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## The Emotional Intelligence of National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) Vending and Coffee Services Industries Executives: A Pilot Study

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# The Emotional Intelligence of National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) Vending and Coffee Services Industries Executives: A Pilot Study

## **Abstract**

The authors report the pilot study focused on identifying the emotional intelligence (EI) of leaders in the automatic merchandising and coffee service industries. The data were collected from 39 executives, members of National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAM), who attended 2005 Executive Development Program on the campus of Michigan State University. Three elements of EI- IN, OUT, RELATIONSHIP for these leaders are discussed.

# The Emotional Intelligence of National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) Vending and Coffee Services Industries Executives: A Pilot Study

By Ronald F. Cichy, Richard M. Geerdes, and JaeMin Cha

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## Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a set of abilities or capabilities utilized by a person to understand, use, regulate, and manage the individual's emotions. (Law, Wang and Song, 2004). As opposed to cognitive intelligence, measured by an intelligence quotient (IQ), EI attempts to assess the expression of emotions and feelings.<sup>1</sup> While some researchers have empirically linked EI to academic achievement and success<sup>2</sup> and management performance (Langhorn, 2004) others have demonstrated that EI skills and capabilities are contributors to effective leadership. (Goleman, et. al., 2001; Gardner and Stough, 2002; Carmeli, 2003.)

Leaders with high EI are capable of assessing how followers feel, and effectively utilize this information to influence the emotions of followers in service of organizational goals. (George, 2001) Past service industries EI studies have included customer service (Cook and McCaulay, 2002), nursing staff (Vitello-Cicciu, 2003), and restaurant managers. (Langhorn, 2004) In a soon-to-be-published study, the emotional intelligence of 926 private club industry leaders was studied. (Cichy, Cha and Kim, *Under Review*). This present study is a pilot study focused on identifying the EI of leaders in the automatic merchandising and coffee service industries.

## Three models of EI defined

Cichy, Cha, and Kim conducted an extensive review of the EI literature prior to assessing the EI of 926 private club industry leaders. As the basis for developing the assessment tool, first for use with club leaders, and then for use with the leaders in this pilot study, the authors of this present study chose three major conceptual models of EI: Salovey-Mayer, Goleman, and Bar-On (2000).

Salovey and Mayer in 1990 were the pioneers in using the term Emotional Intelligence to describe the individual's ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions in self and others. Their definition combined intrapersonal and interpersonal capabilities and emphasized the noncognitive nature of EI. Their model was subsequently revised to include four dimensions of EI:

- the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion;

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, H. Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); P. Salovey and D. Mayer, "Emotional intelligence," *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9, no. 3 (1990), 185-211; D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It can matter more than IQ* (New York: Bantam, 1995); R. Bar-On, *The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I): A Test of Emotional Intelligence* (Toronto: Multi-Health Systems, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, K. Barcard, "Does emotional intelligence assist in the prediction of academic success?," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 63, no. 5 (2003): 840-852; S. Woitaszewski and M. Aalasma, "The contribution of emotional intelligence to the social and academic success of gifted adolescents as measured by the multifactor emotional intelligence scale – adolescent version," *Roeper Review* 27, no. 1 (2004): 25-30.

- the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought;
- the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; and
- the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

In 1995, Goleman (2001) published his book entitled: *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Goleman brought a focus to the use of EI in the organization to enhance leadership effectiveness. Goleman's EI model includes four general abilities:

- self-awareness;
- self-management;
- social awareness; and
- relationship management.

Bar-On defined EI as "an array of personal, emotional, and social abilities, and skills that influence an individual's ability to cope effectively with his or her given environmental demands and pressures. Bar-On's abilities number 15, categorized into five composite scales:

- intrapersonal;
- interpersonal;
- adaptability;
- stress management; and
- general mood

The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (2003), or MSCEIT, includes 141 items, both self-reported and evaluated by others. The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) assesses 133 items in a self-measurement of his 15 competencies placed into the five composite scales.

### **A new model of EI presented**

In developing and validating a new scale of EI with private club leaders, the authors of this present study adopted the "ability model" originally introduced by Salovey and Mayer.

