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## Emotional Intelligence Training and Professional Salespeople

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# Emotional Intelligence Training for Professional Salespeople

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**Abstract** - Emotional intelligence (EI) has long been considered a significant success factor, especially in careers that involve considerable social contact (Goldman, 1995). As social contact is typically an integral part of the sales career, a series of research studies have investigated the link between EI and sales performance. Over the past two decades, a growing stream of research has provided evidence supporting a positive relationship between EI and sales performance. While many of these studies have called for the integration of EI into sales training programs, this area has received little research attention. The purpose of this research is to address this lack of research by providing a review of EI training research from other fields. The current study will identify best practices in EI training that can be adapted to meet sales training goals and provide an outline for developing an effective EI training program for sales professionals.

**Keywords** - Emotional Intelligence, Sales Training, Sales

**Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and/or Practitioners** - In recent years, research has indicated a positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and sales performance. As a result, many studies of EI in sales have called for integrating EI into sales training. Unfortunately, little research exists to guide this training. This research provides a review of EI training research from other fields and identifies best practices in EI training while providing an outline for developing an effective EI training program for sales professionals.

## Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has long been considered a significant success factor, especially in careers that involve considerable social contact (Goldman, 1995). As social contact is typically an integral part of the sales career, a series of research studies have investigated the link between EI and sales performance. The first of these studies on the connection between EI and performance in sales appeared in 2003 (Deeter-Schmelz & Sojka). The study offered qualitative support for a direct link between EI and sales performance. Over the two decades since, a growing stream of research has provided evidence supporting a positive relationship between EI and sales performance, either through a direct relationship or through an intermediate variable, such as adaptive sales behavior or customer-oriented sales behavior (for a review of this literature, see Kadic-Maglajlic et al., 2016).

The results indicating that EI can positively impact sales performance should come as good news for management for at least two reasons. First, EI can be identified. As a result, assessment of EI has the potential to be a factor used in recruiting and selecting candidates for sales positions. Second, EI can be developed through training. As a result, many studies of EI in sales have called

for integrating EI into sales training. For example, Deeter-Schmelz and Sojka (2003) note the need for EI training for both sales trainees and existing salespeople. While numerous articles have called for the integration of training in emotional intelligence into general sales training, we could not find research discussing an effective overall approach for that training.

The purpose of this research is to address this lack of research focusing on EI training in sales by providing a review of EI training research from other fields. For example, the Research on Emotional Intelligence Consortium (Cherniss, Goleman, Emmreling, Cowen, & Adler, 1998) summarizes best practices of EI training programs across multiple domains. It suggests a four-phase process that involves preparation, training, transfer and maintenance, and evaluation that can be used to develop an effective emotional intelligence training program for sales professionals. The current study will identify best practices in EI training that can be adapted to meet sales training goals and provide an outline for developing an effective EI training program for sales professionals.

## **Literature Review**

### **Multiple Types of Intelligence**

When thinking of intelligence, we often focus on a person's IQ, but that has not always been the case. Over 100 years ago, Edward Thorndike suggested the existence of multiple types of intelligence. As he stated, "The facts of everyday life, when inspected critically, indicate that a man has not some amount of one kind of intelligence, but a varying amount of different intelligences (1920, p. 228)." Thorndike posited three types of human intelligence: mechanical, social, and abstract. In his view, mechanical intelligence refers to the ability to understand and manage things and mechanisms.

In contrast, social intelligence refers to the ability to understand and manage others and act wisely in human interactions. Finally, abstract intelligence refers to the ability to understand and contain ideas and symbols. In that same publication, he described tests used to measure abstract and mechanical intelligence but noted that effectively measuring social intelligence would be challenging.

Despite Thorndike's belief in multiple forms of intelligence, over the following years, interest in mechanical and social intelligence waned while abstract intelligence, or as Thorndike relabeled it, Intelligence Quotient (IQ), became the accepted measure of human intelligence. The concept that human intelligence was composed of multiple types of intelligence languished for over a half-century until it reemerged in publications by Gardner (1983), Salovey and Mayer (1990), and Goleman (1995). Like Thorndike, these researchers presented IQ and social intelligence, now referred to as emotional intelligence (EI), as complementary and potentially equally essential forms of human intelligence. In fact, Goleman (1995) contends that in many situations, EI could be a more critical success factor than IQ.

