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WHAT IS THERE OTHER THAN BRAINS AND HARD WORK?

Have you ever wondered if you are your firm's best-kept secret? Do you wonder if brains and hard work are enough for you to succeed and get ahead at your firm?

When I started as an investment banker in 1974, I believed that brains and hard work were what got me a position at Morgan Stanley. On the first day of work, it took me about 10 minutes to realize that the woman to my right was smarter than I was and the man to my left was working harder than I was. I thought, "Oh no—there is no way I am smarter than that woman, and I can't work at that guy's pace. I might be toast."

I concluded that there must be something else to distinguish beyond the brains and hard work that got me (and everyone else) the job. The emotional intelligence quotient, or EQ, card was the only and the best that I could play.

I learned about EQ both by being part of a big family and by working with really bright people in the Navy. I grew up in a family of 10 children in

Sparta, Wisconsin. I quickly learned how to listen. I became adaptable by relating to my siblings, who were different ages and had different interests. My parents were schoolteachers as young adults. They each taught eight grades in one-room country schoolhouses in rural Wisconsin. My parents taught us to work as a team to get things done in our home.

After graduating from Marquette University, I joined the U.S. Navy and served as an officer for five years on the nuclear energy staff of Admiral Rickover.

My first month in the Navy was very similar to my first month at Morgan Stanley. I realized that to survive and thrive, I needed more than brain power alone. By being friendly, asking and offering to help others, and creating a network, I was able to solve problems more quickly and put issues in perspective. This same approach proved effective later as I started in a professional services firm.

Early in my career, I saw how EQ (or the lack of it) was more powerful than IQ. For example, we had been trying hard to win a mergers-and-acquisitions (M&A) mandate from the Walt Disney Company. After a number of attempts, we finally persuaded the CEO of Disney to visit Morgan Stanley's New York headquarters. The head of our mergers-and-acquisitions division said we should put our most brilliant M&A banker in charge of the meeting—let's call him Bill.

Bill ordered up reams of analyses and created a huge presentation of M&A ideas, giving the CEO his best ideas. The CEO disliked all of Bill's ideas and said that he had his own pet acquisition idea, which he had not discussed with any other bankers. After the CEO told Bill his specific target and plan, Bill looked at the CEO with a straight face and asked, "Now why would you do a Mickey Mouse thing like that?"

The CEO turned red in the face, stood up, and left our building. Anyone with an ounce of EQ would have known better than to make a sarcastic remark about the icon of the potential client's company. Bill might have been very good at analyzing acquisitions, but he was a total dunce when it came to EQ.