poll. What impact does the emotional intelligence of your line managers have on employee engagement? And then you have a range of responses from significant or some impact or little or no impact, and then if you’re not sure, feel free to share that you’re not sure.

 Okay, I can see that there’s a clear trend already. So vote now. You’ve only got a few more seconds ‘cause I’m going to close it ‘cause there’s a definite winner! There we are.

Abigail Rappoport: Yeah, well 92.2%. Yeah. I think it’s a well-understood concept that a manager has a huge amount of impact on people’s engagement and emotional wellbeing by far.

 Okay, so if we now bring the different strands together so we can bring the section to a close. So we’ve looked at Emoquo and what Emoquo does around being that digital coach for the individual and, if you like, for the organisation the antivirus, helping deal with people risks as and when they arise. Then we looked at how emotional intelligence really needs to be for everyone, how we need to democratise that emotional intelligence knowledge, learning and capability across the entire organisation. And then we’ve also looked at how some organisations have taken a completely new approach around emotional intelligence and employee engagement with things like digital coaching.

 So I just want to thank you for listening and being so engaged and for answering all those poll questions. Please do get in contact if you’ve got any questions at all or if you need to know more or just want to talk through some issues that you’re having in your organisation – I’m very happy to do that. And I will hand back to you, Rob.

Rob Moss: Okay, thank you. Very interesting, and we’ve had lots of questions in already, but do feel free to carry on sending the questions in. We’ve got a nice healthy twenty minutes or so to have a discussion, so let’s have a look at some of the questions.

 The first one I’d like to start with which I saw a couple of times is one that I was thinking as well and Tony, if I could perhaps bring you in on this first of all. Is it a myth that you can’t teach people emotional intelligence? Can you improve their emotional intelligence? ‘Cause when we compare EQ with IQ, people say, ‘Well you can’t change your IQ. You’re clever or you’re not.’ Is it the same with emotional intelligence?

Tony Crabbe: I think emotional intelligence gets expressed with behaviour. I think we can teach different behaviours and different responses to different situations. So if you think about emotional intelligence as having two (this is massively oversimplifying) components – there’s the spotting stuff and then there’s the doing stuff, so the recognising emotions in others and then the way you respond. We can teach better responses and people can learn those and practice those. But even on empathy, it was interesting, there was a study done in America recently. I mentioned that the level of empathy had dropped by 40% in college students because of all the technology and the transaction people are doing, the way relationships are happening in younger people. But they looked at a technology-free summer camp with these kids going off to a summer camp. And what they found was after five days of no technology, their empathy levels had increased, i.e. their ability to spot and recognise emotions in others had increased. I think if we a) help people to learn the skills around the right behaviour, the most effective behaviour, questions to ask, but also we create and encourage people to have the right practices about how to be present with other people, just that discipline of actually spending more time properly connected in conversations with other people starts to build the muscle of emotional intelligence.

Rob Moss: Okay, great. Thank you. Another thing that you brought up, Tony, was around friendship and you predicted that friendship is going to be a buzzword. I’m always pleased to hear predictions of buzzwords ‘cause I can start writing articles about it!

Tony Crabbe: That’s my hunch anyway!

Rob Moss: Mike asks, how do you be friends with your subordinates while still managing to drive results?

Tony Crabbe: I was less talking about the manager-subordinate friendship. But I think my uber-point is, every organisation I work with at the moment obsesses about collaboration. The world is more complex, we need people to collaborate. How do we do this? And their solutions are primarily technical. And I think the underlying driver is a human one. We connect with people and we really engage with people that we like.

 Now when it comes to the manager thing, I don’t think necessarily you need to be friends with them or be looking for friendship between a manager and an employee, but I do think we need to encourage our managers to be more human. I think sometimes even words like ‘emotional intelligence’ become buzzy and it sounds like something...we’ve had NLP, we’ve had EQ, we’ve had lots of acronyms. A lot of this is just about being human to human and actually being fully present with other people. And the level of the conversations that happen and the level of authenticity that happens when we genuinely connect with other people are off the chart.

