

Emotional Bank Account

We all know how a bank account works. We make deposits and with withdraw. We may save money for a rainy day or for something that needs a substantive amount. We earn interest, and sometimes we may have an overdraft where we pay to use the bank's money. And if times are really bad or we are particularly frivolous with our spending and it gets out of control, we may end up bankrupt.

Steven Covey created the metaphor of the Emotional Bank account, which works on the basis of the level of trust rather than of financials. Thus, the concept of the Emotional Bank Account, is one which he defines as a:

“metaphor that describes the amount of trust that’s been built up in a relationship.” AND “If I make deposits into an Emotional Bank Account with you through courtesy, kindness, honesty, and keeping my commitments to you, I build up a reserve. Your trust towards me becomes higher.” WHILE “If I have a habit of showing discourtesy, disrespect, cutting you off, overreacting, ignoring you, becoming arbitrary...eventually my Emotional Bank Account is overdrawn.”

Steven Covey

Ultimately, a high trust relationship is one where the positive deposits far outweigh the negative withdrawals.

Additionally, Dr John Gottman, a professor emeritus of psychology and one of the world's leading authorities on marital stability and relationship analysis. Gottman is most famous for his divorce prediction work where he has been able to predict divorce among couples with a 90% plus accuracy based on the behaviours he observes in the couples' relationships. One of the behavioural clusters Dr Gottman defines as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, are:

1. Criticism
2. Contempt

3. Defensiveness
4. Stonewalling

According to Dr Gottman, when these behaviours dominate a relationship, the chances of that relationship being a successful and positive one are very remote. You can view a clip that speaks to Gottman's work on Gottman Institute YouTube Channel at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHN2EKd9tuE>

Emotional Bank Account and Business

So, this idea of an emotional bank account was originally applied to intimate personal relationships. However, on further consideration we can see that this concept applies equally to relationships we may have in business – with our boss, the leadership of the organisation, customers, and suppliers. In fact, when we continually take more than we give within a relationship, then we shouldn't be surprised that the relationship suffers, trust is eroded or broken and that this is true for all relationships.

Let's explore for a little while how this concept applies within the business context, and then we will look at a practical tool for determining the balance in our emotional bank account.

- In most organisational contexts, both management and leadership know that positive, productive, rewarding, trust-based relationships produce higher and more sustainable results.
- It seems obvious that when a manager says something supportive, shows respect, invests in somebody as an individual, or helps with a difficult situation, they are making a deposit in that person's emotional bank account.
- Conversely, every time they criticize, blame, defend, ignore, lie, intimidate, threaten, and so on, they make a withdrawal.
- A sense of self-worth and respect is important, along with the existence of meaningful, strong relationships that create tangible results. And leaders who build such relationships with stakeholders inside and beyond their organization, are building the organisation's competitive advantage.

- Healthy emotional bank accounts are therefore not about the 'soft stuff' they are about hard delivery and play a role in practically all of an organisation's day-to-day activities.

As a leader, the goal is to accomplish tasks through people, so there are always two dynamics involved:

- the task and,
- the relationship.

So, when a leader assigns tasks, delegates, motivates, influences, leads meetings, communicates, reviews, resolves conflicts, gives feedback, navigates difficult discussions, counsels, trains etc., the quality of the relationship involved always impact success.

All of these are 'moments of truth' where a manager can deposit or withdraw, and each of them has the potential for success or failure.

The key to becoming a great leader is accomplishing tasks while successfully building relationships . The foundation of such relationships is, as we have been discussing in this session, the existence of trust.

- We all know that the quality of a relationship can spiral downward very quickly, and like a financial bank account, you want to avoid being overdrawn.
- Research has shown in organisational contexts, that the ratio of good deeds to damaging ones is around 4:1 (so if you make four small positive deposits, you're able to have a small negative withdrawal).
- This is because we as humans tend to process and remember negative experience including feedback more strongly than positive. The brain handles these in different areas of the brain.
- So, in order to maintain a healthy relationship as a leader, effort is needed to ensure you are applying to the 4:1 ratio over time, and that if you need to make a withdrawal, you have a large enough balance already locked away in storage.

The Emotional Bank Account : At Tool for Measurement

Ben M. Bartlett has taken the work of Covey and Gottman and used it to create a scorecard that can be used to measure the emotional bank balance at any one time. We are going to take a look at that now, initially exploring by

applying it on ourselves. The full sized worksheet below, is available for use with in the [Library of References and Templates](#), for future use with your Mentee upon completion of the session. There is a link for your use now, below the instructions.

To use the Worksheet, determine the emotional trust indicators by placing a tick or cross next to each deposit (positive) behaviour, and then to the same for each withdrawal (negative) behaviour. Once complete, calculate the total scores for both deposits and withdrawals, then deduct withdrawals from deposits. They will leave you with a net score. You can then rate the relationship using the emoticons.

- Where the deposits are much higher – say a minimum of 6 ticks ahead, rate the relationships high
- Where deposits are slightly ahead, through to even scores, rate the trust level as neutral
- Where withdrawals exceed deposits, rate the trust level as low.

The Emotional Bank Account

BANK ACCOUNT	✓	BANK ACCOUNT	✗
Attentive Listening Teamwork Being polite Assertiveness Courtesy/Kindness Respect Encouragement Calmness Openness Commitment Empathy Inclusion		Not listening Conflict Bullying Passive/Aggressiveness Resentment/Contempt Disrespect Being Negative Anger/Neuroticism Shutting down Uncommitted Uncaring Exclusion	
SCO		SCO	

EMOTIONAL BANK	
TRUST	
SCOR	
	HIG
	NEUTR
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For your own use, please click [**Link to the Emotional Bank Account Worksheet.**](#)

By considering where you have placed the ticks and crosses, it is easy to see what specific areas of building the emotional bank account need work.

You can also apply this model if the Mentee want's to explore relationships between themselves and another, or within a team. In that case – if the Mentee can get those others to complete the worksheet, the analysis can then be a topic of exploration in a mentoring session. Or, if this is not possible, the Mentee may get a gauge of the level of the emotional bank account by completing it for others – as an estimate.