Over the past three decades, a growing stream of research has suggested that EI accounts for significant variance in one's problem-solving and social relationships (Mayer et al., 2008). While several conceptualizations of EI exist, a generally accepted definition has emerged of EI as "the

ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion: the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer & Salovey 1997, p.10). In other words, EI encompasses the ability to: 1) accurately perceive emotion, 2) use emotion to facilitate thought, 3) understand emotion, and 4) manage emotion (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Lassar & Shepherd, 2013). Along with the conceptual development, EI research was also boosted by the development of Wong and Law’s broadly accepted EI measurement scale (2002).

Goleman (1995) suggests that emotional intelligence is essential for success in careers that involve considerable social contact. With that in mind, it is not surprising that sales researchers soon began looking for links between EI and success in sales. In 2003, the first article focusing on the link between EI and performance in sales appeared (Deeter-Schmelz & Sojka). The study offered qualitative support for a direct link between EI and sales performance. Over the two decades since, a growing stream of research has provided evidence supporting a positive relationship between EI and sales performance, either through a direct relationship or through an intermediate variable, such as adaptive sales behavior or customer-oriented sales behavior (for a review of this literature, see Kadic-Maglajlic et al., 2016).

Additionally, research is beginning to grow, suggesting that managers’ EI levels can impact their subordinates’ behavior and traits. For example, Rego et al. (2007) found a positive relationship between employee creativity and the EI of their direct manager. Using Rego’s research as a starting point, Lassar & Shepherd (2013) found a positive relationship between salesperson creativity and sales performance. Thus, evidence is growing supporting a link between the EI of sales managers and the traits and behaviors of the salespeople they lead.

## **Training in Emotional Intelligence**

### ***Can Emotional Intelligence be Developed?***

Before discussing EI training approaches and methods, it seems important to determine if emotional intelligence can be developed. This fundamental question has been addressed through two meta-analytical studies. The first (Schutte et al., 2013) found a moderate effect size for the impact of training on emotional intelligence when they included only studies with a common design, experimental studies with random assignment to intervention and control groups. The second (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019) used a much broader sample of studies in their meta-analysis and found a moderate positive effect for training regardless of study design. Their study analyzed 58 published and unpublished studies that included an emotional intelligence training program and used either a pre-post or treatment-control design in their analysis. They conducted an exploratory analysis of training properties and found results consistent with the case for effective training being active and personal. Training should be more effective when participants can discuss the meaning of emotional intelligence and how it applies to them. Additional analysis suggests that training must be active (e.g., include an opportunity to practice) and personal (e.g., provide feedback on their performance). EI scores increase when participants can practice diagnosing situations and then receive feedback on the success of their choices. Thus, they concluded that emotional intelligence is a trainable construct.

## *Sales Training in Emotional Intelligence*

The research into emotional intelligence training in sales is scant. One of the few studies to address the topic was a 2012 study detailing an EI training program designed to improve sales performance during a corporate merger (Gignac, Hammer, Jennings, & Palmer, 2012). The team engaged 50 Australian pharmaceutical sales representatives in the study. Based on random assignment, 29 were selected to receive EI training, and the other 21 comprised the control group. Twenty sales managers also participated in the study by completing an emotional intelligence assessment, participating in a four-hour workshop that introduced emotional intelligence, and participating in a series of one-on-one and small-group coaching sessions. Managers conducted EI-development-focused coaching conversations with their sales team members.

All sales representatives engaged in multi-rater emotional intelligence assessments before and after the training and one year following the training. The training started with a one-on-one debrief to discuss the results of the EI assessment. It was followed by three 2.5-hour workshops focused on applying emotional intelligence in sales. Specifically, the training focused on 1) Identifying the effective and ineffective EI characteristics of sales personnel, 2) Micro-skills training for establishing and building rapport with a client, identifying positive buying signals, and understanding a client's sales objections, and 3) Planning and conducting emotionally intelligent sales meeting with clients.

