

The Implications Wheel and Emotional Intelligence

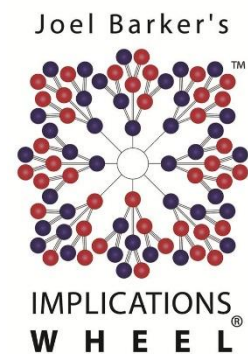
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Is the Implications Wheel an emotionally intelligent process for exploring the future?

After examining key factors of the I-Wheel process, the answer is clear: YES!

The Implications Wheel™

The Implications Wheel™ is a strategic exploration tool that explores the possible consequences, positive and negative, of any change. The issues explored over four decades of use include trends, innovations, paradigm shifts, strategic objectives, plus social and organizational issues. “Centers” explored have addressed climate change, mental health, gambling, drug use, community visions, and multiple innovations, e.g., the release of the iPad.



The process is a “decision-enhancing” tool for leaders who typically define the “center” to be explored and the “first-order” implications following the question: **“What are the possible implications of...”** Diverse teams of five participants “scout the future” by contributing second- and third-order implications. From a defined point of view, the implications are scored for desirability and likelihood.

The Implications Wheel provides leaders with information that provides opportunities to build “barriers” that address highly likely, highly undesirable negative implications, to build “bridges” to increase the likelihood of highly desirable but unlikely positive implications, and to identify implications where more information is needed.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence has become widely accepted within organizations and practiced in many ways, including articles, coaching, and training by thousands of professionals. Sparked by [Daniel Goleman's](#) work, it's had an extensive application for leadership. It encompasses various core factors contributing to an individual's overall emotional intelligence quotient. Most references to the Emotional Intelligence components in this article will be from the [EIQ-2 360°](#). This is an assessment I use for leadership and career coaching.



Self-Recognition (Self-Awareness and Understanding, Personal Acceptance): Self-recognition involves having a deep understanding of oneself, including being aware of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs. It encompasses the ability to recognize and accept one's own thoughts and feelings without judgment. Self-awareness serves as the foundation for social awareness and self-management.

Social Recognition (Awareness and Consideration of Others' Feelings and Responses, Empathy, Sensitivity): Social recognition refers to the ability to be aware of and considerate towards the emotions, needs, and perspectives of others. It involves empathizing with others and maintaining sensitivity to their moods and emotions. By understanding and acknowledging the feelings of those around us, we can develop superior intuition and establish meaningful connections.

Self-Management (Self-Evaluation, Self-Regulation, Control of Feelings): Self-management entails the ability to evaluate oneself objectively and regulate one's emotions, impulses, and behaviors. It involves exercising self-control, adaptability, and resilience in the face of challenging situations. Through self-management, individuals can effectively control and harness their emotions, which directly impacts

their ability to achieve personal objectives and develop inner resolution.

Social Management (Interpersonal Skills, Collaboration, Synergy): Social management encompasses the ability to effectively interact with others, communicate clearly, and build positive relationships. It involves leveraging interpersonal skills to foster collaboration, teamwork, and synergy. Individuals with strong social management skills can navigate social dynamics, resolve conflicts, and influence others positively.

Motivation refers to the driving force behind our emotional and behavioral responses. It involves understanding and harnessing our own emotions to motivate ourselves and others effectively. It serves as a driving force that fuels self-awareness, empathy, self-control, and collaborative efforts. It includes the personal drive to improve and achieve, commitment to goals, initiative, or readiness to act on opportunities, as well as optimism and resilience.

Connection I: The “Center” and Motivation

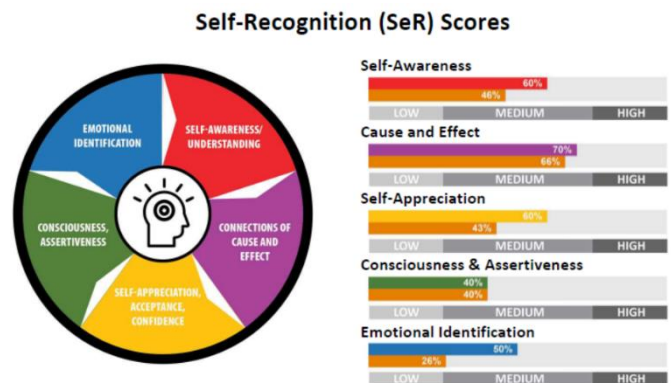
The “center” of an Implications Wheel represents the goal to be explored. Selected by leaders, there is a strong motivation to discover the possible consequences, both positive and negative. For organizations pursuing an important issue or a strategic objective, the value of exploration can be valued in clear measures of financial or organizational success.

In addition, there’s a strong connection between the Implications Wheel and Joel Barker’s work on “The Power of Vision.” From one perspective, whether the “center” is a strategic objective or an issue like youth gambling, the exploration is driven by a desire for a positive view of the future.

