



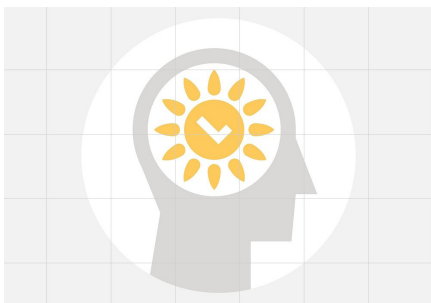
Don't neglect emotional intelligence, says **Sean Butler** – it's a critical quality for any good businessperson

Conventional wisdom holds that business success is the simple result of hard skills, clear thinking and bold risk-taking. However, recent research suggests that emotional intelligence – sometimes derided as a 'soft' skill – is also a key ingredient in a leader's effectiveness, and therefore in the success of a project or business.

#### Emotional intelligence is the ability to:

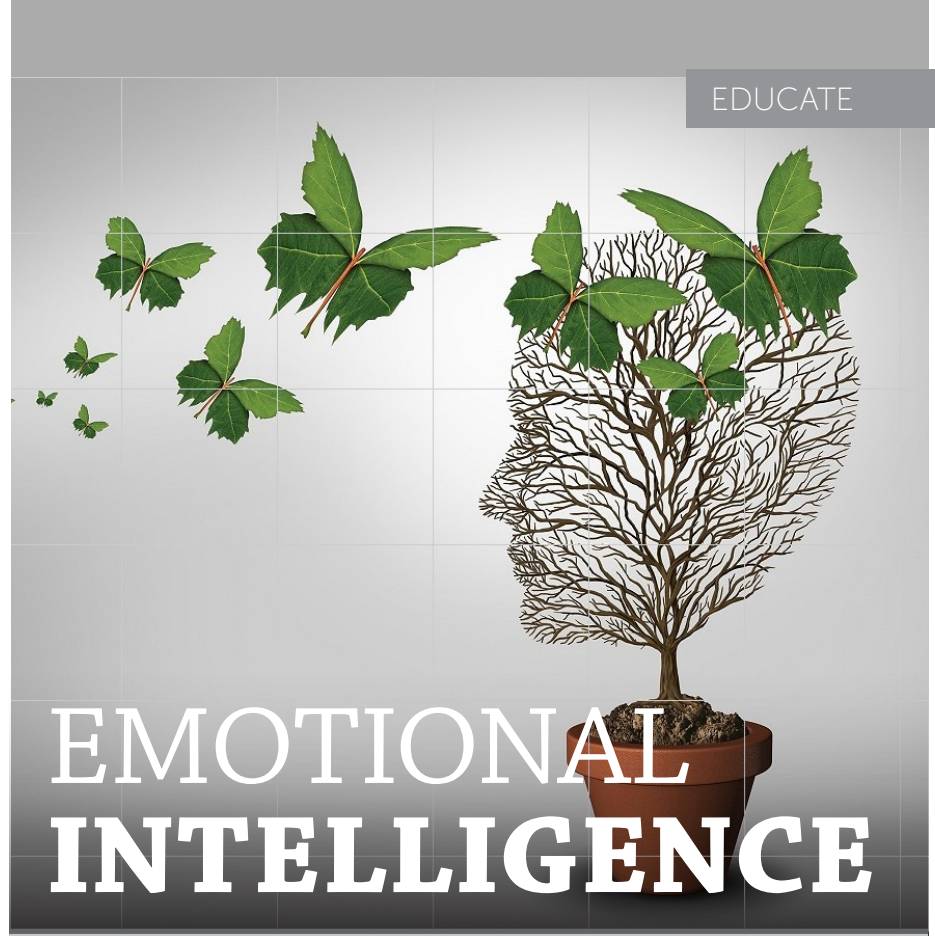
- Recognise, understand and manage our own emotions.
- Recognise, understand and influence the emotions of others.

Having had my own landscape company for 25 years, I have found that training designers to take a good brief is one of the hardest things to do. Usually fresh out of university or college, they come with an amazing talent of fresh and creative ideas. It is our job to bring these ideas down to earth – and to clients' budgets. Over the years, I have been training my designers and my landscapers to be able to recognise, understand and influence the emotions of others, as well as managing their own.



A carefully worded sentence can have a very positive outcome when liaising with clients. Being able to hold back, listen to customers carefully and digest takes experience, which only comes with time – but it can also be sped up through in-house training.

Inexperienced designers and landscapers often say the first thing that comes into their head when asked a question by a client. Being excited at the prospect to win a contract or a



commission for a design takes over their own emotional intelligence. Designers, in my opinion, should always seek advice from a contractor before giving any indication of cost to a client. It is often the case that they want the design, but give too low an estimated budget to win them over. Emotional intelligence gives you the ability to think logically – and logical thinking helps to result in a good outcome for the client, the designer and the landscaper.

#### There are five attributes associated with emotional intelligence:

1. Self-awareness: Understanding your strengths and weaknesses, and how your actions affect others.
2. Self-regulation: Exercising your emotions – and also exercising restraint and control.
3. Empathy: Connecting with others on an emotional level.
4. Motivation: Being self-motivated, resilient, optimistic and flexible.
5. People skills: Resolving conflicts, collaborating with others, demonstrating leadership and creating a positive atmosphere.

By seeking out employees with a high level of emotional intelligence, businesses can create a

“**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE GIVES YOU THE ABILITY TO THINK LOGICALLY, WHICH ALWAYS RESULTS IN A GOOD OUTCOME FOR THE CLIENT, THE DESIGNER AND THE LANDSCAPER**”

more positive workplace, increase employee retention, and install better project performance. Increasing emotional intelligence within your staff is also proven to reduce lost time through absenteeism, and accidents in the workplace. If you employ landscapers or designers who possess the ability to influence a prospective client's emotions, you will greatly improve your win-to-build ratio. With everything to gain, assess your organisation today and ask yourself: "Is my business intelligent enough?"

#### ABOUT SEAN BUTLER

Sean Butler is a landscape designer and director of Cube 1994. With a background in civil engineering, Sean has an in-depth understanding of the design, construction and maintenance of the physical and naturally built landscape.

[www.cube1994.com](http://www.cube1994.com)