The results indicated that higher emotional intelligence scores correlate with higher performance as rated by others. After one year, the emotional intelligence training program had a statistically significant positive effect on self-reported emotional intelligence and a marginally significant positive impact on rater-reported emotional intelligence scores. Additionally, a comparison with a control group over that same time frame showed that the training group's performance increased in the third and fourth quarters. By the fourth quarter, the training group outperformed the control group by 9.4 %. In other words, increased performance appeared to be correlated with EI training, but only after a significant training period.

Another sales training study (Leach, Liu, & Johnson, 2005) focused specifically on the impact of self-regulation training on motivation management. As previously mentioned, the self-regulation of emotions is generally accepted as an essential aspect of EI. Self-regulation training focuses on the process of setting goals, monitoring progress toward the goals, time management, and prioritizing action. In this study, the research team sent surveys to a sample of 2000 salespeople in the life insurance underwriting industry who had participated in self-regulation training. They received a usable sample of 411 responses. Researchers were interested in understanding how self-regulation training influenced specific capabilities in self-regulation and how those capabilities related to sales performance. They also examined procedural sales knowledge as a potential moderator of the relationship. Salespeople were asked to report on the training they had received (how much of each type), to complete questions related to emotional control, motivation control, role ambiguity, and procedural knowledge, and to report their performance by self-assessment through recent performance evaluation results, and by sharing the percentage of their sales goal they had achieved. The results indicated that self-regulation training was related to emotional control and motivation control. Self-regulation training is more strongly associated with

motivation control for salespeople with higher levels of procedural knowledge. Thus, they concluded that self-regulation training is more effective after primary skills are mastered.

### ***General (Non-Sales) Training in Emotional Intelligence***

While these sales training articles provide insights into EI-related training programs, more detail can be gleaned by reviewing EI training outside the sales field. In particular, three studies emerged that provided insights into training programs developed to enhance certain aspects of EI. The first (Cherniss et al., 2010) sought to evaluate the effectiveness of a leadership development program based on International Organization for Standardization (ISO) principles. Their program used training groups to help participants improve their emotional intelligence. The two-year study included 169 managers from 9 companies randomly assigned to either the treatment group that received the EI training or to a control group.

In the first year of the training program, managers met monthly in small groups led by a trained moderator. One of the first steps of the process was for each team to develop ground rules and procedures to create a safe learning environment. The rules included using specific behaviors, including active listening and asking clarifying questions, which were practiced throughout the experience. Each month the groups learned about specific emotional intelligence competencies. Group members were asked to apply one skill on the job each month and report back at the next meeting. Group members took turns hosting the meeting, which lasted three hours and was followed by an informal dinner.

Each meeting followed the same format. The host shared his personal and business history, the history and highlights of the host company, and a description of the biggest concerns or problems the leader was facing. Group members had an opportunity to share personal experiences that involved similar issues or concerns, and each member provided a one-minute discussion of what they would do if they were in the host's position. Meetings ended with an update from each of the members.

In the second year, one group member was trained to serve in the moderator role. In these meetings, the host described a personal performance issue or concern and a selection of business-related issues. Group members were given a list of seven emotional intelligence habits (developed in consultation with CEOs of the nine companies) and were required to practice one each month. In the meetings, members described their best and worst experiences applying the assigned EI habit. At the end of each year, a retreat was held, and emotional intelligence was assessed.

Over the two-year intervention, emotional intelligence increased for both self and other ratings for participants who participated in the EI training. However, the change did not occur until year two. The researchers noted that it might take time for raters to notice a behavior change, it might take practice and repetition over time for meaningful change to occur, or it may have been that the year two activity of practicing specific competencies was needed for behavioral change. Participants provided positive feedback about the program. They noted that the practice requirement and the need to report each month helped them become more aware of their behavior and its impact on others.

The goal of the EI training program reported by Beigi and Shirmohammadi (2011) was to help bank employees in Iran improve their emotional intelligence and deliver higher-quality service to their customers. The program's first phase allowed the program designers to observe employees, speak with their managers, and survey customers. The training was designed in the second phase. Eight sessions were held over two months at each bank location. Five randomly selected branches were chosen for the training, and five randomly selected branches were used in a control group that did not receive the training. All employees in the study were assessed on their emotional intelligence.

