

# Introduction

When I left Africa to come to the United States for college in the eighties, I left a world that was several decades behind in so many ways. I remember my family getting a thirteen-inch color TV when I was a teenager, and I thought that man had conquered it all. To see the world in color was one of the more exciting childhood experiences I can recall, primarily because it stimulated a powerful imagination of possibilities. I desperately wanted to be a part of exploring those possibilities. Once in the States, I saw for the first time a CD player, a microwave, a computer, and a television with multiple channels. Whoa!

Little did I know just how much change our lives would continue to go through. At a seminar I facilitated recently, I asked the audience to list all the inventions of the past twenty-five years that are presently shaping the way we live and work. And then to juxtapose them with how we lived and worked the previous twenty-five years. It is no stretch to assert that the present generations have the highest probability of achieving their full potential in a way that no other set of human beings who have walked the face of this earth have. Just take a moment and think about this. If you want to be the best at what you do, can you honestly say “I can’t find information on how to do it?”

To drive this point further, think of what the generations of the past could have done with all of our tools—all the available apps, blogs, BlackBerrys, cell phones, DVRs, Google, GPS, Facebook, iPods, Skype, Netflix, texting (just think, 110 billion text messages were sent in December 2008), Wikipedia, Twitter, and YouTube, to name just a few of the knowledge and information exchange inventions of the past decade alone.

Human knowledge—past, present, and future—is widely accessible in unprecedented ways. The power of constant connection should never again be underestimated or underutilized. We were never able to constantly connect until we possessed cell phones and other mobile devices, which are, of course, constantly on. New technological innovations of this decade will allow laptops to be constantly connected wirelessly instead of having to search for a connection. The imperative to leverage all this to perform at our best, to constantly enhance our self equity, and to live happier and healthier lives has never been greater and our chance of achieving it has also never been better.

I have spent all my adult life not in the imagination of possibilities but in the reality of them. As a management consultant with two global firms, I consulted with leaders and managers at organizations all over the world. I became fascinated by the term empowerment. I loved it like most people did and felt we’ve been getting closer and closer to it since the ’80s. Driven in large part by technology, as more and more knowledge and tools became available to us, both in our personal and professional lives, we did indeed become more efficient, but not necessarily empowered. Something was still missing.

It was about fifteen years ago that I was first exposed to emotional intelligence. Eureka! I finally had a framework around what I had always known—our ever-changing emotions play a significant role in our performance. Our ability to recognize and alter them based on the demands of the situation is the missing link.

This book, a powerful collaboration of thought leaders, practitioners, and academics, marinated with a blend of rigorous research and real-world applications of forward-thinking ideas, is a culmination of that journey I began as an immigrant teenager from Africa toward the ultimate state of personal and professional empowerment. I still wake up and view this country and the world as a land and life of constant opportunity. I read a philosophical quote that said, “Doubt the man who has found the truth, but trust the man who is searching for it.” It is incredible to live in times where it is not the “knowers” but the “learners” who will thrive.

I am thrilled to share with you a powerful new concept—EPowerment: an amalgam of achieving empowerment in the e world we now live in and leveraging your own inherent emotional intelligence. I am convinced that the content of this book will help you think about just how achievable empowerment is for you and your organization. As you read this book, ask yourself, “Can I afford not to be empowered?”

—Dr. Izzy Justice