

# Competency & Emotional Intelligence Quarterly

THE JOURNAL OF PERFORMANCE THROUGH PEOPLE

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## Benchmarking supplement

Posted to our journal subscribers alongside this issue is our latest 48-page benchmarking report. This draws on our latest research findings into employers' uses of competencies; the key issues associated with the introduction, use and revision of competency frameworks; and the latest trends and developments.

that this is not statistically significant. Results for length of service show a trend towards a “less well” perception as time in the organisation increases, with a degree of “honeymoon” mentality among those with up to six months’ service. There is also a general decline in perceived wellness with age, with a higher degree of perceived wellness in the under-35 age group, a trend that is independent of length of service. There is also a clear rise in perceived wellness from the group closest to retirement age.

There were no significant differences by job grade across the entire survey population, which included: administrative staff; junior, middle and senior management; and junior and senior technical professionals. There were differences between job levels within organisations, but sometimes these were in opposite directions in different organisations.

Corporate Heart believes that its research demonstrates that there is no single picture of healthy high performance – it is different for each business sector measured. The issues of destructive behaviour, poor health, disengaged communication and management competency all featured in the question data and free comments. These are challenges that organisations have consistently tried to address, but may not have had the dialogue to discuss the issues. Corporate Heart believes that its Wellness Map<sup>®</sup> provides a means of doing this.

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#### Further information

*Organisation wellness survey findings*, available from the Corporate Heart website, [www.corporate-heart.co.uk/ch\\_rd.pdf](http://www.corporate-heart.co.uk/ch_rd.pdf), or from Pauline Crawford, tel: 020 8998 7032 or 07976 512117, email: [info@corporate-heart.co.uk](mailto:info@corporate-heart.co.uk).

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# Emotional intelligence and 360-degree assessment

Geetu Bharwaney explores the use of 360-degree processes for measuring emotional intelligence, drawing on her experience as a practitioner of the EQ-360 tool, a multirater measure modelled on the Bar-On EQ-i.

**T**here are three ways of assessing an individual’s emotional intelligence – self-report questionnaires, ability tests and multirater instruments, also known as 360-degree assessment.

The advantages and disadvantages of each of these forms of assessment have been summarised by the present author in her book on emotional intelligence<sup>1</sup>. The same source also provides a summary of the major emotional intelligence tools, their potential applications and developments in their respective research underpinnings.

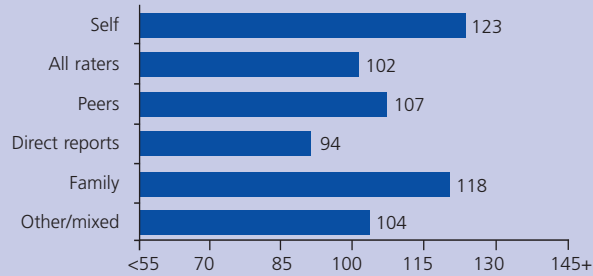
For practitioners who are debating the possible use of 360-degree assessments of emotional intelligence, this article outlines the value, mechanics and potential risks of introducing such assessments. In addition, seasoned human resources practitioners already using 360-degree assess-

ment of emotional intelligence will find that this article raises some fundamental and philosophical questions. Some of these questions have wider ramifications for the use of 360-degree measures that do not involve the measurement of emotional intelligence.

The 360-degree assessment of emotional intelligence is defined by the author as: “a *whole-life* assessment, *amenable to improvement* which involves *highly specific feedback*”.

The reflections contained in this article are based on use of the Bar-On EQ-360<sup>2</sup>, a multirater tool of emotional intelligence. While many of its themes will be relevant to other emotional intelligence tools, the subtleties are directly linked to the way in which multirater perspectives are presented in the Bar-On EQ-360 tool.

### 1. Total EQ scores from 31 raters and rates



Extract from Bar-On EQ-360 Resource Report, published by Multi Health Systems Inc., Toronto.

### VALUE OF 360-DEGREE ASSESSMENT

The use of 360-degree processes can be extremely attractive. The process of finding out what others think is enough to pique human curiosity for the person being rated (hereafter referred to as the “ratee”) and for the people doing the rating (the “raters”). These processes tend to be highly automated so they can be implemented for thousands of people relatively easily. As the 360-degree feedback process typically involves an individual ratee talking about themselves and being given dedicated “air time” in their feedback session, this adds to the appeal of introducing 360-degree assessment as part of the support for an employee’s development.