The authors also differentiated EI capabilities for oneself (we called these IN) and for others (we called these OUT) based on Goleman's model. In addition, we incorporated the emotional and social intelligence components of Bar-On and called these RELATIONSHIPS.

IN construct includes three elements:

- Awareness of self;
- Self-leadership; and
- Self-actualization.

IN is the ability to sense and lead one's own emotions.

OUT construct includes two elements:

- Empathy; and
- Awareness of others.

OUT is one's ability to be aware of, or relate to, and understand others' emotions.

RELATIONSHIPS construct is unidimensional, representing one's abilities to integrate emotional experiences with his or her own actions and thoughts, while interacting with others.

### Vending and coffee service executives surveyed

The National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) is the leading trade association for the vending and coffee service industries. In this pilot study of vending and coffee service executives, the authors of this current study surveyed 39 participants in the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) Executive Development Program (EDP) in attendance at the January 16-21, 2005 Executive Development Program on the campus of Michigan State University. The survey instrument consisted of 37 items, 20 representing the IN construct, 9 representing the OUT construct, and 8 representing the RELATIONSHIPS construct. All 37 items were measured with a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 4 (Very often or True of me) to 1 (Very seldom or Not true of me). In addition to responding to the 37 items, participants were asked to respond one open-ended question that asked: "If you were to give someone who aspires to be like you advice about emotional intelligence, what would you say?" Selected demographics of the attendees at the NAMA 2005 EDP are presented in Table 1

**Table 1:**

#### Demographics of participants

<b>Title of participant</b>	
Owner/operator	4.7%
President or vice president	18.6%
National sales manager / regional sales manager / regional manager	9.3%
Key account manager or district manager	11.6%
Account executive or sales representative	27.9%
General manager	11.6%
Business development manager / customer service manager / vending manager	7.0%
Operations manager or office manager or manager	7.0%
<b>Food service director</b>	<b>2.3%</b>
<b>Years of Experience in Vending/Coffee Service Industries</b>	
0-5	19.2%
6-10	15.4%
11-15	7.7%
16-20	34.6%
20+	23.1%
<b>Number of Employees of Study Participants' Organizations</b>	
50 or less	42.3%
51-100	23.1%
101-200	7.7%
201-499	3.8%
500+	23.1%
<b>Annual Gross Sales (US\$) of Study Participants' Organizations</b>	
Less than \$1M	8.7%
\$1M-\$5M	4.4%
More than \$5M-\$10M	26.0%
\$10M+	60.9%
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	18.6%
Female	81.4%

### Three elements of EI ranked

The mean values representing the averages for IN, OUT, and RELATIONSHIPS are presented from top to bottom in Tables 2, 3, and 4 respectively. In particular, Table 2 illustrates that three statements representing the IN construct were tied for the top rank:

- I look at the positive side of life with positive attitude, even in the face of challenges.
- I feel pleased with my life, like myself and others, and have fun.
- I make my own decisions in life, and do not depend on others to do things for me. The standardized item alpha (= Reliability) for IN was 0.82.

**Table 2:**

#### Mean scores and rankings for IN element

Rank	Item	Mean*
1	I look at the positive side of life with positive attitude, even in the face of challenges.	3.49
1	I feel pleased with my life, like myself and others, and have fun.	3.49
1	I make my own decisions in life, and do not depend on others to do things for me.	3.49
4	I have many exciting and interesting things going on in my life.	3.44
5	I am able to handle stressful situation without losing my cool.	3.41
6	I am good at identifying problems, and developing and putting into place effective solutions.	3.38
6	I am able to sense my own feelings.	3.38
8	I accept myself as I am, the good and the not so good.	3.33
8	I focus on what is practical and avoid unrealistic expectations.	3.33
10	I am able to use awareness of my feelings to be adaptable.	3.28
11	I am able to use my feelings in my thinking processes.	3.26
12	I am able to keep in touch with my own feelings as they take place.	3.23
12	I am able to understand and appreciate the meaning of feelings.	3.23
12	I can adapt my feelings, thoughts, and behavior even when circumstances change.	3.23
15	I am able to use awareness of my feelings to positively influence my behavior.	3.15
16	I am able to accurately perceive my own feelings as they develop.	3.13
16	I am able to understand information about feeling and how feelings work together and progress.	3.13
18	I am open to my feelings and am able to adjust them in myself to promote personal understanding and development.	3.10
19	I can recognize and understand my feelings, can tell the differences between them, know what caused the feelings, and why.	3.05
20	I am patient and can delay satisfaction or an impulse to act.	2.90