Connection between I-Wheel and Emotional Intelligence: ***Strong!***

Connection II: Exploration and Self-Recognition

“Every voice is heard!” This key element of an Implications Wheel creates a dynamic where each member contributes at different stages of exploration and is willing to acknowledge the contributions of others. Key aspects of the process, and the facilitator’s role, work to reinforce this aspect:

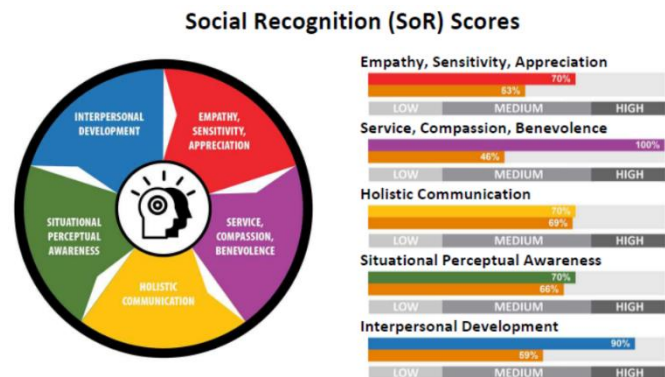


- Participants receive introductory training to the process and the set of “rules.” With a game-like quality, participants are usually motivated to participate. Everyone’s contribution is valued from the beginning of an exploration.
- Participants obviously bring their preferences or personality to the process. An interesting guideline was added to the process over 20 years ago, the “30-second rule.” When an implication is presented to be explored at the next (2nd- or 3rd-order), participants are asked to pause for 30 seconds to write down their thoughts for an implication to contribute and then to offer it as a “possibility.” *Introverts are given time to formulate their contributions, extroverts don’t jump in with all their thoughts.*
- Self-Awareness is also supported by the importance of phrasing every contribution with the “**One possibility is...**” A one-in-a-million possibility is a valid contribution. And so are implications offered that are weird, obvious, or repetitive from another set.
- In one evaluation with over 200 college students, 94% reported that they “learned something from their teammates,” and 96% reported that an implication was contributed that “they would not have thought of by themselves.”

Connection between I-Wheel and Emotional Intelligence: **Strong!**

Connection III: Exploration and Social-Recognition

One of the prompts for this article was an excellent point about Emotional Intelligence from Justin Bariso, author and content provider on [EQ Applied](#). One of the tools he offers is “Change Your Glasses,” looking at an issue from different perspectives.



There’s a strong, direct connection to the Implications Wheel here:

- A key Implications Wheel rule requires at least one positive and one negative implication following from the previous one at each stage.
- When a team struggles with this during an exploration, facilitators are trained to prompt: “Think of someone with a different point of view, what might they see as positive (or negative)?”
- Not only is this a common occurrence, but it also frequently changes the exploration significantly beyond just the initial incident.

A second element of the Implications Wheel connects here. It comes from the scoring process later in the process but loops back to become a trait describing the overall process. Scoring for desirability and likelihood is “majority rules, minority reports” for an important reason: **“Every voice is heard.”**

A third element also defines the link here. It’s the “Wisdom of Crowds,” which could be considered as connected to other factors too but is highlighted here because the strongest connection would be with social recognition.

The “Wisdom of Crowds”

The Implications Wheel is described as a “Wisdom of Crowds” approach. Here’s a segment from a special report prepared on this connection.

The Implications Wheel® uses the power of diversity to increase the insights into possible long-term implications. Its rules and design allow it to tap into the “Wisdom of Crowds,” as described by James Surowiecki in a book by that title.

He identified four key characteristics needed to create large-group intelligence:

- *“Diversity of opinion.” Everyone should know some private information, even if it’s just an eccentric interpretation of known facts.”*
- *Independence of position. Everyone must have the right of independence of their position. No one can influence them to go along with another position they do not believe in.*
- *“Decentralization.” Each person has some local knowledge and specialized knowledge they can bring to bear on the issue.*
- *There has to be a device to collect the observations and then aggregate that information into some final product.*

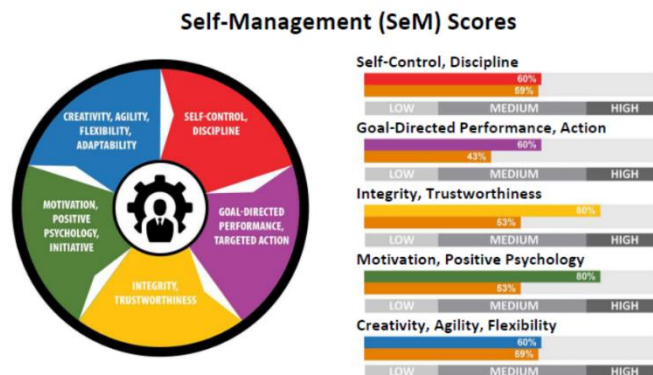
*The I-Wheel™ has all four of those characteristics, so it is a tool that creates collective intelligence from many diverse points of view. To quote the author: **“Groups could make intelligent decisions quickly and could do better than their smartest members.”***

Connection between I-Wheel and Emotional Intelligence: **Very Strong!**

Connection IV: Exploration and Self-Management

Several of the factors noted already, for Self-Awareness and Social Recognition, can apply to Self-Management as well.