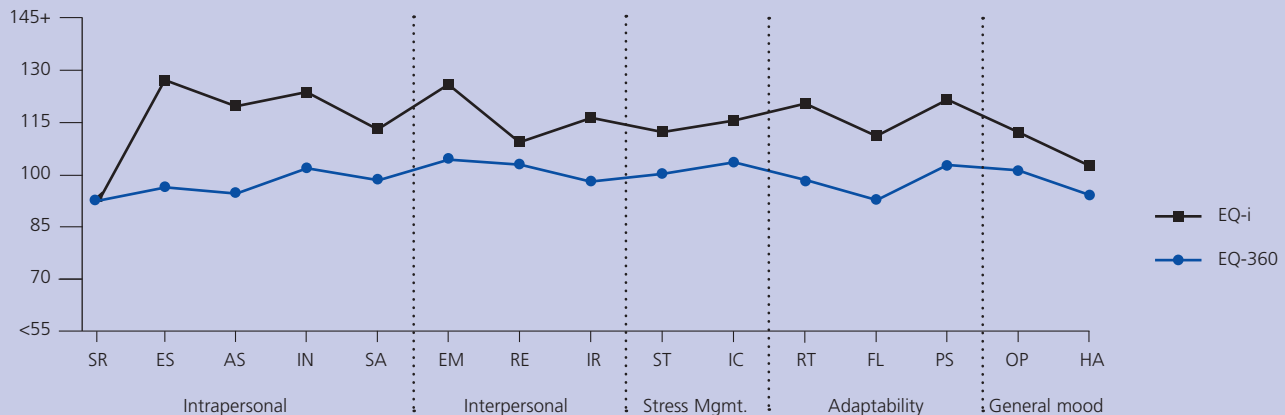
However, looking beyond these initial points of ease of use, it is appropriate to identify the *specific* value of a 360-degree assessment of someone’s emotional intelligence when such assessment occurs outside the formal performance management processes<sup>3</sup>. The specific value is best summed up as: *a whole-life assessment, amenable to improvement, that involves highly specific feedback*. Each of these points is discussed in turn.

#### A. Whole-life assessment

Unlike other 360-degree processes that are directly linked to competencies, 360-degree assessment of emotional intelligence is directly linked to a person’s general functioning. Therefore, a ratee receives feedback across the full range of skills and behaviours in their daily functioning. Because emotional intelligence is defined as an “array of emotional, personal and social competencies which influence our ability to cope effectively with daily demands and pressures”<sup>4</sup>, a 360-degree assessment of emotional intelligence provides multiple perspectives on how someone is functioning in their daily life.

In other words, such assessments go beyond other 360-degree tools of competence assessment (for example, those that concentrate on leadership or team working). The assessment of emotional intelligence through 360-degree processes focuses not only on the way in which someone is managing a team or fulfilling their technical function, but goes beyond that to encompass how they are coping, both on the

### 2. Ratee’s and raters’ scores for all 15 EQ components



Note: the key to the abbreviations can be found in box 3.

Extract from Bar-On EQ-360 Resource Report, published by Multi Health Systems Inc., Toronto.

inside and the outside. Surely, this is of value to managers and leaders from the full range of occupational roles?

While it is ideal for managers and leaders to engage in open communication with their direct reports and peers about their performance, such relationships do not exist as the norm in business. Additionally, as there is scope in EQ-360 degree assessment for a ratee to involve their family members and friends, a wider assessment can be provided, together with the possibility to become aware of the degree of “consistency” of func-

tioning across the multiple roles that the individual fulfils in their life. This point is explored further in the section below on the developmental bias of the assessor.

**B. Amenable to improvement**

Because we know that emotional intelligence increases throughout life, scores are definitely amenable to improvement by the feedback recipient, unlike other 360-degree assessments that may have some factors that are less amenable to change. Gender and age effects have been