**IN Mean = 3.27; Reliability = .82**

\*4 (very often or true of me) to 1 (very seldom or not true of me)

One of the core competencies of EI, as described by Bar-On, is optimism. A leader with an optimistic approach looks at the positive side of life with a positive attitude, even in the face of challenges. This optimism helps leaders become the best at what they do, as well as inspire others in the organization. Organizational life and personal life are not without its challenges. When a leader sees the possibilities, not just the problems, and focuses on the potential rather than the pitfalls, the leader helps his or her own self-motivation as well as building commitment from others on the team.

The next EI capability tied for the top rank was: "I feel pleased with my life, like myself and others, and have fun." This skill begins with self-understanding. One leader advised that you must "understand yourself – feed the body, soul, and spirit, and

allow this to flow to others.” Another wrote: “it takes a lot less effort to be nice and happy than mean and visibly unhappy.” Being true to yourself and being your own role model were themes that surfaced relative to this EI capability.

The third EI capability tied for top rank is: “I make my own decisions in life, and do not depend on others to do things for me.” This independence is a hallmark of emotionally intelligent leaders, particularly those who are self-starters. These leaders are grounded in reality but strive to reach exceptional expectations and results. This independence often stems from self-awareness, another critical EI skill. A leader must be in touch with his or her own emotions as a basis for independence. This leader also understands that he or she must have an adjustable leadership style to deal with varying personalities, emotional response, and situations.

Regarding other IN-related advice from our respondents, they wrote “listen to your gut;” and “in yourself, be consistent with your own emotional attitude.” The IN construct summarizes the necessary intrapersonal EI skills.

For the OUT construct, the standardized item alpha (= Reliability) was 0.83. As Table 3 shows, the top-ranked item was: “I am sensitive to other people’s emotions.” One leader advised those who aspire to leadership positions to “pay attention to the little things like a person’s body language and their comments in small talk both reveal a lot.” Listening and being aware of others emotions, including body language, helps a leader become more emotionally intelligent.

**Table 3:**  
**Mean scores and rankings for OUT element**

Rank	Item	Mean*
1	I am sensitive to other people's emotions.	3.36
2	I can read the feelings of other people.	3.33
3	I am aware of emotions of others.	3.31
4	I am able to perceive feelings in others.	3.28
5	I am able to be open to emotions in others to promote understanding and development.	3.23
6	I am able to accurately sense feelings in others and understand what is really taking place.	3.21
7	I understand what other people are thinking and feeling even when it is different that my own thoughts and emotions.	3.13
8	I am able to feel emotions in things. (e.g., art, music, objects, and stories)	3.10
9	I understand and appreciate emotions of others.	3.08

**OUT Mean = 3.23; Reliability = .83**

\*4 (very often or true of me) to 1 (very seldom or not true of me)

Being sensitive to the emotions of others requires patience and understanding. Leaders must learn to listen to others and not necessarily try to fix problems. “Just listen unless you are asked for an opinion” is what one leader advised. Being patient and understanding before being understood are essential EI skills. Leaders try to put themselves in others’ shoes and pay attention to the feelings of others.

The second OUT item is reading the feelings of other people. Listening to understand is an essential component of this EI competency. One leader advised to “not comment until you understand.” Another wrote: “listen to what they are saying.” Take time to ask questions that help you develop a deeper understanding of the other person’s position.” In so doing, the leader becomes aware of and sensitive to the feelings of others.

“I am aware of emotions of others” is the OUT EI skill ranked third. This awareness leads to the realization that everyone has different values and priorities that make them who they are. One leader suggested that “the more you understand what makes someone who they are, the better you will be able to inspire and lead that individual effectively.”

In terms of the RELATIONSHIPS construct, the standardized item alpha (= Reliability) was 0.72. As Table 4 shows, the top ranked item was “people would say I am a cooperative, contributing, and a positive team member.” One leader wrote: “you have to overlook the small stuff and try to find the positive in people.” Another remarked: “Keep an open mind and don’t sweat the small stuff.” Always be positive seemed to emerge as a theme in the remarks about RELATIONSHIPS.

