

PROFESSIONAL *development*

Emotional intelligence, women and leadership

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▲ Alison Crake

Early this year, I was delighted to be contacted by Professor Jane Turner OBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Teesside University, to ask if I would like to take part in the University's International Women's Day event. I was one of a number of women contacted, all of whom had featured in the inaugural Teesside Businesswomen Awards in November 2018 where my company, Crake and Mallon Funeral Service, was a finalist in the award for SME of the Year.

The overarching theme for the day was to be around building greater self awareness and confidence in 100 girls (aged 16-18 years) from the Tees Valley area, with the event being facilitated by Caroline Theobald CBE. For me, it was an honour and privilege to be invited to be involved in such an important event. This was only enhanced by the fact that it was taking place at the University where I studied for my Master's degree, plus International Women's Day (8 March) just happens to be my birthday what could be better?

Jane is passionate about the North East and considers part of her role is a fundamental responsibility to ensure that Teesside University plays its role in developing a pipeline of talented leaders of the future with the skills, knowledge and self-efficacy to problem-solve and tackle the intractable problems

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that young people inevitably face. Caroline Theobald CBE, who was to facilitate the day, has an equally impressive background. Caroline is Honorary Consul and Chair of the north east chapter of the Swedish Consul and Chair of the north east chapter of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce, as well as being co-Chair of the North East Initiative on Business Ethics, an independent resource with a focal point for good business behaviour.

Jane's plans for the day were to ensure that the event would provide an opportunity for the attendees to hear honest life stories from female business leaders working in a broad range of professions. My role was to deliver two workshops featuring emotional intelligence (EI) stemming from my dissertation for my Master's degree on EI and Leadership in the funeral profession.

What is emotional intelligence?

The topic of emotional intelligence can be complex and thought provoking, but the idea was to provide an outline to spark interest amongst the girls and to give them an idea of how emotional intelligence features in everyday life, not just in the workplace.

My workshop opened with an introduction to the four key elements of EI: Recognising, Using, Understanding and Managing emotions.

Looking at the key elements in the slide below, particularly in relation to recognising emotions, I was keen to get an understanding of the girls' thoughts on this. With such prevalent use of texts and emojis – could they still “read people” easily? We talked about emojis and their use and whether they make things easier to understand, or harder. Are they appropriate in the workplace? We had some interesting discussions around this – the majority of the girls felt that they could easily understand their friend's mood from a text message, but it could be very different with people they did not know well (and had no or little personal face-to-face interaction with).

Virtually all of them, at some point, had misinterpreted something that they had read (particularly on social media sites) and yet digital communication is still a preferred choice of communication – even to the point of “nexting” – ie texting or messaging someone who is in the



same room. However, all the girls agreed that they would be cautious about the use of emojis in the workplace (thankfully!).

According to 3M Corporation, 90% of sensory information sent to the brain is visual, so understandably digital communication (done well) can have a positive affect on how your key messages are retained by others. However, our career trajectories are invariably dependent on our abilities to make connections and interact with the people around us. Whilst occupational knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge is always important, we still need to be able to develop and build relationships with others, not just in the workplace but in our personal lives too.

Speech and Emotion

Tone	Meaning
Monotone	Boredom
Slow speed and pitch	Depression
High speed, emphatic pitch	Enthusiasm
Ascending tone	Surprise
Abrupt speech	Defensiveness
Terse, loud tone	Anger
High pitch, drawn-out speech	Disbelief

Nonverbal Clues

	What it looks like	What it suggests
Orientation	Facing towards you	Interest
	Turned slightly away	Closed off
Arms	Arms open	Openness
	Arms folded	Closed off
Posture	Leaning forward	Interest
	Leaning away from you	Rejection

How you really feel – and looking for clues in others

We talked about speech and emotion as well as nonverbal clues and what to look out for in face-to-face conversations. This can help us recognise and understand the emotions of others, but what about our own emotions?

Can we go beyond the obvious and identify exactly how we feel? During the session I asked the girls to think of a time when they were angry, sad, anxious or hurt and then describe it briefly to the rest of the workshop (if they felt they could). We then looked at the following descriptors. One of the girls described a time she was waiting for an examination result, one where she did not think she had done particularly well – she described herself as being “anxious”.

When the following table was displayed, she identified other emotions too. She was feeling worried (that she could have failed the exam), nervous (waiting for the result), stressed (that she might have to sit the exam again). By identifying these other emotions (rather than just describing herself as anxious), the girls were able to see that there are other descriptors that can apply to an expressed emotion and that, by exploring these other descriptors, they can often gain a better understanding of “what they feel and why”.

A List of Emotions

Go beyond the obvious to identify exactly what you're feeling.

Angry	Sad	Anxious	Hurt	Embarrassed	Happy
Grumpy	Disappointed	Afraid	Jealous	Isolated	Thankful
Frustrated	Mournful	Stressed	Betrayed	Self-conscious	Trusting
Annoyed	Regretful	Vulnerable	Isolated	Lonely	Comfortable
Defensive	Depressed	Confused	Shocked	Inferior	Content
Spiteful	Paralyzed	Bewildered	Deprived	Guilty	Excited
Impatient	Pessimistic	Skeptical	Victimized	Ashamed	Relaxed
Disgusted	Tearful	Worried	Aggrieved	Repugnant	Relieved
Offended	Dismayed	Cautious	Tormented	Pathetic	Elated
Irritated	Disillusioned	Nervous	Abandoned	Confused	Confident

gap in critical areas such as health and education, significant gender inequality persists in the workforce and in politics. Given current rates of change, the World Economic Forum's ‘Global Gender Gap Report 2017’ estimates it will be another 217 years before we achieve gender parity across the four areas of health, education, workforce and politics. It will take until 2095 to achieve global gender parity in the workplace, 80 more years until companies and governments are equally led by men and women and arguably, 80 more years of talent pipelines and professional promise not fully realized.

The young women attending the IWD event have an advantage over

The final part of our workshop involved the attendees being given a group task. The girls were given a relatable scenario with three possible approaches. One would suggest an overly analytical approach to problem solving, one an overly emotional approach and finally, one which would indicate an approach which integrated their thinking with their feelings. The majority of groups picked the latter, emotionally intelligent approach, although this was not always their first thought before getting into discussions with the others in their group. This in itself is useful, as the girls were clearly able to see that a collaborative, considered approach can be helpful when problem solving.

Our workshops concluded with a group discussion around the content, it was good to hear that the students had enjoyed the session – and that some of them had wished it had been longer!

In her opening address, Prof. Turner told the audience that, whilst women worldwide are closing the

many of their contemporaries and opportunities that are not afforded to other women worldwide and it was very clear that they were appreciative of that. It really was a great privilege to be part of such an inspiring event, the day itself was a great success and a great tribute to the hard work of Prof. Jane Turner and her team. As Jane said when she introduced the day – “The main aim of today is to realize the power of you through: listening, learning, sharing, laughing and engaging. Celebrate being female.”

For further information: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>