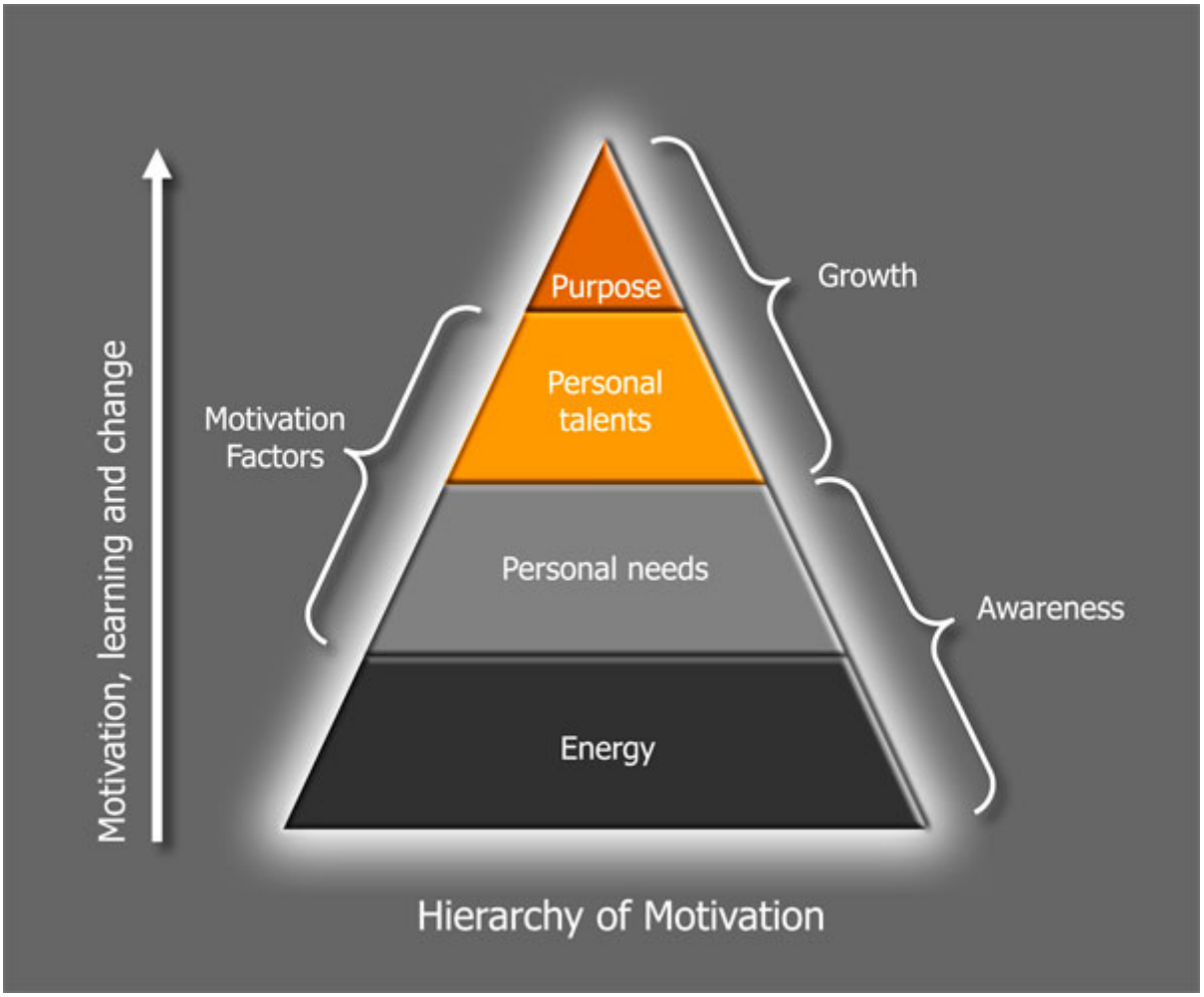
MOTIVATION FACTOR

Whitepaper
for the
Hierarchy of Motivation



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Choice of method

Appreciative Inquiry

The focal point in executing the Motivation Factor™ process is based on Appreciative Inquiry, also known as AI. The starting point is David Cooperrider's theory, which has partly inspired, partly supports the content and choice of method in the Motivation Factor™ cycle.

