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Courtroom **to** boardroom

How many times have you been sure someone was 'pulling the wool over your eyes'? Perhaps hiding information and trying to deceive or mislead you? For some of you, this could be true at this very moment. You know they are not telling you the truth yet they are clearly convinced their efforts to distract you or cover up the truth are actually working!

CEOs, MDs, business owners and directors face this problem in the boardroom and in other executive group functions, in the same way that judge and jury navigate 'smoke and mirrors' in a courtroom.

A greater understanding of 'emotional quotient' (EQ), better known as emotional intelligence, can really help you clear the fog and see clearly what is happening. EQ is energy in motion, or E-motion. It empowers us to 'see what is being said' and so influence the ultimate and right outcomes. When we understand, recognise and manage emotions we are then able to use the knowledge to solve problems. Our motives, intentions and core values are critical to experiencing the right results.

An emotional reaction can be physical or mental. What you see in both is a shift – something changes. We

Board members, like jurors, must understand, improve and use emotional intelligence to make effective and insightful decisions

can colour or blush, perhaps get up and walk out or hit mute and uncharacteristically remain quiet. I call it inappropriate behaviour. In years gone by our emotional shifts were fight, flight or die. Now it's about fight, flight or freeze.

A few weeks ago, I was in London speaking at the CPA Australia annual conference. I had agreed to host what is better known as 'the graveyard slot', directly after lunch; named such because delegates are often sleepy as the body's blood supply focusses more on digesting food, rather than feeding the brain to enhance its ability to listen and concentrate.

I had been asked to explain how emotional intelligence is used in the quest to find justice. So, for the core of my presentation, I chose to reflect on the time I served as a juror on a drugs-related trial.

As I approached the conference stage, delegate faces were thankfully expectant, many poised holding pen over paper. My remit was to deliver

a memorable, interactive and entertaining presentation – and no jokes!

The last rule is my own. I have never been good at comedy, even after attending a two-day comedy-training course in June last year. Being light-hearted or amusing is one thing – when I am funny though, it's usually an accident.

Stephen Covey, in his self-help book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* says: "Start with the end in mind." Yes, if explaining how to assemble furniture we would need to communicate in chronological order; first things first; however it is not necessary, nor indeed recommended when telling stories.

So I started with the end, the conclusion – the verdict. Speaking as if I was the foreperson of the jury, I dramatically answered 'guilty' in response to each of four charges, eeding in a running commentary so I could create a picture of the usher reading out the charges against the defendant.

Looking out from the jury box in that trial, if someone had said that the *Only Fools and Horses* team were outside with Del Boy sat next to Rodney in their Reliant Regal van, I would have believed them.

After we had heard all the evidence most of the jury, bar one gentleman and myself, were convinced the defendant was innocent, stating: "There wasn't enough evidence anyway." I knew

they were guilty – not of just one of the crimes read by the prosecutor, but of all four. All I had to do was prove it.

The commitment in the jury room varied. Some clearly didn't want to be there and just wanted the experience to be over and done with. Remind you of the odd board meeting?

I sifted through the evidence, using my problem-solving skills working with a fellow juror who up to this point had remained silent. The judge eventually accepted we couldn't reach a unanimous verdict, allowing us eventually to reach a majority verdict. The process took days and one girl in particular, whose brother took drugs, really struggled.

Here are a few initiatives I used to help cope with the challenges.

Converse with the unlikely So often we only speak to or relate to those like us. On the jury there was a character I affectionately called 'the tramp'. Everyone ignored him because he was untidy and smelly. It was as if he was deemed not worthy of having an opinion.

On the other hand I realised he knew a lot about drugs and firearms. With this in mind, I befriended him, gaining his trust and encouraging him to work with me, as a team. We worked together, determined to uphold justice.

He was critical to my success, yet I am ashamed to say I probably would have ignored him, too, had I not thought him useful to me. Who might you be sidestepping, ignoring or perhaps not seeing properly in your organisation?

Make someone else a hero I realised within hours of leaving the courtroom that many fellow jurors knew I disagreed with them. They were

convinced I would want to be the 'foreperson' – the leader. With this in mind I quickly nominated someone else – the look of relief on the faces round the table was tangible. This meant I could use the power of speech, my words, carefully. If I only spoke when I had to, I knew they would be more likely to listen to me.

If I spoke a lot they would switch off and not hear what I was saying. Jurors had to hear detailed explanations as 'the tramp' and I worked through the evidence. Making someone else the hero was my key to being heard. Who is your advocate – your 'Trojan Horse'? Who can help break down resistance ahead of you speaking?

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The power of pictures The prosecutor spent much time drawing our attention to the pictures and CDs found in the defendant's house. We can decide how to respond to what has happened, is happening or being said. Being aware of emotions as they happen can be challenging, yet help us move forward. When frightened, if our motives are right, we should just do it afraid!

Our minds work in pictures. These pictures reveal our core values, our beliefs and things we like to do. Emotions are then felt in response to those values. Do your internal pictures say what you want them to say and are there any pictures missing?

Suspension At one point I was sure the mother, now in the gallery after giving evidence, was trying to signal to her children to cry while giving their evidence. Her sniffing noises left me in no doubt, she was attempting to orchestrate a possible sympathy vote from the jury.

Giving her the benefit of the doubt I waited until the recess and mentioned it to the usher. The daughter was still to have her time in the witness box so I suspended my judgement, delaying it to see if the same thing happened after the break.

As soon as we reconvened the mother started again. I followed protocol by writing a note from where I was sitting. I stuck my hand up in the air indicating the paper I was grasping was to be given to the judge. Dutifully, the usher collected it from me and took it to the judge to read. The judge upheld my suspicion, saying he had noticed the noises and asked the gallery to be quiet.

Are you aware of all the noises going on around you? Sometimes we are so busy working in the business we miss vital signs. So the next time you believe someone is trying to fool you, or distract you away from the truth then stop, take a short break and be present. Be in the moment. Practice suspension and watch what is done above what is said... on rare occasions someone might be being manipulated from out of sight.

At the end, the judge thanked the jury for all its hard work, which was nice.

Whether it's in the courtroom or boardroom, our role as leaders is to uphold justice and seek the truth. Accessing emotional intelligence empowers us to see through the mist and fog so we can stand in a clearing – a space where we can 'see the wood for the trees'.

Silence can often be misinterpreted, but it can never be misquoted.

RECOGNISING EMOTIONS

Better understanding people and their motives can help you achieve the right outcomes