The training included lectures, group discussions of relevant examples, and stories about emotionally intelligent interactions in the service industry. The training was implemented by one trainer (who was an EI researcher) and two assistant trainers. The third phase included an assessment of the program through participant feedback and an assessment of the emotional intelligence of all participants. Results indicated that the training enhanced one dimension of emotional intelligence, relationship management. Further, the EI training program resulted in improved service quality.

A final example of EI training is provided by Gilar-Corbi, Pozo-Rico, Sánchez, & Castejón (2019), who developed a training course on emotional intelligence for 54 senior managers of a European private organization. The researchers attempted to address the limitations of previous studies of emotional intelligence training by including a control group, measuring emotional intelligence 12 months after the training, employing an experimental design, including group discussion and interactive participation, collecting information on individual differences that might influence the results, and using both self-report and ability measures of emotional intelligence.

The training was created to provide these senior managers with emotional intelligence knowledge and skills they could apply, transfer to their work teams, and use to find solutions to real challenges they faced. The study employed a pretest-posttest design with a control group. The training lasted seven weeks and included a weekly session of 95 minutes conducted by the researcher. Participants also engaged in 5 hours a week of online training that had content knowledge, quizzes, discussions, debates, and the giving and receiving of feedback. The online format allowed participants to remain connected after the formal training ended. The classroom and the online learning components required participants to communicate and work as a group to solve real problems using emotional intelligence skills in the workplace. The final training session involved creating a long-term plan to continue learning and developing their emotional intelligence competencies. Researchers saw the result of a long-term plan as necessary for continued improvement in EI over time.

The student's results revealed that some aspects of emotional intelligence were maintained after completion of the study, and some parts of EI (emotional understanding and emotion management) were strengthened over time. They also found that this training did not impact interpersonal and adaptability skills.

# **Emotional Intelligence Training for Professional Salespeople**

The Consortium on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations created a guide to help organizations create effective emotional intelligence training programs. (Cherniss et al., 1998). They suggest a process including preparation, training, transfer and maintenance, and evaluation phases. These four phases can be used to develop an effective emotional intelligence training program for sales professionals.

## **Preparation**

The preparation phase requires (Cherniss et al., 1998) an assessment of the organization, its business, and the individuals participating in the training. Top management must be supportive of the EI training effort. Program designers should know about effective program design, organization, and emotional intelligence. The program designers must identify emotional intelligence competencies expected to lead to success in the unique sales environment and set specific training goals. The Beigi and Shirmohammadi (2011) study completed this phase by having program designers observe employees, speak with managers, and survey customers.

Next, salespeople with the technical skills and aptitude for change are invited to participate in the program. There seems to be a benefit to delaying EI training until after salespeople are knowledgeable about their product, company, and competition. Leach, Liu & Johnson (2005) concluded that training for one EI competency, self-regulation, is more effective after primary skills are mastered. Sales managers who will be observing, coaching, and supporting salespeople should also possess high levels of EI. One organization focused its EI training solely on sales managers (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2019) and charged them with developing their people. One example of EI training for salespeople going through a corporate merger (Gignac et al., 2012) required the sales managers to complete an emotional intelligence assessment, participate in a four-hour workshop that introduced emotional intelligence, and participate in a series of one-on-one and small group coaching sessions.

Those who agree to participate should be assessed for starting levels of emotional intelligence and any other organizational outcomes targeted by the training (sales, goal completion, customer satisfaction, etc.). Multi-rater emotional intelligence assessments are recommended so salespeople can get feedback from others who work closely with them, along with a self-assessment. These tools allow a salesperson to request input from the sales manager, colleagues, customers, direct reports, engineers, and other individuals crucial to their success. Various multi-rater EI assessments have been used effectively in organizational settings (for example, see Emotional and Social Competence Inventory Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, 2022). Many of these tools require a facilitator who has been certified to use the assessment tool, and organizations can get their trainers certified as well.