David Cooperrider uses as his point of departure what has been proven to work for human beings and in organisations. He argues that we should move the focus from the problems and deficiencies to resource and value thinking. In this respect, he works from the idea that the speed of our development is dependent on how we perceive the day tomorrow. The brighter we perceive it, the faster we will develop in a positive direction, and the opposite: the darker, we perceive it, the faster we will develop in a negative direction. It is thus important to create bright, strong and positive expectations about the future, as they animate us to positive acts in the present.

His theory and experience is that by focusing on what doesn't work, we get stuck deeper in the problem, which means that we are not able to see solutions or grow. By focusing on the problem, we become blinded and persist in whatever doesn't work.

Instead we ought to focus on what does work – what creates life and value. We should especially focus on the circumstances and conditions that allow us to perform well, and the strengths, resources and competences we use when we perform at the top of our abilities.

Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive psychology is a field within psychology concerned with thinking. Cognitive refers to the processes of recognition – in other words, the processes taking place in the brain (thinking, experience), which the person is usually able to process consciously.

Cognitive psychology is an important part of positive psychology, as it is a learning theory and method, delivering "guidance for actions", in terms of creating positive development. Cognitive psychology supports our choice of coaching, as a learning environment providing optimal conditions for reflection, self-knowledge and action.

Cognitive psychology has its root in the 1960s, as a continuation of the classical behavioural psychology, but differs from the latter by not only being interested in human's external behaviour. The cognitive psychology is interested in inner cognitive processes, such as experiences, memory, thinking and language, as being important for how we interpret our surroundings and what it means for our behaviour.

It assumes that people look for a meaning in all the impressions they are presented with in their lives. We want to make sense of the world, for which reason we must explain and rationalise until we are able to make a connection between things. It is thus through the thought-process that the world makes sense and becomes clear to us. We select, interpret and connect experiences, based on our own inner logic and according to cognitive psychology, it happens on the basis of cognitive framework (models of the world).

When we are talking about cognitive coaching, we refer to the method that focuses on optimising our thought processes, so that our way of explaining, models of the world and need

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to fulfil our needs – and accordingly behaviour –will benefit us in terms of creating well-being for ourselves and the people around us.

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Underlying empiricism and theory

During the last couple of decades, groundbreaking research and knowledge has been done and acquired regarding human awareness and behaviour on one hand and basic function and significance on the other.

This is, among other things, because science has integrated research in the human mind and behaviour (psychology) with research in the brain's anatomy and functions (neuroscience) in new ways. Additionally, the access to advanced technology, such as scanning, helps us understand the relationship between thoughts, emotions, sensation and behaviour and the brain processes, which take place in each person's brain.

One of the most groundbreaking discoveries is that the brain is plastic – in other words workable and flexible. The brain has unheard-of capacity in the sense that new learning creates new connections in the brain during a lifetime. The notion that there is a continuous decline in the brain capacity and the ability to learn after the teenage years has effectively been demolished. Lifelong learning both provides a meaning – and results.

The Motivation Factor™ method has been developed with basis in neuroscience and positive psychology, very broadly defined.

The following is a presentation of some of the specific theoretical and empirical contributions and movements, which have each in their own way inspired the content and design of the Motivation Factor™ method.

The theory supporting the Motivation Factor™ method is based on:

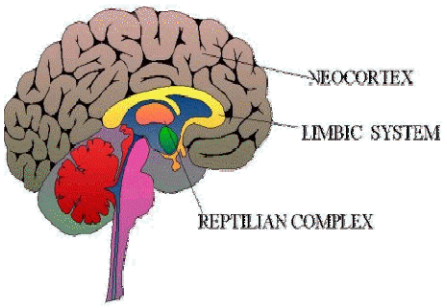
- The brain's structure
- The flow theory
- Positive psychology
- Maslow's Hierarchy of needs
- Neuroscience including the study of emotional and social intelligence and the formation of strengths.