**3. Scores by each rater group for all 15 EQ components**

	Self	Peer	Direct reports	Family	Other/mixed	All 360 raters
<b>Intrapersonal</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>104*</b>	<b>89*</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>102*</b>	<b>99*</b>
Self-regard (SR)	95	99	87	111*	98	95
Emotional self-awareness (ES)	129	105*	88*	118*	99*	98*
Assertiveness (AS)	123	106*	88*	110*	97*	97*
Independence (IN)	127	107*	94*	116*	110*	104*
Self-actualization (SA)	114	102*	95*	111	101*	100*
<b>Interpersonal</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>99*</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>108*</b>	<b>106*</b>
Empathy (EM)	128	115*	103*	120	108*	109*
Social responsibility (RE)	111	112	103*	115	108	108
Interpersonal relationship (IR)	119	105*	90*	113	104*	100*
<b>Stress management</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>108*</b>	<b>102*</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>106*</b>	<b>106*</b>
Stress tolerance (ST)	114	106	96*	117	104	103*
Impulse control (IC)	118	108	108	116	107*	108
<b>Adaptability</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>104*</b>	<b>92*</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>106*</b>	<b>101*</b>
Reality testing (RT)	124	103*	89*	116	109*	100*
Flexibility (FL)	110	96*	90*	112	97*	95*
Problem-solving (PS)	125	109*	97*	120	109*	105*
<b>General mood</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>99</b>
Optimism (OP)	113	102*	102*	112	99*	102*
Happiness (HA)	101	98	96	109	95	97
<b>Total EQ</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>107*</b>	<b>94*</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>104*</b>	<b>102*</b>

\*Denotes score differences of more than 10 points, considered to be statistically significant.

**Technical note:**

The numbers are based on a normal distribution standardised by age and gender norms, where the mean is 100 and the standard deviation is 15.

researched in the assessments that ratees receive, so a number of meaningful comparisons can be made.

### C. Highly specific feedback

The content of an EQ-360 is entirely quantitative; therefore, it is easy to identify where there are significant differences in self-perception. Boxes 1 to 3 provide illustrations of such differences, based on the results of an EQ-360 report for client A (see the next section below for further information about this client).

Box 1 provides a visual summary of the total EQ scores for client A for the various categories of rater. The scores are averaged across all five composite components and the 15 individual components that make up the EQ-360. Even at this first level of analysis, the scores differ considerably – from 94, in the case of client A's direct reports, to 123, in the case of his assessment of his own EQ.

Box 2 takes this analysis a stage further by presenting the scores for each of the 15 constituent EQ-360 components, comparing the ratee's assessments with a combined result for those of his 31 raters. The most extreme difference here relates to the "emotional self-awareness" component, where the ratee's score of 129 contrasts with his combined raters' score of 98.

Finally, box 3 provides detailed results for each of the rater groups, together with the ratee's assessments, for all 15 EQ-360 components.

Having identified and discussed these three differentiating factors, the user of 360-degree assessments of emotional intelligence may wish to compare their chosen method of assessment with these three points.

### Mechanics for success

Documented elsewhere are concrete checklists for the careful and successful introduction of 360-degree assessment<sup>5</sup>.

The 360-degree assessment of emotional intelligence, like other forms of 360-degree assessment, provides a significant amount of personal data. The challenge is how to bring it into a form that will be meaningful and helpful. It is suggested that while having a clear development plan is valuable, this may or may not be the end output of a 360-degree assessment of emotional intelligence.

An essential question that arises is how to interpret scores based on the ratees' own assessments that are markedly higher or lower than those of the other raters.

Take the example of **client A**. He is in a career transition and wanted to seek feedback from many people in his life. He selected 50 raters and, from these, 31 completed an online EQ questionnaire. Boxes 1 to 3, discussed above, show the headlines of his profile.

It is tempting to interpret the higher scores that he gives himself as indicating self-delusion or an over-inflated ego. However, because the assessment involves a 360-degree assessment of *emotional intelligence*, other more subtle interpretations of these differences between the ratee and other raters come into play.

Instead of inflated self-perceptions and a lack of self-awareness, 360-degree assessments of emotional intelligence would interpret these high scores as indicating that the ratee feels some pressure to be effectively functioning in all aspects of EQ. At the same time, he

## IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCE 1: GETTING THE LANGUAGE RIGHT

The appropriate language for introducing 360-degree processes will depend on the goals of the assessment. The table below provides a comparison of the ways in which performance appraisal and individual development processes (including 360-degree feedback of emotional intelligence) can be used.

### Performance appraisal can be used:

- to identify clear, specific goals for performance;
- to establish measures to determine outcomes and results;
- to review the degree to which outcomes and results were achieved; and
- to determine performance-related achievements and therefore the bonus due.