Once participants receive initial results on their EI competencies and have a good understanding of emotional intelligence, they should set personal goals for the EI training. The program designers may have set specific program-level goals, but participants should also set personal goals for the training. For example, salespeople might be more successful with greater competency in influence. They can develop their action plan to improve in that specific area. Another individual may



struggle to stay motivated in the face of rejection, and she might choose to focus on self-management competency. Setting these personal goals and creating action steps are components of self-directed change that effectively support personal change and development (Rhee, 2003).

## **Develop Training**

The second phase (Cherniss et al., 1998) of developing the training starts with choosing trainers, facilitators, and mentors who have or can create positive, trusting relationships with participants. The training should include both content and experiential learning, so participants understand and have a chance to practice new behaviors. Ideally, trainers should be qualified to teach emotional intelligence development and have knowledge of the technical aspects of both sales training techniques and the specific sales environment (product, customers, competitors). Technical knowledge is as necessary as the facilitation skills of the trainers. Developing emotional intelligence can be an emotionally exhausting process. Participants need to be able to trust the facilitator and other participants, so they are comfortable discussing their concerns and willing to accept their feedback and suggestions.

Developing new skills takes time, so training sessions should be stretched over months or even a year. Participants may be reluctant to take time away from the sales field to engage in training, so the case must be made that the EI training can lead to increased sales. The trainers should explain the specific EI competencies that will be the focus of the training and the ways these competencies are expected to impact both behaviors and sales outcomes. Some of the competencies may simply focus on helping salespeople handle the stress of sales (McFarland, Rode, & Shrivani, 2016). Some training may focus on specific sales approaches such as establishing and building rapport with a client, identifying positive buying signals, and understanding a client's sales objections (Gignac et al., 2012).

The training may start with a multiple-day or week-long on-site to analyze and reflect on the results from the multi-rater feedback. Participants need to learn about emotional intelligence and how these competencies can contribute to their success in developing relationships and closing sales. These new behaviors should be practiced during the training and between training sessions with feedback and discussion about what worked and did not work. Participants should be organized into learning groups with others in the same position or management level that can provide support during and between sessions. The learning groups should engage in activities that will help members get to know each other and trust that they are all trying to help others improve and succeed. The program may incorporate individual coaching sessions, but it is also helpful for participants to share experiences with others who are also implementing the new skills in their sales work.

After the initial session, participants should come together, in-person or virtually, regularly, monthly to start, so that they can share their experiences trying out the new behaviors and getting feedback on how they improve. Support during training and development is crucial to success. The group could meet in person after a year to discuss their learning, development, and performance. Research indicates that the impact of EI training and development can take a year (Gignac et al., 2012) and up to two years (Cherniss et al., 1998) in one study.

Cherniss et al. (2010) provide a training program example. In this two-year study, managers met monthly in small groups led by a trained moderator. Each month the groups learned about specific emotional intelligence competencies. Group members were asked to apply one skill on the job each month and report back at the next meeting. Each month, a different member shared a host shared personal and business history, the history and highlights of their company, and a description of the biggest concerns or problems the leader was facing. Group members provided a one-minute discussion of what they would do if they were in the host's position and an update on their monthly progress. In the second year, one group member was trained to serve the moderator role, and the monthly meetings continued. Group members were required to practice one EI habit each month and then share their experiences applying the habit in their workplaces. The program ended with a final retreat.

The entire class or cohort and small groups become learning communities that practice, provide feedback, and process reflection and learning from experiences. Successes can be shared with the entire group so everyone can learn from others' experiences. Participants can also help each other develop strategies to deal with setbacks and relapses. Part of emotional intelligence is the ability to keep a positive outlook and self-motivation in the face of adversity. The group can help individuals plan for and practice these skills.

Finally, participants should create individual learning plans to continue learning and developing during and after the formal program ends. Assuming the supervisors are supportive of the program and the engagement of their direct reports in the program, participants should be encouraged to share their development plan with their supervisors to ask for their support and feedback. Learning groups may choose to meet after the formal program ends to continue the support and development.