Brain structure

Through millions of years our brain has developed from the bottom and up, so that the higher-lying centres have developed as extensions on the lower and older parts. In this way, emotional life and sense perception play an important role in all experiences, deliberations, and actions.

To put it in simple terms, it can be said that the brain has 3 layers:

- The reactive brain, or reptilian brain (***sensory***, brainstem)
- The social brain, or mammalian brain (***emotive***, limbic system)
- The thinking brain (***thinking***, neo-cortex, pre-frontal cortex).



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The brain stem (reptilian brain)

The first layer is the reptilian brain or the brain stem. This part of the brain works instinctively doing the basic, motile planning. It has implanted some functions that control instincts and very primitive emotions. In today's human brain, this corresponds to the brain stem and the autonomous nervous system that controls breathing, heart rhythm, the metabolism of different organisms and the production of many of the neural-chemical substances, such as adrenalin, cortisol, and endorphins. Without the autonomous nervous system, we would not be able to perceive emotions, as emotions and evaluations are rooted in bodily perceptions.

The feelings of pleasure and unpleasantness are experienced through the autonomous nervous system and create the basis for experiences and evaluations that will later control thoughts and behaviour. The autonomous nervous system is simply the person's physiological basis for perceiving anything. It makes up the basis for instincts and urges and thus makes up the "roots" of emotional life.

The limbic system (mammalian brain)

The second layer is the mammalian brain or the limbic system. The development of the older mammalian brain added more sophisticated emotions, such as happiness, sorrow, etc. to the basic reptilian emotions. The limbic system made possible the development and refinement of social interactions including social emotions, such as the desire to play or being sad, and added actual feelings to the brain's repertoire. Over time, the limbic system also developed learning and memory, which created the possibility of making choices during the struggle for survival and fine-tuning responses.

The limbic system further processes and nuances emotions and connects perceptual and cognitive processes. It is capable of adapting to a rapidly changing environment and can organise new learning.

Neo-cortex (the thinking brain)

The third layer, which represents the rational, is the borderline area between primitive survival impulses in the perceptive brain and the processed analyses of sensory perceptions, which take place in the thinking brain. The thinking brain processes cognitive rationalisations and allows us to perform long-term planning.

This part of the brain contains the centres that compare and create meaning in perceptions and allows the possibility for a complex and subtle emotional life.

Neo-cortex plays a critical role in maintaining emotional stability. It gains control over primitive behaviour and basic emotions by restricting impulses and taking over the control from the reflexive and instinctive systems. The many connections between pre-frontal cortex and the rest of neo-cortex give the individual greater capability for fantasy and the ability to create complex ideas. This is the area where emotional and mental impressions are collected, targeted and actions planned.

It is here that mental images can be frozen and manipulated and plans and ideas are created. This area makes it possible to choose one strategy instead of another, allowing us to suppress or control emotions or act differently in order to better handle a situation. It is in this area that delay of needs/repression of impulses takes place. The pre-frontal level is also the brain's most plastic area.

If we relate the brain's construction and functional areas to the hierarchy of motivation®, the type of training we work with in "Workshop Energy" and "Workshop Needs" involves and

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addresses the limbic system, while the content in “Workshop Talents” and “Workshop Purpose” involves and addresses neo-cortex.

Flow theory

The father of the flow theory is the Hungarian theoretician Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who developed his flow theory at University of Chicago. He defines flow this way:

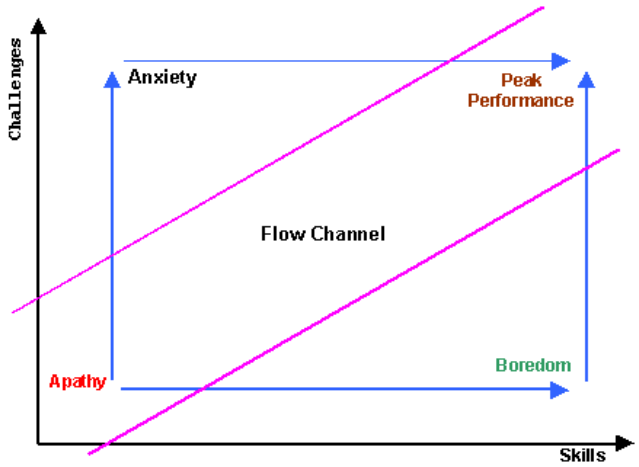
“Flow means positive situations where one is so engrossed that sense of time disappears and all attention is focused on one activity.”