 Let me give you another example. The person that drives my greatest results is my wife, because there is the level of trust that’s developed over the years that she can say things to me that are more brutal than anyone else can say to me, because we have that trust. And so she can be direct, in a way. So when we actually make the emotional investment in other people, we can actually enter spaces and conversations that wouldn’t be possible with people that we didn’t have that level of connection with. But that’s not necessarily friendship. That’s also just about a stronger human connection with that person.

Rob Moss: Okay, thank you. Abigail, Sharon has asked, ‘In your personal situation you described, what choice did you make?’

Abigail Rappoport: And actually somebody else asked that further down as well, so it’s come up a couple of times. So what did I do? The first thing I did was initially I ignored it, ‘cause I thought it would go away. Then I realised very quickly that that wasn’t working because they were continuing to be the way they were and I was getting more and more stressed out about it. So I decided then to do something about it. I had conversations with the individual. I spoke to a few people beforehand, confidentially, to say what I was trying to say and tested it and practised it with them first. Then I went to speak to the individual concerned. They didn’t really get it. They didn’t really understand it. They were in denial, I think. And then I did speak to the HR department as well, because I thought that they really needed to know about it. So then they got on the case.

 It took a little bit of time for things to move and actually, because of what I was doing at the time, I then had an opportunity to go and work somewhere else in the organisation and I thought, ‘Actually, I’m going to do that. I’m going to distance myself from this person because I really don’t need to be around this anymore.’ So actually I did all three things in the end.

Rob Moss: Okay, thank you. Let’s move on. There were a few questions around productivity. Obviously that’s the key problem according to economists and journalists in the news. The UK has a big productivity problem. Okay, so Tony, Adrian asks, ‘In the UK we are currently very troubled by the productivity gap, while we are 30% behind our competitors in terms of output per person per hour. How can emotional intelligence solve this problem? Doesn’t investment in creativity take us on the long-term trajectory whereas we are obsessed with short-term gains?’

Tony Crabbe: There are a few other questions around, ‘What are you talking about Tony? We’re more productive and Britain’s rubbish at productivity!’ But I think there is a productivity paradox here, and when I talk about productivity, it’s somehow slightly different to the way economists talk about it. So I talk about productivity about the advanced stuff that we do. And I actually think the amount of stuff that we do gets in the way of us being genuinely productive.

 So if I came up with a definition that I would like of productivity, it would be your ability to get the important stuff done, the stuff that really matters to your customers, to your organisation. But actually, the language I was using earlier was just the amount of stuff that we do, and I think that for a lot of organisations, they’re so focused on... How many different kinds of social media or ways of communicating in the organisation do we need to have? How much activity are we expecting? How many more meetings do we need to get people to go to? All of these can often get in the way, to a degree, of getting stuff done.

 So when it comes to the emotional intelligence, it’s about being able to help people grapple with the tough choices. There’s something in psychology called the ‘which or whether or not’. So the way I describe it is I don’t like buffets, ‘cause I see all these foods and I end up choosing them all ‘cause I ask myself whether or not I like this, whether or not I like that. And I end up with an over-full plate that no chef would serve me.

 Now we do the same at work. We say whether or not it’s good to do this, whether or not it’s good to answer those emails, whether or not it’s good to go to that meeting, and we end up filling our diaries with stuff.

 What we should be asking is getting much more strategic and saying, ‘Which of these is the better use of my time? Which of these is the better choice for me to make?’ And there’s always a risk associated with that. Like any company strategy, they don’t try to do everything. They try to do one or two things really well. But when you ask any individual to make tough choices and therefore be a bit sloppy in certain areas, that’s a deeply emotional conversation. You need the support of your manager to feel that you can make those choices. You need to be able to have that open conversation which says, ‘Look, I’m getting pressure from so-and-so, I’m getting pressure from so-and-so. I can’t do it all well. Which should I focus on?’ That level of conversation only happens when we’re in a trusting relationship with a manager.

Rob Moss: Okay. Tracey and someone else as well have asked a follow-on on this productivity issue, ‘What is it that other countries are doing well?’