### Individual development processes can be used:

- to identify skills, competencies, behaviours and practices to be more effective;
- to measure current and desired levels of skills, competencies, behaviours and practices needed to achieve results more easily;
- to assess where improvement is needed to achieve desired results; and
- to identify the climate that will bring out the best results from individuals, teams and key stakeholders.

is experiencing internal tensions and wants to avoid drawing attention to his developing EQ skills. The fact that he gives himself higher scores in some assessment areas than conferred by the other raters can also be seen as a reflection of the raters' own circumstances. Some of the raters are unlikely to know the ratee well enough to assess client A accurately. Their own shortcomings in emotional intelligence skills mean that some raters lack the ability to assess another person's emotional intelligence.

The results of client A's 360-degree assessment also reveal some areas where he has rated himself more poorly than his raters have done.

The standard interpretation of such results in non-emotional intelligence 360-degree processes would be to infer that he lacks confidence in his own skills and abilities, lacks self-awareness and tends to under-value his own abilities.

The more subtle approach of feedback linked to emotional intelligence would show, instead, that the ratee is experiencing a major crisis and does not feel able to cope. Other raters lack the ability to assess his emotional intelligence and, instead, have based their favourable scores on the outward show that client A is making in pretending to function effectively. More generally, differences in scores between different groups of raters may reflect the fact that many aspects of daily life are situation-specific and everything is relative. Some people may consider someone else to be better at coping than they would rate themselves, so the ratee gets higher than expected ratings.

The range of possible interpretations is endless. It does raise the issue of care in both interpreting the results of 360-degree processes, and preparing to give the ratee feedback on their results. This raises the matter of the potential risks involved.

### Potential risks

The use of 360-degree processes presents risks as well as benefits to the client, and to any organisations sponsoring them. This article examines four such risks and challenges:

- whether, and by what means, the results are shared with the raters;
- the costs may be greater than the benefits;
- the use of a 360-degree process as a replacement for dialogue and communication; and

- the person providing the 360-degree feedback may not be sufficiently skilled in this task.

**Sharing findings with raters:** There is a risk involved in going back to the raters. Should the ratee share the results of the 360-degree process, the personal development plan based on the results, or nothing? What is the appropriate method of saying "thank you" when the anonymity of the raters has been guaranteed?

It is recommended that extreme care is exercised in the ways in which ratees follow up with their raters. From the author's experience, it is better to share broad insights rather than specific results (and definitely not the report itself), otherwise the ratees tend to watch out for improvements.

**Costs may be greater than benefits:** Assuming that 10 people contribute to a multirater assessment of someone's emotional intelligence – even based on 15 minutes per person completing a questionnaire and minor administration time – this represents around three hours of organisational time investment to create one person's 360-degree feedback results. It is fair to question the value of such a high level of time investment if the benefits cannot be fully realised. One of the benefits that sounds fine in theory but is hard to implement in practice is having a clear development plan. From experience, with the depth and quantity of feedback that will be covered in a feedback debriefing session, this plan needs to be prepared while the results are being fed back if it is going to be a tool that the ratee will actually use in practice later on.

Advocates of 360-degree feedback processes for emotional intelligence need to be clear about the potential benefits. Here is a suggestion of four specifics, all within a developmental context:

- identifying areas of struggle in individual functioning and taking steps to address these;
- identifying areas of strength and taking steps to fully realise these;
- assessing areas of inconsistency of approach to decide which behaviours to change; and
- assessing areas of congruence to decide which behaviours to keep.

**The 360-degree process is a replacement for conversation:** Ultimately, if a dialogue exists between a person and their colleagues, then they are likely to have channels of communication

open for feedback. Sadly, many people do not have these less formal means of receiving feedback. The challenge is how to make sure that the 360-degree assessment process runs side by side with informal dialogue, and does not supplant it.

**Developmental bias of the assessor:** There is a real risk that the session in which the ratee receives the feedback from the multi-rater process will be influenced by the poor emotional intelligence skills of the person providing the feedback, by their developmental bias, or both.

In an earlier article in this journal, the author outlined aspects of “emotionally intelligent helping” and picked out some specific EQ combinations in the make-up of the person providing the assessment and feedback conversation that may lead to success in providing

helpful dialogue<sup>6</sup>. She also outlined some combinations of EQ skill levels that may get in the way of the provision of effective feedback. The factors that are most pertinent here are both the EQ of the person providing the feedback, as well as their developmental bias.