According to Senior Lecturer Hans Henrik Knoop from Denmark’s Educational University School the flow-state will typically be characterised by the following:

- *”You are completely involved, focused and concentrated*
- *You feel a degree of ecstasy by rising above the facts of daily life*
- *You feel a great inner lucidity from knowing what needs to be done and to what degree it will happen*
- *You know that it is possible to solve the task, because one’s abilities match the challenge*
- *One feels a purity, as one does not worry about oneself and has the experience of going beyond one’s own limits*
- *One feels a sort of timelessness, because one is completely in the present moment and hours feel like minutes*
- *One experiences an inner motivation, since the activity becomes a goal and an end in itself. It is even better if the activity, besides the inner motivation, also contributes to the fulfilment of a higher purpose”*

The theory is further substantiated, as when we are in a flow, we perform at the top of our ability both in terms of our own learning and what we contribute.

From the classical flow-model, which can be seen below, it can be seen that flow is created when challenges and skills match each other. There has to be a suitable and increasing degree of complexity in our daily challenges, as we would otherwise start feeling bored. But it has to be adjusted to our skills and knowledge.



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This means that there has to be a suitable balance between skills and challenges and that a sense of boredom typically occurs from lack of challenges and anxiety from being too greatly challenged. Other conditions for creating flow are that the individual has:

- *possibility of taking initiatives independently*
- *specific, energising goals*
- *manageable, un-bureaucratic rules*
- *a clear sense of how well one is performing*
- *possibility of influencing one's own situation*
- *high degree of self-worth*
- *possibility of immersion*
- *possibility of using one's strengths and knowledge for something that is seen as important*

Hans Henrik Knoop adds that among circumstances in the work environment that prevent a flow are:

- *"Lack of influence (which makes people apathetic, irresponsible, and often weaker professionally in the long run, as the lack of involvement can also easily de-motivate people from pursuing further education).*
- *Lack of professional and managerial clarity regarding goals and rules have also created discontent and timidity, and as it is difficult to judge how well one is performing when one is not sure what one is doing. Flow is almost completely absent in company's that have lost their sense of direction.*
- *Too ambitious goals and/or too hard competition will by definition result in a overloading, which gradually wears people down while creating an anxiety-ridden and nervous atmosphere in the work place.*
- *Hectic and overly busy work places can obviously be exciting, but often they prevent people from concentrating sufficiently to ensure adequate quality of the work."*

Each of the above pre-conditions and circumstances will be a perceived state, which varies according to each person. For instance, when is a work place seen as hectic and overly busy, one can ask two managers or employees, who have the same basis, and same goals, but each with his or her own "crossbar" for when something is hectic and too hurried. When is a goal too ambitious? Or how much of one's own situation would one like to influence? How large degree of freedom does one want?

The Motivation Factor™ method helps each one decode what needs to happen in order to create this flow-state. Also, if the organisation is not able to create it, what can the individuals do for their own part?

In relation to the hierarchy of motivation®, the flow-state is what we experience at the top levels of the hierarchy's "talents and purpose". But in order to get there, each person needs to "decode" and understand his or her own motivational factors and behavioural patterns.

This is done based on well proven tools which are linked to:

- Positive psychology
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- Neuroscience including the study of emotional intelligence and the creation of strengths

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Positive psychology

Positive psychology is a theory and methodology, which emerged as a critique of traditional psychology's focus on problems.

It is a very recent branch of psychology, which has only been gaining ground in the United States during the last 10 years – and is now undergoing a flourishing development.