**Table 4:**  
**Mean scores and rankings for RELATIONSHIPS element**

Rank	Item	Mean*
1	People would say I am a co-operative, contributing, and a positive team member.	3.43
2	I understand the effect of my feelings on particular people and situations.	3.19
2	I manage my feelings in the ways I respond to particular circumstances and individuals.	3.19
4	I am able to express and use feelings to communicate emotions with theirs.	3.14
5	I am able to clearly communicate in relationships with others.	3.11
6	I am effective in dealing with conflict in relationships with others.	3.08
6	I am able to use awareness of my emotions to manage relationships with others.	3.08
8	I can easily build and participate in mutually satisfying relationships characterized by openness and affection.	3.05

**RELATIONSHIPS Mean = 3.16; Reliability = .72**

\*4 (very often or true of me) to 1 (very seldom or not true of me)

The next two RELATIONSHIPS items were tied for rank 2: “I understand the effect of my feelings on particular people and situations.” and “I manage my feelings in the ways I respond to particular circumstances and individuals.” Regarding understanding feelings, leaders suggested that one must “be aware of the inner self and work on what triggers your emotions and how best to use them in relationships.” Another advised: “in the end, it is not all about what is in it for you. Keep that in mind.”

Regarding managing feelings, one leaders wrote to: “be yourself and respect others the way you would like to be respected.” An additional comment was to “maintain ethics and honesty in all decisions.”



Two other comments from these vending and coffee service leaders bear repeating. One leader advised those who aspire to be a leader to “educate yourself with self-help and management books.” This comment is particularly noteworthy since EI skills may be improved with practice. A second leader wrote: “Success is a journey that may never end, and tenacity is essential. Failures are certain and it is what you do with failures that determine your success.” EI helps one cope with the failures and pressures that leaders face daily.

**Future research recommended**

Given the sample size in this pilot study, it was not useful to examine more sophisticated statistical analyses. Based on this pilot study, a future research project involving the membership of NAMA could provide sufficient numbers of usable references such that exploratory factor analysis (EFA) or confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) could be utilized.

Even though all scores of standardized item reliability were calculated for each of the three constructs (IN = .82, OUT = .83, RELATIONSHIPS = .72) and exceeded the recommended minimum of .70, more sophisticated statistical methods could not be applied in this pilot study. However, the findings indicate that vending and coffee service leaders participating in this pilot study tend to have high EI for all three areas – IN, OUT, and RELATIONSHIPS (Table 5). The differences among the three constructs are not statistically significant.

**Table 5:**

**Summary EQ scores**

	<b>IN (20 items)</b>	<b>OUT (9 items)</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIPS (8 items)</b>	<b>Total EQ score (37 items)</b>
<b>Maximum scores</b>	80	36	32	148
<b>Mean<sup>1)</sup></b>	65.4 (81.8%) <sup>2)</sup>	28.9 (80.3%)	25.3 (79.0%)	119.6 (80.8%)
<b>S.D.</b>	5.5	3.6	2.8	12.0

1) NAMA EDP participants (n=39)

Given the earlier research into the EI of private club leaders<sup>23</sup>, and the ability to expand the numbers of usable responses for vending and coffee service leaders in the examination of IN, OUT and RELATIONSHIPS constructs, the authors of this present study could be closer to cross-validating the three-dimensional EI framework. That would allow the authors to begin to investigate whether our newly developed EI model is consistent and stable across different (i.e. varying populations of hospitality business leaders) cultures in terms of factor structure.

An additional study is underway of the EI of leaders in manufacturing, specifically the home improvements products industries. Unlike the private club leaders or vending and coffee service leaders studies, the manufacturing leaders study is longitudinal in the sense that the EI of the same sample of participants will be assessed and compared over a period of time. This study potentially has the ability to point out changes in overall EI, as well as the IN, OUT, and RELATIONSHIPS constructs.

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**Authors' note:** Mi Ran Kim, a doctoral student in the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation, and Resource Studies at Michigan State University, was a research assistant on this project.