This bias emerges in the discussion of the comparison between self-ratings and other people’s ratings. The question is: “What is the appropriate way to review differences in raters’ results?” This is more than a philosophical point. The basis from which the assessor considers such differences in ratings will influence their whole approach towards reviewing the results of a 360-degree assessment of emotional intelligence. These potential biases are described below as three *lenses* through which a client’s 360-degree results can be viewed by the person charged with giving feedback to them, each with a different outcome and theme.

## IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCE 2: FURTHER REFERENCES ON 360-DEGREE ASSESSMENT

Adapted from a list provided at the site <http://www.takechargeinc.com/enewsltr.htm>.

**360-degree feedback: the powerful new model for employee assessment and performance improvement, Mark R Edwards and Ann J Ewen, American Management Association, 1996.**

This book is a reference source about 360-degree feedback and related processes. It teaches a step-by-step process of how to go about designing a 360-degree process. It also covers the common pitfalls, what to avoid, and the criticisms often made about the process. The book has an extensive glossary of terms, together with an appendix of sample competency assessments.

**360-degree feedback; strategies, tactics and techniques for developing leaders, John J Jones and William L Bearley, Human Resource Development Press, 1996.**

John Jones and Bill Bearley provide the rationale and backdrop for using 360-degree feedback. They discuss the various uses of multirater feedback, such as in team building, assessing training needs, and assessing the outcomes of training; they also show how to forge links between performance appraisal and 360-degree feedback. Appendix A provides a “logistical-planning worksheet” for 360-degree feedback.

**Maximizing the value of 360-degree feedback: a process for successful individual and organizational development, Walter W Tornow, the Center for Creative Leadership.**

The Center for Creative Leadership, long leaders in assessment, has put together a volume that covers all aspects of the 360-degree process. This book is for readers who are not knowledgeable about 360-degree assessment. It provides a practical understanding of the theories behind 360-degree assessment, and discusses all of the important questions regarding its

implementation and use. The key to understanding the 360-degree process is that it is not a tool for single usage, rather it is a process that helps the person and the organisation improve productivity and performance.

**Should 360-degree feedback be used only for developmental purposes?, David Bracken, Center for Creative Leadership, 1997.**

With the growing use of 360-degree, or multirater, feedback in organisations today, there is much disagreement about the ways in which it should be employed: strictly to help the manager develop or also to help those who work with the manager decide such issues as pay and promotion? The articles in this publication, written by professionals who have extensive experience with 360-degree processes, span the range of the debate – from development-only to development-plus.

**Using 360-degree feedback in organizations: an annotated bibliography, John W Fleenor and Jeffrey Michael Prince, Centre for Creative Leadership, 1997.**

This work introduces the multirater feedback approach through 56 annotated reviews of articles and books, each of which is about half a page in length. It includes a glossary of the subject, and concludes by providing answers to frequently asked questions. All in all, it represents a good overview of the subject.

**Power of 360-degrees feedback, David A Waldman and Leanne E Atwater, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998.**

Based on the authors’ vast consulting experience with top companies, you will learn: if, when, and how to implement feedback; how to solve and avoid problems with the process; what the impact will be on your organisation’s culture; its effect on individual employees; and how to use the feedback to get results. Sample surveys and feedback reports show you what types of questions to ask and how to present your feedback results effectively.

### Lens 1: Consistency

*Basic premise* – the optimal way of functioning involves being consistent with all people in one’s daily life, across all roles and contexts, so that people know where they stand and know who you are.

*Success measure* – the extent to which scores from different rater groups overlap closely: the closer they overlap the better.

*Overlooked* – the comparison between self and observer ratings. It is of no consequence how you regard yourself; what is most important is how people from different rater categories perceive you.

### Lens 2: Congruence

*Basic premise* – we are what we are. Optimal functioning is having a self-perception that closely mirrors other people’s perceptions.

*Success measure* – how tightly overlapping self-perception is with each rater group: the closer they are the better.

*Overlooked* – nothing. All ratings are important and the further away your self-rating is from others’ perceptions the more complex, and the less effectively, you are functioning.

### Lens 3: Situational choices

*Basic premise* – every set of relationships has a different set of requirements. Optimal functioning is being able to choose appropriately how to respond and react to different people and situations. Each of the people we interact with will therefore see different skills and strengths depending on what they have experienced.

*Success criteria* – alignment of personal functioning with the demands of a particular rater group. All score differences are entirely possible and may indicate effective functioning. Success criteria have to be decided by the individual client, based on the demands of the different roles they have in life.

