BOOK REVIEW

The Emotionally Intelligent Financial Advisor

By Hendrie Weisinger, Ph.D.
Dearborn Trade Publishing, 104 pages
$32.95

Reviewed by Lynn Biscott

Emotionally intelligent, you say? It's not enough for advisors to be knowledgeable, ethical, and proactive – now we have to be emotionally intelligent too? According to Hendrie Weisinger, you do if you want to be “able to turn setbacks into comebacks, to respond effectively to emotionally aroused clients – especially those that are angry and anxious – and to stay motivated and focused during turbulent times”.

But what is emotional intelligence? Former Harvard psychology professor Dr. Daniel Goleman popularized the concept in 1995. Emotional intelligence (or EI in Weisinger’s terms) refers to a distinct combination of emotional, personal and interpersonal skills and competencies that influence your ability to succeed with the demands and pressures of work and life.

While most people attribute their success to their mental abilities, research in psychology and human behaviour over the past 20 years has shown that emotional intelligence is actually a more significant factor. Those financial advisors looking to gain an edge over the competition will find some interesting suggestions here for gaining the trust of clients and prospects, dealing effectively with emotionally reactive clients, and responding positively to client criticism.

Hendrie Weisinger has consulted extensively throughout the securities industry for the past several years, and this slim volume is liberally laced with investment terminology and references (growing your EI portfolio, diversifying your emotional intelligence, developing your mutual motivation fund).

Weisinger outlines five key components (or core assets) of emotional intelligence: high self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, interpersonal expertise, and emotional mentoring. The theory is that, by becoming aware of our own emotions, we can begin to understand what caused them and what behaviours they stimulate. Self-awareness in turn helps us to manage our own emotions by taking control of negative feelings and harnessing positive ones. Through this process, we learn how to read the emotions of others, understand where they came from and where they might lead. Managing our own emotions helps us develop the skills to manage
others and help them to manage themselves.

The Emotionally Intelligent Financial Advisor provides lots of practical exercises (“On the Street”), including tips such as: “Give yourself a motivational self-statement each morning as you first sit down to your desk”; “during your next team meeting, practice inclusion by soliciting thoughts from all team members”; and “write down a positive definition of criticism and put it on your desk”.

The book finishes with a short blueprint for applying the EI concepts to your daily work routine. The blueprint consists of a series of steps that must be performed the night before you go to work, including writing down three statements that will help you start your day on a positive note, practicing relaxation for 10 minutes, listing three “intentions” for the day, and making a list of emotions and how you will manage them during the day.

For some advisors, these concepts may seem trite. After all, we’ve heard the same ideas in different contexts from many other motivational speakers and writers over the years. What makes this book different, however, is the detailed application of the concepts to the everyday life of the financial advisor. Weisinger obviously knows his turf – he explains how an advisor can follow his approach when making cold calls, dealing with clients who are upset when the market is down, or trying to get more support from their branch manager.

Advisors who are looking for an approach designed exclusively for their business environment may want to check this book out.

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