

## Emotional Intelligence & Construction

One of the most daunting tasks of any Law Firm Administrator is to help lead the planning, analysis and transition to new space or, even more challenging, to lead a renovation in place. We have all lived through the monumental changes that have taken place in the legal industry over the last thirty years. This explosive change in the economics of the industry has driven new trends in design and construction. As a lawyer turned construction executive, I can well relate to the pressure on every Law Firm Administrator to “get it right” for the firm.

The topics of “emotional intelligence” and construction may seem incongruous. But, excellent leadership in any context is rooted in having skills associated with what has come to be known as “emotional intelligence.” As it turns out, having those skills firmly established in one’s construction team, can make the difference between a law firm crowd cheering for you on “move-in day” or jeering at you for months of upheaval and disruption.

Research over the last two decades has established that “emotional intelligence” is a critical component in providing leadership on any task, project or enterprise. There is an incontrovertible link between a leader’s emotional maturity, as demonstrated by characteristics such as self-awareness and empathy, and performance. As Daniel Goleman has pointed out in the *Harvard Business Review*, effective leaders all have a high degree of emotional intelligence. “It’s not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but as ‘threshold capabilities’; that is, they are the entry-level requirements.” To lead any initiative, whether it is a company or a construction project, requires something much more.

What is emotional intelligence? The characteristics that mark “EI” are:

**Self-awareness**-knowing one’s strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and impact on others.

**Self-regulation**-controlling or redirecting disruptive impulses and moods.

**Motivation**-relishing achievement for its own sake.

**Empathy**-understanding other people’s emotional makeup.

**Social Skill**-building rapport with others to move them in a desired direction.

We might associate all of these skills with a highly effective and inspirational Managing Partner of a law firm. But these skills must also be sought out in major law firm vendors, including those who manage the complex execution of a firm’s build out.

At Peris Construction, we value well-developed technical skill set in all our construction professionals. But we also value a construction project leader's ability to bring intuitive intelligence to the job site. We intentionally look for these skills in the hiring and development of all our Superintendents (the on-site professional that leads the day-to-day aspects of the construction project) and our Project Managers (the professional who handles the overall integration of every detail across every discipline to ensure accurate and on time delivery).

Whether building out a law firm or a major corporate office space, baseline construction skills are not enough. This is especially true in a high stakes setting like a law firm. And the emotions can run even higher when executing a staged "in place" renovation. Whether inherent or learned, the construction professional must not only know how to communicate effectively with the law firm's operational team, but must stand ready to read a situation intuitively, when a partner, for example, is under pressure in handling an explosive deposition in the next room. Or when a trial team needs the project schedule adjusted instantly to prepare for an *ex parte* motion.

For the Peris team, the "vision" is to bring excellence to every aspect of building a space. A law firm design often calls for high-end finishes and the execution of every detail makes a difference. Clients, lawyers and staff alike are energized and inspired (or not) as each passes over the threshold of a new law firm lobby. Design well-built is essential.

Peris also takes a macro view of the overall project. Regardless of the technical legal duties captured in a contract, we immediately develop an excellent working relationship with the building management (if one does not already exist) and assume oversight and scheduling responsibility for all vendors whether officially under GC purview or not. The ultimate key to success is the ability of the Peris team to act as a coach to motivate the team, including subcontractors, to deliver a precision result, even while many of those tradespeople may never see the site again.

A cranky lawyer can ruin your day. An especially high strung and demanding one can ruin your year. As with all vendors coordinated by a Law Firm Administrator, it is important to have professionals that are in tune with your workplace culture and flow, and can approach problem solving with cultural dexterity, insight and ease. More important than any other marker of leadership and emotional intelligence is integrity. Peris is committed to bring that to every project.

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