Positive psychology is also gaining more prominence and recognition in our country as theory and method. For instance, in Denmark heavyweights within the business community have invested in a research centre at Universe Research Lab, where Hans Henrik Knoop and a research team working with him carry out research on positive psychology.

Positive psychology investigates and focuses on what works. It focuses on positive feelings for each person's well being, as well as resources and strengths, instead of problems and weaknesses. It revolves around the study of people who function optimally and of what creates the optimal conditions for well being – generally and individually – in personal life and on the job.

For those that wishes to immerse themselves in the many nuances, aspects and results of positive psychology, it is recommended to examine "the roots". For that purpose, let us briefly introduce Martin Seligman, who many consider to be the founder of positive psychology, as well as Marcus Buckingham.

Martin Seligman – Optimism and joy of life

Seligman - and positive psychology – is concerned with the importance of optimism for the good life and optimal conditions for development and he started his career by researching helplessness.

Through experiments with test animals and later with humans, he showed how helplessness and pessimism can be socialised if a person during an extensive period of time is exposed to impacts that deprive the person of the possibility of influencing and impact his or her own situation.

The external influences could, however, not by themselves explain subsequent helplessness and pessimism as some of the test animals and people used in the experiments, actually maintained their initiative and optimism despite being exposed to situations that they had no possibility of influencing.

This made Seligman focus on studying the nature of optimism. Studies of pessimism and optimism show that each person's ***explanatory response*** determines whether an external influence will result in pessimism/depression or continued optimism and well being. In other words, the meaning people give to experiences.

Seligman uses three decisive dimensions in explanatory responses

- Permanence
- Pervasiveness
- Personalization

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Permanence is about time. People, who quickly give up, tend to believe that unpleasant experiences will last and always affect their lives. People, who maintain their optimism and avoid becoming helpless and pessimistic, tend to believe that bad experiences are temporary.

Pervasiveness is about dominance – or space. It revolves around whether a state, as a result of a pessimistic explanatory response, is dominant in the individual's life or limited to a specific domain (personal life/professional life).

Personalization refers to whether unpleasant events/experiences are explained as something external or something internal. The pessimistic explanatory response will always search for "causes and guilt" within one self for what happens – often combined with low self-esteem.

Seligman's basic assumption is that just as helplessness can be learned, so can optimism. It is partly about focusing on explanatory response and change the perspective on what we are exposed to and experience in our lives.

When we keep faith that there are always possibilities and that we have some degree of influence, we are also able to see the possibilities and act accordingly. This way of thinking supports some of the key elements of the learning that we would like to transmit through the Motivation Factor™ method. The methodology in the "Workshop Energy" and subsequent coaching focuses on challenging the explanatory responses, we each have regarding our energy drainers.

By working on energy drainers, each one is challenged to test and learn an optimistic forward-looking explanatory response that will result in forward-looking and suitable actions – and further stimulate the optimistic perspective.

Another key concept in Seligman – and positive psychology – is ***joy of life (happiness)***, which further builds on the fundamental optimism.

He uses three levels of joy of life

- Pleasant life
- Engaged life
- Meaningful life

The ***"Pleasant life"*** level is concerned with our ability to create and preserve as many positive emotions as possible and with developing new skills allowing us to strengthen positive emotions. With a parallel to the Motivation Factor™ method, it is the added bonus gained from being able to recognise and eliminate one's energy drainers which we work with in "Workshop Energy".

The ***"Engaged life"*** level refers to the great satisfaction and source of happiness that comes from living a strength-based life. The more we apply our talents and strengths at work, in our love life, friendships, and activities in our spare time etc, the greater the happiness. In the Motivation Factor™ method, the parallel to focusing on happiness from an "engaged life" perspective, is what we work with in "Workshop Talents", which is about knowing and developing our talents and strengths.

The highest level of happiness is created, according to Seligman, through what he terms ***"Meaningful life"***, which comes into existence when we apply our talents and strengths to a purpose that is greater than ourselves. In the Motivation Factor™ method this type of self-realization is the focal point of the "Workshop Purpose". As mentioned previously, the important thing is to blend together the satisfaction of personal needs and development of strengths with passions and having a purpose.