## **Transfer and Maintenance**

The third phase (Cherniss et al., 1998) is the transfer of new skills into the workplace and continued use after the training ends. Participants should practice their new emotional intelligence competencies during training by participating in role-play sales simulations with other members of their training cohort. Watching others practice the competencies should support the learning and transfer of the behaviors to sales calls. Going back into the field, participants should be encouraged to use their developing emotional intelligence competencies in their customer interactions. Questions or concerns that arise from the use of these new competencies in the field should be discussed with members of the learning teams in between training sessions or with the sales managers trained in emotional intelligence.

Management support and emotional intelligence modeling help participants transfer their learning more easily into the workplace. If salespeople see their managers using emotional intelligence competencies, they can learn from that experience and benefit from the relationships that form in the process. Managers should support salespeople in trying new skills and learning from their experiences. Managers can conduct individual coaching sessions and encourage salespeople to share their experiences, good and bad, with trying out new behaviors and skills.

Managers can pave the way for the successful use of emotional intelligence on the job by recognizing and rewarding new behaviors that lead to improved outcomes. When sales managers

observe people exhibiting high levels of emotional intelligence, they should identify them and congratulate the salesperson for the new behavior. Emotionally intelligent salespeople should be changing their sales behaviors for the better (number of calls, the volume of sales, reduction in change orders, etc.), and thus, it should be easy for sales managers to track and reward the new behavior and the improved outcomes.

The organization's culture must support salespeople in learning from experience, trying new approaches, and helping each other succeed in the workplace application of their new skills. It takes courage to try new skills because people must be willing to fail or fall short, learn from that experience, change their behavior, and try again. Skill development requires practice, feedback, and more practice and feedback. A learning culture in the organization will encourage this process for all employees and will not punish people for trying new approaches.

## **Evaluation**

As with any training program, the final phase (Cherniss et al., 1998) is an evaluation of how well the training has met its goals. The program will have multiple measures of success. Individual levels of EI will be assessed again. Sales or sales performance should be evaluated. Finally, the program participants should be asked to provide feedback and suggestions on the program. The top management sponsors of the program will likely receive updates throughout the program.

Individual competency levels should be assessed at the end of the training using the same tools used at the beginning of the program. Emotional intelligence should be assessed immediately after the training and a year or more after the training to examine its long-term effects. Developing and using new skills takes time, practice, feedback, conscious reflection, and learning, all of which take time.

The program goals set at the beginning of the training should be assessed. There will likely be both individual goals and organizational process or outcome goals. Depending on the specific objectives, sales in dollars might be the appropriate outcome to track. With another training focus, the number of cold calls might be the best way to assess self-management. If salespeople work in teams, team performance might be evaluated. The organization may want to track participant attendance and engagement with the program. Sales managers may observe salespeople in the field to provide immediate feedback and coaching on any areas of concern. The program results should be used to revise the program for future training sessions.

Participants should be surveyed about their satisfaction with the program, their suggestions for the program, and their descriptions of how their training experience translated into higher performance in the field.

At the end of the evaluation phase, the organization would determine whether to continue training new groups, expand, revise, or conclude the training. Managers can continue to reinforce the importance of emotional intelligence in every organizational, departmental, team, and individual meeting. A summary of the stages and key activities in each stage is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Stages in the Development of Emotional Intelligence Training in Sales**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Prepare</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Steps</b>	Determine Needs	Choose the right trainers	Management support of using new skills	Analyze program outcomes
	Select Trainees/include sales managers	Choose time frame for training	Managers role modeling new skills	Analyze changes in EI competencies from multi-rater feedback
	Initial Assessment of EI and other competencies	Choose format – content, experiential	Rewards for using new skills	Include Supervisor observation
	Provide opportunity to create personal goals	Develop learning communities/teams	Culture supportive of new skills	Get feedback from all involved

## **Implications for Emotional Intelligence Training**

Several themes that emerged in this study have implications for developing sales-oriented EI training programs. First, as depicted in Table 1, the Consortium on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations guidelines indicate that the development of an EI training program should be seen as a process. Further, that process should be grounded in the unique sales environment existing in the organization. Indeed, generic EI training programs exist, but a wealth of research has shown the sales position as a uniquely challenging and stressful boundary-spanning position. Further, the rules of success can vary significantly from one type of sales position to another. Following the 4-stage process model shown in Table 1 should result in EI training that is much more effective due to its customization to the specific sales organization.

