

Emotional Intelligence Case Study

Alice has been working as Corporate Counsel for Sterling Enterprises (SE), a US-based manufacturing firm with global presence, for over 10 years. SE has a long-standing reputation as a company that stands by its core values (respect, integrity, and excellence). These values have defined how SE works with its customers, have framed how staff members work with colleagues and have been a key part of the company's culture since its founding.

About three years ago, SE was sold to private equity. Since then, there has been a significant restructuring and the acquisition of two smaller companies to help improve the balance sheet. Part of the prior leadership team remained, but some talent, including the CEO and COO, have been appointed by the new owners. It is understood that the new owners are preparing the company for an eventual IPO. Dave, the new COO's primary mission is to build SE's value and prepare it to go public. He expects all functions, including corporate functions like legal, to focus on bottom-line performance, just as the profit centers of the business must do.

Alice, along with her colleagues representing Finance, Accounting and IT have been invited to a meeting to discuss ways to cut costs and streamline processes in each of their respective areas. When the meeting agenda was communicated a few weeks ago, Dave stated that he was looking forward to lots of group interaction and innovative thinking. About 10 minutes into the meeting, Alice realizes there will be little room for discussion. In fact, she starts to feel that the meeting is 100% aligned to re-affirming his pet projects and that he is not open to new ideas at all. Within 20-minutes of the meeting, the tone is set and it is clear Dave only wants to review the projects he has defined as being critical in each area, without much input.

When the Legal Department comes up, Dave mentions his plan to redistribute the workload and reduce reliance on outside counsel. Alice interjects with a different idea and offers a new approach to contract negotiations allowing the in-house team to focus on higher-value legal work. Dave shoots down Alice's idea down with, "I wish we had time to vet these ideas more fully but I think you would all agree, we've already identified what needs to be accomplished by the end of this fiscal year." Alice counters with some data she has collected and connects the projected cost savings on reducing contracting time to SE's overall financial objectives. She can tell Dave is very unhappy with her interjection.

Alice notices her colleagues as all of this is happening and sees them shutting down too. One of them, an attorney on Alice’s team, tries to support her idea and even mentions that he knows of several competitors who are moving towards using web-based systems with pre-defined work flows for standardized legal transactions – Paul tries hard to influence Dave giving lots of pertinent information. By this point, Dave becomes very quiet and just looks down – it is very uncomfortable for everybody. Paul continues but Dave says “we need to table this until another time.”

Self-Awareness	
Emotional Awareness:	Recognizing our emotions and their effect.
Accurate Self-Assessment:	Knowing one’s strengths and limits.
Self-Confidence:	A strong sense of one’s self-worth and capabilities.

1. What aspects of **Self-Awareness** are not being used in this situation by Dave, Alice or Paul?

2. What feedback would you give Dave, Alice or Paul to strengthen this dimension?

Self-Management	
Emotional Self-Control:	Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check.
Transparency:	An authenticity, openness and integrity – openly admits mistakes and confronts unethical behavior.
Adaptability:	Comfortable with ambiguity, flexible, copes with demands without losing focus.
Achievement:	High personal standards, constantly seeking improvement, continually learning.
Initiative:	Creates opportunities and will bend rules if necessary.
Optimism:	Expects the future to be brighter, seeing opportunities rather than threats.

1. Where are Dave, Alice, and Paul having the most difficulty with **Self-Management**?

2. What feedback would you give Dave, Alice or Paul to strengthen this dimension?

Social Awareness	
Empathy:	Attuned to the senses and emotional signals, listens well, comfortable with diversity.
Organizational Awareness:	Politically astute, detects crucial relationships and power relationships. Understands the guiding value and unspoken rules.
Service Orientation:	Fosters an emotional climate and encourages good relationships and direct contact with customers. Are always available.

1. How effective are Dave, Alice and Paul's **Social Awareness**?

2. What would a display of empathy and of organizational awareness have looked like in this situation?

Relationship Management	
Developing Others:	Shows genuine interest, understands goals, strengths and weaknesses.
Inspirational Leadership:	Articulates a compelling vision, embody what they ask of others and make work exciting.
Change Catalyst:	Recognizes the need for and strong advocate for change. Finds practical ways to overcome barriers.
Influence:	Persuasive, engaging, the right appeal, builds buy-in.
Conflict Management:	Surface conflict, view all sides, redirects energy.
Teamwork & Collaboration:	Pays attention to atmosphere, respectful, cooperative, builds spirit and forges close relationships.

1. What would effective influence and teamwork and collaboration have looked like in this situation?

2. How would you coach Dave, Alice and Paul to strengthen **Relationship Management**?

Summary

1. What are the likely business implications due to the lack of Emotional Intelligence demonstrated in this situation?