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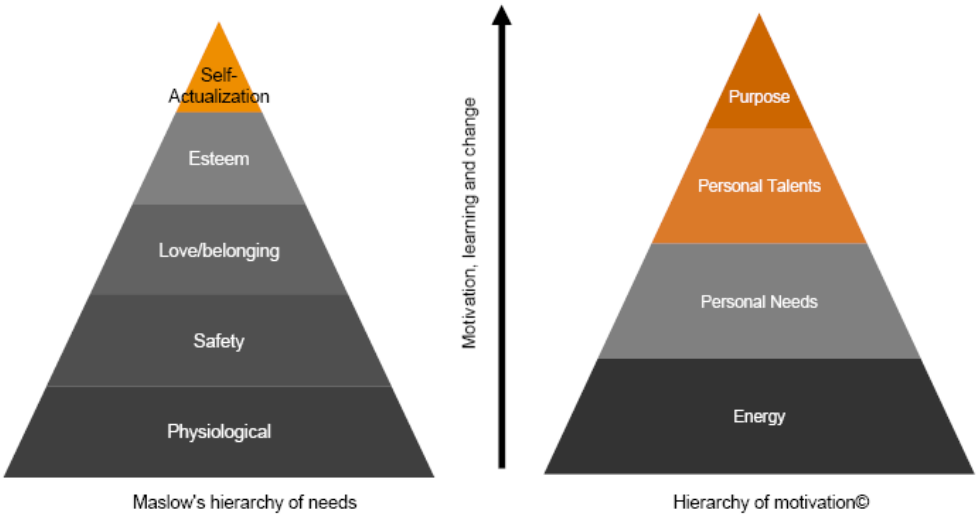
Maslow's needs and motivational theory

The inner logic of the Motivation Factor™ method is, as mentioned, constructed around the motivational hierarchy, which is inspired by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Abraham Maslow belonged to the humanistic psychology, which today is considered to be the foundation that positive psychology is build on. Humanistic psychology is a value-based psychology representing an optimistic and constructive view of human qualities and ability to be autonomous.

Maslow studied the healthy human being and developed his theory, which argues that people are born with a potential, which they need to realize. His theory further argued that people would find meaning in life by realizing natural abilities and talents. In the 1940's, he developed the hierarchy of needs, which is a model of psychological motivation with a hierarchal listing of human needs. Maslow placed human needs in a hierarchy with 5 levels.



The three first levels he called deficiency needs, which we will always try to satisfy, because they cause anxiety, unease and frustration, when they are not satisfied. The top two layers he called growth layers, which emphasizes the human potential and desire for growth.

According to Maslow, the needs have to be fulfilled at every level of the hierarchy, before moving on to the next level. Maslow originally claimed that the need for self-realisation would never be completely satisfied.

In 1970 however, he revised his theory and added the cognitive need at the top of the hierarchy, which concerns the human need for gaining knowledge and understand it (create a purpose in life).

The Motivation Factor™ method focuses on the satisfaction of personal needs because they control our behaviour and as such make up an all-important motivational factor. The structure in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is adhered to our method in the sense that here it is also the case that the better we are able to take care of the levels in the hierarchical construction of the need structure, the greater satisfaction we will experience. The less energy we have invested

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in something that frustrates us ("Workshop Energy"), the more we will be able to ensure the satisfaction of our personal needs.

If we allow that our personal needs are not fulfilled, it creates a feeling of low self-esteem, weakness and helplessness. Conversely, when the selfish/personal need is satisfied, we will become oriented towards new goals, in the form of self-realisation, by realizing our potential – our talents.

It is no coincidence that the steps named "esteem" and the need for "self-actualisation" in Maslow's hierarchy of needs has the same colour as the "personal needs and talets" in the hierarchy of motivation. Our needs are precisely rooted in our esteem/ego, and our talents are the potential we need to build on.

