

# Are you going to **FIGHT OR TAKE FLIGHT?**

It's August 9th, 2010. You have just arrived at the Pittsburgh airport and you're beginning the process needed to fly to New York on Jet Blue Flight 1052. You made it through check in, security check, and are in the midst of boarding. You find a spot for your carry-on amongst the hustle and bustle of everyone else and finally get settled into your seat. Captain communicates he is ready to proceed, when you hear another voice communicate, "I've been abused by a passenger...I QUIT."

You look back and realize one of the flight attendants has said this. In that moment, this flight attendant – who had worked in the industry for 20 years – opens a refrigerator, takes out two beers and proceeds to leave the airplane via one of the exit doors down an inflatable chute.

After years of being a flight attendant, Steven Slater made a choice that forever changed the trajectory of his life and career. As a passenger you're no longer going anywhere, and you've just witnessed an individual experience an emotional meltdown.

## **WE ALWAYS HAVE TWO CHOICES**

What Steven may not have recognized at the time of the incident is he had two choices – to fight or take flight (although, not in the way all the passengers were hoping). To fight, wouldn't necessarily mean to literally fight with the difficult individual he was dealing with, but rather find the strength to stay, deal with, and continue his job. Instead, he took flight

– leaving the aircraft in a dramatic fashion, leaving a flight full of passengers stranded on the tarmac.

Is it necessarily to take abuse from hostile individuals who may spew negative, derogatory, and/or hurtful things? Not at all. However, our response to negative experiences will determine our ability to navigate life successfully. We all find ourselves in those moments where two options are presented before us – do we stick with the situation at hand, deal with it in an emotional mature way – or figuratively (not literally) "fight"? Or, do we cower at the challenge and find ourselves taking flight in order to avoid the situation altogether?

## **YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE MATTERS MORE**

Most of us don't have an escape hatch to jump from to leave our stresses and difficult coworkers/clients/family members behind. We're all experiencing variations of similar stresses, and as a result we're walking around with unresolved emotions that aren't dealt with properly.

What's the solution for us all? A greater concentration in and development of our own emotional intelligence (EQ). It's a buzz word being used more and more in today's business hot topics – stressing the need to rationally deal with the pressures of today.

Ultimately, EQ allows us to anticipate and respond appropriately to any given situation we encounter.

So much of our success each day relies on these reactions and interactions. Yes, our intelligence – or IQ - in different areas is critical; our technical skills and abilities help qualify us to do certain jobs and functions. However, it is our emotional intelligence that determines how successful we'll be in accomplishing anything we pursue.

Many workplaces are understanding the importance of fostering greater levels of EQ in their managers and employees. I have several CEOs calling me to help them with instilling their “no-jerk” policies that help address negative behaviors impacting the productivity and welfare of employees.

### **ACKNOWLEDGE AND IMPROVE**

The first step in making any kind of change or improvement in EQ requires acknowledging the very real existence of emotional suppression. Whether we recognize it or not, we often project emotional neutrality – this idea that we're afraid to express emotions that we feel about different situations. As a result, we suppress feelings and communication in the effort to appear calm and neutral. The problem is, many of us are still experiencing the disappointment, frustration, anger, etc. deep down, and now that it's been suppressed, it's bound to be unleashed toward our colleagues at some point in the future.

This is why our EQ is so critical – to help individuals

learn to respond to situations in a productive, empathetic way, thus preventing dramatic exits, explosions, etc. The reality is, 90 percent of how you react – or respond – to a situation will determine how well you traverse your career. It's in those moments that people perceive and experience your likability, integrity, and leadership ability. This is the crux of what I've been coaching many executives on recently; the question becomes, “are you managing your emotions, or are your emotions managing you?”

So, what do you do when you're on that plane as the proverbial flight attendant? Do you do you stay and work through the moment, tapping into your emotional intelligence, or do you dramatically flee the situation?

Every interaction you have with individuals throughout the day from morning with your family and fellow commuters, to throughout the rest of the day with coworkers, clients, and strangers – you have a choice in how you listen, react, and respond. When individuals are ready and willing to take responsibility for their emotions and reactions, they become better leaders and experience greater personal growth.

Where do you fall on the EQ scale and how you are dealing with the fight and flight choices you face each day? Visit [chuckgarcia.com/assessment](http://chuckgarcia.com/assessment) to learn more.



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A 25-year veteran of Wall Street, he spent 14 years in sales and marketing at Bloomberg in a variety of leadership positions. He was Director of Business Development at BlackRock Solutions, an arm of the world's largest investment manager, and was a Managing Director at Citadel, a prestigious alternative investment manager.

He is also a mountaineer and has climbed some of the world's tallest peaks, including Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Elbrus, the Matterhorn, as well as mountains in Alaska and the Andes.