Tony Crabbe: So the Dutch do it pretty well, do productivity pretty well, and Abigail’s here – I’ll even use the example of Microsoft in the Netherlands. So they effectively did away with space and time. They said, ‘Space and time don’t matter any more. We’ll focus on outputs.’ The managers really struggled with that because, ‘So what’s our role? We’re not managing what people are doing.’ What they did, though, was they shifted the role of manager to, ‘Your job is to effectively lubricate the wheels of your employees. So you’re not managing what they do. They’ve got clear outputs. Your job is to help them achieve those. Your job is to enable them to get the support they need. Your job is to help them to focus on what matters.’ And their productivity went through the roof.

 And then the Scandic countries do quite a lot of this stuff well. In Sweden, I think it’s Honda have just introduced the six-hour work week and they found they get more done in six hours than they used to in eight hours. But I think sometimes the analogy I give is I work with a lot of women who have just had children and are actually finding their working hours are constrained because they’ve got commitments but they’re actually getting more stuff done. Because what happens is the constrains of having to leave at 4:30 generates a lot of creativity in how they get the work done and how productive they are. So I think it’s about having the conversations about the way they’re working that allows them to focus better.

Rob Moss: Thank you. Okay, I’ve got a couple of questions now for you, Abby. Firstly a simple one from Mike. ‘Does Emoquo measure EQ using the tool?’

Abigail Rappoport: Okay, so what do we do? So we aggregate all of the usage, so it’s aggregated, anonymised data, so that you’ll be able to see how many people have accessed various different scenarios and how that’s changing over time. So that’s how we’re looking at it right now.

 So because we cover 55 of the most common workplace scenarios and 330 of the most helpful input from therapists and coaches on how to deal with that, we know how many people have accessed and used those things, and that’s how we capture it at the moment.

 What we’re working on for the next version of the product is to be able to have a benchmark so that for people in a particular role or in a particular function, they can see where they are right now versus where we’d like them to be as an organisation, or where their peers are versus their peers. So actually you’ll get a much more granular view of where you’d like people to be and where they are on their journey. And so there are a number of different categories and you’ll be able to slice and dice that in lots of different ways with the analytics tool.

 But right now, the way we measure it is that aggregated, anonymised view of what the issues are, how people have solved those problems and how that’s changing over time.

 And just actually on that point, one really powerful example that comes to mind is two very large automotive companies came together a number of years ago and they implemented Emoquo at that time because they knew there were going to be lots of changes and cultural issues and people having to deal with bringing these two cultures together. So they went through this whole year of integration and then at the end of it they basically said, ‘Okay, everyone’s fine. We’ve ticked all the boxes, we’ve gone through the implementation, everything’s back to normal now.’ And we saw immediately after they’d signed it off that a whole group of people in the organisations were still accessing scenarios about how to deal with conflict. So very quickly, finger on the pulse, we could see what was happening and what those issues are.

 So it’s a slight tangent from the answer to the question, but that’s the power of knowing what’s really happening under the surface of the organisation and seeing what people are struggling with, and that’s something that’s related to that question.

Rob Moss: And Michelle asks, ‘Where do you think the future of emotional intelligence is going, both from an organisational level and the impact on graduates?’ There’s another question that talks not just about graduates but about the fact that there are five generations, potentially, in the workforce.

Abigail Rappoport: I’ll take that from a tool and a technology perspective and perhaps you can look at it from your perspective. So the future of emotional intelligence. I think more than ever, because of the way people learn and the sort of collective social learning, there needs to be a way that a) people can express themselves more openly and honestly and for there to be a trusted way for them to do that, and technology plays, I think, a very, very important role in that. And in terms of graduates and millennials, they want to be able to access things quickly, they want short, sharp hits of content that are really, really personal to them, and they also want to be able to share that, and I think that’s where technology comes in and tools like Emoquo come in where they can do that. So it’s making it really personalised, really relevant, but really short and sharp and punchy. And the millennial generation is the video generation, so that needs to be one of the mediums you use to engage them in new ways. And I’ll hand over to you, Tony, for your perspective on it.