In "Workshop Purpose" we work with what, according to the hierarchy of motivation theory, really motivate us and contributes to our self-realisation, which is integrating the satisfaction of personal needs and the development of strengths with passion and purpose.

The theory of emotional intelligence

Daniel Goleman is the man who in the last 10 years really has brought attention to the concept of emotional intelligence. In his book "emotional intelligence", he has summed up the research and knowledge that existed in the field, when the book was published in 1996. His easily understood presentation has meant that he has played an important role in creating the great interest for the concept that exists today.

The first interest in the concept of emotional intelligence emerged long before Goleman wrote his book. Back in the 1920s, Thorndike used the concept of social intelligence and in the beginning of the 1980s Reuven Bar-on and Gardner, among others, became known for working with emotional intelligence in its different manifestations.

The interest in the concept has risen from the desire to discover the factors that generally determine the success of a person in life. This meant finding an answer to the question of what determines why some people have little or no success in life while others achieve great success, both personally and professionally.

IQ - meaning cognitive intelligence – was not a reliable indicator, even though a high IQ has previously been an entry ticket both to institutions of higher education and good jobs.

There are several different definitions of what constitutes emotional intelligence. Reuven Bar-on, who is the creator of one of the most comprehensive and scientifically documented tests measuring intelligence, provides the following definition:

"EI is a collection of non-cognitive talents, abilities, and skills that influence each person's possibility of achieving success in handling demands and pressure from surroundings".

More than 2000 years ago, Aristotle gave, without knowing it, a definition that is close to the core skills, that characterises what we today know as emotional intelligence:

"Anyone can become angry it is easy,
but becoming angry at the right person,
to the right extent,
at the right time,
with the right purpose,
and in the right way,
……..that is not easy"

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(On the other hand, it is a sign of well-developed emotional intelligence to be able to do so). Put in a different way, emotional intelligence can be defined as:

1. We are capable of identifying our own (and other people's) emotions and state of mind in a situation
2. We are able to identify the source of the emotional state (the emotional trigger)
3. On the basis of 1+2 we are able to choose our response, among several possible ones.

It sounds simple, but is nonetheless a complex affair, which takes place through a complex interaction of brain processes, awareness and behaviour.

In this respect, the discovery of our psychological guard Amygdala plays an important role. Amygdala has a privileged status as an emotional guard that is capable of taking over our brain, completely and fully.

The brain has a long and a short circuit in terms of response time to a given stimulus. The short circuit goes directly from sensory impressions, which are received in the Thalamus, to Amygdala. It reacts promptly if it believes there is danger.

It is not important whether there is a "real" danger or an imagined one. Amygdala can react with the same degree of urgency, whether we are faced with an armed robber or we are afraid of losing face in a human relation. The long circuit runs through the thinking brain, which adds analysis and information to a sensory perception before Amygdala receives signals about a suitable emotional response.

The short circuit has time to report "danger", before the long circuit is ready with a "civilised" response and thus initiate an action that paralyses the rest of the brain. That is because Amygdala has a well-developed network of connections to all parts of the brain and can therefore capture the brain completely in an alarm situation.

Once the alarm has been given, the stress hormones cortisol and adrenalin are released and that mixture ensures that all brain and body functions not used for the fight-or-flight response are shut down.

A necessary step in the process of developing our emotional intelligence is that we become aware of the factors that trigger these protective reactions, which are linked to our reptilian brain. Here we find the pre-condition for our ability to select our response in a given situation, instead of being in the grip of our emotions.

Emotions are considered to be carriers of information in emotional intelligence research and the development of emotional intelligence is both about giving emotions a cognitive dimension, but also about collecting important information for the cognitive processes in emotions.

In everyday language, this means that emotional intelligence is about developing a good interplay between letting reason control our emotional reactions on one hand and listening to our emotions and including them in rational thinking on the other.

Competence and behaviour

The competence and the behaviour, which reflects a well-developed, emotional intelligence, are described in different ways in the relevant literature. They all in one way or another revolve around having self-knowledge, the ability to relate, empathy, tolerance of stress, the ability for problem solving, flexibility and optimism.