Another theme seen in this study is the prevalence of active learning approaches. While the training programs reviewed included the review of some content, they all featured a sizeable active learning component. For example, the training program discussed by Cherniss et al. (2010) consisted of learning one skill per month in a group meeting, followed by a requirement to apply that skill on the job over the next month. It seems that all the trainers involved in the studies shown in the research recognized that EI could not be learned through lectures, readings, or group discussions. In short, to grow in emotional intelligence, one must know about EI and practice applying that knowledge through active learning (Rhee & Sigler, 2020).

The active nature of EI training suggests two additional themes seen in EI training programs. One of these themes concerns the personal nature of the training program. For example, in the training program for leaders detailed by Cherniss et al. (2010), trainees were required to share personal details from their backgrounds and discuss concerns or problems in their work life. Additionally, trainees were required to discuss their attempts at applying EI principles in their daily work life. Developing emotional intelligence results in changes to the whole person. One study of an academic program on developing emotional intelligence found that enhanced emotional intelligence was evident in people’s home lives as parents and spouses as well as in their work

lives (Rhee & Sigler, 2020). If you are better at developing relationships at work, you can use those same competencies outside of work.

Discussing backgrounds, concerns about work, and the outcomes of work interactions requires the trainee to be willing to share personal information with training leaders and group members. For this to happen, the EI training program must foster a safe environment in which trainees are willing to share information that could be deemed highly personal. This willingness to share illuminates the EI training theme of trust. This willingness to share personal details requires that the trainee holds a great deal of trust in the training leader and group members. This requirement might differ from some traditional sales cultures where performance is enhanced by competition.

Another theme that emerged from a review of the EI training literature concerns the best timing of training. Instead of integrating EI training into new employee training, the reviewed programs tended to favor beginning EI training after the employee had been with the organization for some time. For example, the training program discussed by Leach et al. (2005) found that the EI training was more effective after primary skills were mastered, while senior executives were the subject of the program discussed by Gilar-Corbi et al. (2019). Applying this to the sales profession, it seems logical that EI training would be more effective after the salesperson has gained a working knowledge of products and services, along with a working knowledge of their company and their industry.

The final theme that emerged from the review of the EI training literature concerns the long-term nature of the EI training program. The EI training programs discussed were not short-run training programs. The shortest training programs discussed were seven weeks (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2019) and two months in length (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2011). The other programs ranged from one year (Gignac et al., 2012) to two years (Cherniss et al., 2010). In other words, the EI training programs reviewed appear to realize that impacting an individual's level of emotional intelligence takes a long-term commitment to training. Developing new skills requires a continuous process of practice, feedback, and new behaviors (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2011). Further, a two-year study (Cherniss et al., 2010) indicated that the most significant gains in EI occurred during the second year of training. Top management and supervisors need to be supportive through this long-term process. The themes that emerged from this review of EI training programs are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Themes Emerging from Emotional Intelligence Training Programs**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
Process Oriented	Developing an EI training program should be considered a process
Active Learning	Much of the learning of EI comes from applying the tools learned in training sessions
Personal	Trainees must be willing to openly share personal information with others
Trust	The honest sharing of personal information requires a high degree of trust with others in the training class
Timing	EI training appears more effective when scheduled after the employ feels comfortable with the organization and his/her skill level
Long Term	EI training requires a long-term commitment from the trainee and their organization

## **Conclusion**

Goleman (1995) and others have suggested that emotional intelligence is essential for success in careers that involve significant social contact. This should be considered good news for sales management as emotional intelligence is measurable and trainable. Unfortunately, while generic tools for measuring EI levels are available, little guidance is available to guide the development of EI training programs for the sales profession. The significant contribution of this manuscript is providing an outline for developing such a training program in the field of sales grounded in a process suggested by The Consortium on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations (Cherniss et al., 1998).

An emotionally intelligent sales force will impact the entire organization because not only will salespeople be using their new competencies with customers, but they also will be more emotionally intelligent co-workers, direct reports, and leaders. The authors hope that these guidelines for developing emotional intelligence training in the sales profession will assist practitioners as they develop EI training programs and stimulate research on identifying more best practices in the field of EI training.

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