Tony Crabbe: Yeah, when it comes to the trend, just building on younger people want short and sharp. I think that speaks to the whole challenges, the lower EQ, if you like, of younger people. They’re used to transacting, they’re used to information short and sharp. They’re not used to the messiness of relationships at the same level.

 McDonald’s did an interesting study where they compared their personnel data with their performance data and what they found is the stores that had people over 50 on the counter sold more, and it turns out because the older people were mentoring the millennials coming through around how do you actually have a conversation with people. I think what’s going to happen as the millennials come further up the food chain, emotions are only going to become more important because a) the stuff we need to do to achieve and succeed is much more emotional by its nature, and b) because they’re going to be less good at it.

Rob Moss: Okay, perfect. We are about four minutes from finishing off. So Tony and Abigail, if you see any questions that you’re particularly keen on answering then let me know. In the meantime let me identify one more which we can address. Okay, there are a couple of questions around convincing the leadership that this is needed. With lots of these webinars that we do, a big part of it is how do you convince the leadership team that it’s a problem?

Tony Crabbe: Well I think a starting point often is data. Talk the business game. Get the facts and figures to enable that conversation. I think the other thing that I know I’ve been asked personally on so many occasions to do cultural assessments that relate to emotional issues or otherwise of organisations, and I learnt many years ago that if I just took that as a request either from HR or the leadership team without pre-contacting, the leadership team nearly always rejected the output. Because nearly always there’d be some stuff that’s about them changing as well, that comes out from that.

 So what I do before I do a cultural assessment now it I always pre-contact with the leadership team about, ‘So what will happen if the outcome of this means that you have to change?’ And even just having that conversation upfront means that when inevitably it does come up that they need to do things differently, they’re prepared for it and I get a much more positive response.

 So I think it’s data and then actually prepare the leaders for the bad news of that data if it’s going to be about them.

Abigail Rappoport: And just a very practical piece in terms of measurement and having the evidence, there’s a handy tool from the Emoquo website where you put in the number of employees and we’ve got an average based on the minimum wage. So you can actually put in the number of employees and it calculates the cost of disengagement for your organisation. Just to give you a ballpark there. Very tangible.

Tony Crabbe: Speak the language of money. Perfect!

Rob Moss: I think we’ve got chance for one last quick question. Janine asks, ‘Is there any industry sector that’s better at this than others?’ Any ideas?

Abigail Rappoport: I’m biased because I’ve worked in the technology sector for so long! So I have very little...

Rob Moss: That it’s good or...?

Abigail Rappoport: In my experience it tends to be a little bit further ahead than other industries.

Tony Crabbe: Oh, I’m not sure I would agree with that.

Abigail Rappoport: Oh well there you go! Tony has a different view.

Tony Crabbe: I don’t think that would be universal in other technology companies. I think Microsoft are a little further ahead than others. And I think media are very far ahead. Who does it better? You know what? I struggle to put my finger on one that’s particularly good. I think I can think of great companies.

Rob Moss: Okay, perfect. Well unfortunately that is all we have time for. Do read Tony’s book, which is on-screen at the moment, available in all good bookshops and of course Amazon. It’s been a really interesting discussion. Great to have a good Q&A. We will attempt to make the on-demand version of today’s webinar available as soon as possible. It’s usually within a day or so, and we will distribute this along with the slide deck and with a transcript.

 As you leave today’s webinar, please provide any feedback in a survey that will pop up on your screen. We do have another webinar scheduled for next week, which is looking at creating a high-performance organisational culture, and we have webinars in the pipeline in the next few weeks covering topics as diverse as HR data analytics, sickness absence reporting and how to empower millennial workers. Further details are of course on [www.personneltoday.com/webinars](http://www.personneltoday.com/webinars).

 It leaves me to thank Tony and Abigail. Thank you both.

Abigail Rappoport: Thank you very much.

Tony Crabbe: Thanks very much.

Rob Moss: You’ve been listening to a PersonnelToday webinar, in association with Emoquo. Thank you for joining us and goodbye.