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The study of emotionally intelligence managerial behaviour in organisations by the psychologists Higgs and Dulewich has been selected as they have created categories that summarise the essence of emotionally intelligent behaviour in a clear way:

Self-knowledge
Awareness of one's own emotions and the ability to recognise and handle these emotions in a manner that creates a feeling of being in control. This factor involves a degree of confidence in one's own ability to handle one's emotions and control their impact in a work environment.

Emotional robustness
The ability to consistently perform well under pressure in a number of situations and adapt one's behaviour in a suitable manner. The ability to weigh the needs and circumstances of other people involved in the situation and task. The ability to maintain a focus on an action plan, or the necessity of creating results even if one faces challenges or critique at a personal level.

Motivation
Incentive and energy for achieving clear results and make a difference. Create a balance between short- and long-term goals, as well as the ability to pursue challenging goals, even if one is rejected or put into doubt.

Inter-personal sensibility
The ability to be aware of and take into consideration other's needs and views when decisions regarding problems and challenges have to be made and presented. The ability to construct this understanding and be able to "become part of" decisions and proposed action.

Ability to influence
The ability to persuade others to change their point of view on the basis of an understanding of their point of view and a recognition of the need to listen to their perspective and present a logical argument for change.

Determination
The ability to make clear decisions and implement them by using both rational and "emotional" or insightful understanding of key circumstances and implications when one has incomplete or ambiguous information.

Conscientiousness and integrity
The ability to show a clear commitment to an action plan, even when confronted with challenges and to do what one promises when supporting and encouraging others in order to support the direction chosen. To be personally committed to finding ethical solutions to difficult business problems or situations.

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Creation of talents

When we talk about positive psychology and the inspiration, which the Motivation Factor™ method has found here, we should also mention Marcus Buckingham.

In collaboration with Gallup in the USA, he has done research on strength as well as the importance of living a strength-based life. Marcus Buckingham and others have interviewed close to 2 million people regarding their strengths and has found 34 recurring patterns or themes, which are considered to be the most dominant themes when it comes to human abilities. Based on this research Gallup has developed a test, which uncovers the 5 most important talent fields in each person.

Within these talent fields are found our strengths, which we need to apply and develop if the goal is for us to remain motivated.

Buckingham's key idea is that the greatest tragedy in regards to our strengths is not that each individual does not possess enough strengths, but rather that we do not use the ones we have.

Through thousand of interviews in companies in many countries, Buckingham has come to the conclusion that the predominant development philosophy in companies is:

- Anybody can become good at almost anything
- A person's greatest potential for growth is found in improving the most obvious weaknesses

Buckingham's theory, based on countless studies of excellent companies is, in opposition to this, that:

- Every person's talents are long-lasting and unique
- Every person's greatest potential for growth is found in the area encompassing his or her strengths

Buckingham's basic assumption is that in order to excel where we choose to be and find enduring motivation, we need to understand the unique patterns that make up our talent mass. We need to become experts in finding, describing, using and developing our strengths. That doesn't mean that we should not confront our weaknesses – including realising them.

However, we should not spend energy on becoming better at something that we are not particularly good at. Instead we should use our strengths to compensate for our so-called weaknesses. According to Buckingham our strengths – what we are really good at – are made up by:

- ***Talents*** – our natural, recurring patterns of thoughts, emotions and behaviour
- ***Knowledge*** – what we know and continuously learn
- ***Abilities*** – actions, different parts of the activity

The definition of and what characterises our strengths is: "a consistent, close-to-perfect performance within a defined activity".

In other words, for an activity – or behaviour – to be characterised as strength, it needs to be something constant that is a predictable part of the performance. It has to be something you can do repeatedly. Another characteristic of strength is that it is something we quickly excel in.

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It is associated with a feeling of ”being drawn to or longing for” and using it gives a great sense of satisfaction.

Buckingham’s research and theories regarding living in a strength-based way has inspired the content and method in both the Motivation Factor Indicator® and the approach we use for the development of talents in “Workshop Talents” and “Workshop Purpose”.

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