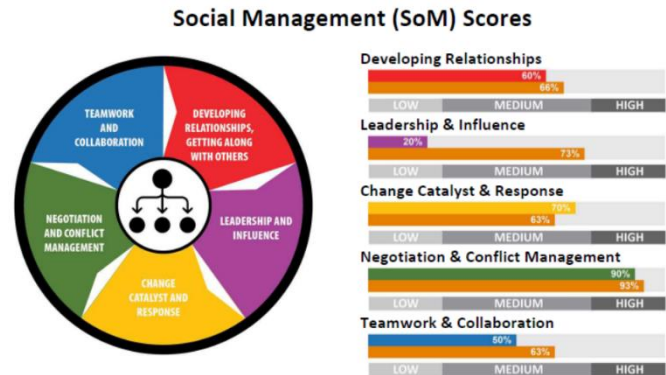
- The rules asking everyone to contribute, the 30-second rule, the one positive/one negative, plus a rule that requires “specificity” for implications all contribute to participants practicing “self-control and discipline.”
- The introduction to the process, asking participants to explore the future as scouts for a particular topic (the “center”) encourages “initiative and drive.” The overwhelming majority, almost unanimous, number of participants are eager to undertake the exploration. It is “goal-directed” for all stages, contributing, scoring, and evaluating the results.
- The process of contributing implications, what’s “possible,” opens participants’ thinking for creativity and flexibility. Participants consistently evaluate the process as “substantially different” from other conversations they’ve had on important topics.



Connection between I-Wheel and Emotional Intelligence: **Very Strong!**

Connection V: Exploration and Social Management

Teamwork and collaboration are clearly the most obvious elements connected to the Implications Wheel process. As a “Wisdom of Crowds” approach (as noted above), the process is designed for diverse teams of five contributors. Diversity is among the most important factors in planning an exploration, particularly when projects involve 50+ participants.



Other factors in Social Management are equally clear from the process.

- Working together as a team, sometimes for a day-long activity, creates bonds and relationships that are built on exploring possibilities and sharing the diverse contributions generated by the rules of the process.
- For most explorations, the process generates new learning and openness to change, based primarily on “learning from their colleagues.”
- Occasionally, there are situations during an exploration that call for negotiation or conflict management. A key role, and the reason, the process is “highly facilitated” is because the facilitators work the rules of the process to manage and in most cases, minimize conflicts. One of the most important aspects, as noted frequently here, is the process deals in the world of “possibilities.”
- While the Implications Wheel process, by definition provides, “decision-enhancing information for leaders,” and this sets a clear picture for understanding the role of leadership, there is some leadership activity during the process.

- After the contributing and scoring stages, the teams are often provided the opportunity to evaluate the results, to “interrogate” the results in a “when the scouts return” format. In this setting, the teams play a leadership role, working together to offer opportunities to build “barriers” that address highly likely, highly undesirable negative implications, to build “bridges” to increase the likelihood of highly desirable but unlikely positive implications, and to identify implications where more information is needed.
- Another element that connects here, and to Social Recognition as well, is the scoring process where participants score implications for desirability and likelihood. This scoring is done from a specific “point-of-view” determined by leadership. In some cases, explorations are scored from multiple points of view – which opens up participant’s minds to sometimes very different views of the issue being explored.

Connection between I-Wheel and Emotional Intelligence: ***Very Strong!***

Other Connections

Several of our certified facilitators have incorporated other assessments of preferences (personality), e.g., CliftonStrengths or DISC, into their work with the Implications Wheel. Anecdotally, they report observations on how different “types” perform during an exploration.

An experiment with CliftonStrengths and some of our most experienced facilitators showed a common pattern of strengths in the strategic thinking theme.

Conclusion

The links between the Implications Wheel and Emotional Intelligence are very strong, with each component of Emotional Intelligence connecting directing to the process, the rules, and the responsibilities of a facilitator. The connections provide very strong support for the “Yes,” for the Implications Wheel supporting an emotionally intelligent mindset.

About the Author

James W. Schreier, Ph.D., SPHR, is a leadership and career coach who works extensively with assessments of emotional intelligence, strengths, and other personality or preference factors. He serves as futurist Joel Barker’s Director of Training for the Strategic Exploration Tools. He is a Master Trainer for the Implications Wheel, training hundreds of facilitators and leading explorations with thousands of participants. Visit the [Implications Wheel](http://ImplicationsWheel.com) website for more information and sample explorations.