*Overlooked* – self-perception is not as important as reviewing in detail the specific scores in each rater group.

There may be scope for being able to adopt all three perspectives in reviewing 360-degree assessment results. The practitioner is advised to elicit from the client at the outset which of these three

they aspire to, as this can influence the discussion. Otherwise, client and feedback-giver may be speaking different languages.

David Whyte, the poet, once said that many people try to keep two different personalities going at work – their work self and the real self. He estimated that this takes double the energy to sustain rather than just sticking with one personality and way of being.

### Conclusion

In this article, the author has explained some specifics around the 360-degree assessment of emotional intelligence. These will help the users of such measures to introduce them effectively.

At a time when more and more leaders need to develop their levels of self-awareness to cope with an increasingly complex business environment, the number of tools for assessing emotional intelligence is expanding. In parallel is a growth in the desire to have dialogue and conversation about issues that matter at all levels within organisations. Meaningful dialogue can be aided by providing feedback on individuals’ emotional intelligence, where 360-degree processes provide some of this input. However, high levels of care and sensitivity are required to introduce and use such 360-degree measures.

Before the reader embarks on the use of such measures, the author advocates stopping and considering the following questions:

- What is the appropriate language for describing scores that are higher or lower than the ratee’s own assessments?
- What is the specific value of introducing this tool now?
- How will I minimise the risks outlined here (of ratees sharing findings; of high time costs; of the possibility that the process replaces conversation)?
- What do I personally regard as optimal in 360-degree results in relation to the three lenses of consistency, congruence and situational choices, and what does my client regard as the optimal approach?

As with most things, such tools can be dangerous and risky in the wrong hands.

The developmental perspective of the assessor merits further exploration and the author would value comment and debate on the three lenses for reviewing 360-degree feedback on emotional intelligence.

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**Notes**

- Chapter 3 and Appendix 3 in *Emotionally intelligent living*, Geetu Orme, Crown House Publishing, 2001.
- The Bar-On EQ-360 is published by Multi Health Systems Inc, Toronto, Canada. It is a multirater assessment tool of emotional intelligence authored by Dr Reuven Bar-On and Dr Rich Handley. It can accommodate the use of between three and 50 raters across five categories of raters – manager, peer, direct report, family/friend, other. All results are presented quantitatively, and the tool is modelled on the Bar-On EQ-i, which has 19 years of underpinning research confirming its validity and reliability as an assessment tool of emotional intelligence. The Bar-On EQ-i has been reviewed in *Buros Mental Measurements Yearbook* ([www.unl.edu/buros/](http://www.unl.edu/buros/)), a well-established journal where psychometric tests are peer-reviewed. It is the only emotional intelligence assessment tool that has held up to professional scrutiny at this level.
- While some writers advocate that 360-degree feedback can be used for both evaluative and developmental purposes, the author takes the view that emotional intelligence assessment can only be provided for developmental reasons.

4. Adapted from Bar-On EQ-i Technical Manual, 2001.

5. See, for example, the British Psychological Society's guidelines contained in its *360-degree feedback: guidelines for best practice*, [www.psychtesting.org.uk](http://www.psychtesting.org.uk).

6. See "Emotionally intelligent helping", Geetu Bharwaney, *Competency & Emotional Intelligence*, vol. 11 no.1, autumn 2003, pp.27–32.

**References and resources**

- *Bar-On EQ-360 Technical Manual*.
- *360-degree feedback: guidelines for best practice*, British Psychological Society, [www.psychtesting.org.uk](http://www.psychtesting.org.uk).
- *The thin book of 360 feedback: a manager's guide*, Michelle Leduff Collins, Thin Book Publishing Company, 2000. This is an excellent resource for handing out to managers involved in the 360-degree assessment process. The publisher offers discounts on large orders.
- Bar-On EQ-i and Bar-On EQ-360 training is offered by Ei World – see [www.eiworld.org](http://www.eiworld.org) for details of forthcoming workshops; the next is being held on 14 to 17 December 2004.

**INDEX TO VOLUME 11**

**Key:** This index is in three parts, covering subjects, authors and employing organisations. Each entry gives the *issue number*, followed by the page reference (*Benchmarking* refers to the separate annual benchmarking report for 2003/04 sent to subscribers). Back numbers are available from Customer Services, tel: 020 8662 2000; email: [customer.services@lexisnexis.co.uk](mailto:customer.services@lexisnexis.co.uk).

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