



Dr. Afzalur Rahim may be the quint-essential example of a self-made man. From his birth and education in Bangladesh to his current role as the world-traveling founding editor of two major journals, Rahim took a little job on the side.

The Elusive Intangible Intelligence

**Conflict
Management
and Emotional
Intelligence
in the
Workplace**

By Matt Batchelor

Rahim is a 17-year veteran professor of Management at Western Kentucky University. This is not to say that Rahim's teaching is not a major passion in his life. Indeed, Rahim teaches classes on the Hill, ranging from organizational management at the undergraduate level to a graduate class on organizational theory.



PHOTO BY SHERYL A. HAGAN

It seems that every minute that Rahim isn't teaching, he's studying in the library or his home. Yes, even his home is his workplace. It is the home of the *International Journal of Conflict Management*— and his publishing company, the Center for Advanced Studies in Management. It's the site where he has written most of 18 books and more than 140 articles, book chapters, case studies and research instruments.

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Rahim said he wouldn't do any of this if it weren't fascinating — trying to measure the elusively intangible field of management.

“There are no easy answers to some difficult problems,” he said. “It's not like chemistry or biology where you have definite answers to problems.”

In simplest terms, Rahim seeks to discover why, with all factors seemingly equal on the surface, some organizations and companies succeed while others fail. He

wants to discover more fully how the fields of psychology and sociology contribute to management.

To this end, Rahim is now studying Emotional Intelligence, or EQ. The study of EQ has become popular of late, because it completely shatters earlier impressions of intelligence. Theorists believe there are more types of intelligence than just the mental recall measured by the traditional IQ (Intelligence Quotient) test.

“For a long time, we thought IQ was the most important thing,” Rahim said. “Now, we're realizing IQ is not the only thing to be considered. It's actually EQ.” Rahim's interest in EQ began just last year when it was discussed in detail at the American Psychological Association convention in San Francisco. With the aid of a fellowship from Western, Rahim began what is now his greatest interest: the study of EQ.

He said he is just beginning to realize the implications that EQ has in the field of management.

“IQ really doesn't do if you want to be a leader,” he said. “It has to be EQ.”

But Rahim is breaking from his peers' conventional study of EQ. Until now, EQ has existed mostly as theory. Rahim is developing an instrument to actually measure it. Once he develops an instrument, he wants to study how a manager's EQ scores affect leadership and his ability to manage conflict.

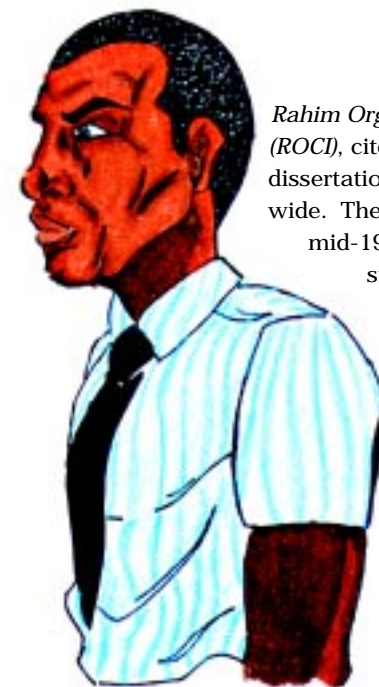
Conflict management is another of Rahim's specialties. After addressing the subject in his doctoral dissertation before coming to the Hill, he developed Management 419: the Management of Organizational Conflict. He even wrote the book on it: *Managing Conflict in Organizations* — and has prepared a third edition for the book. He developed a diagram for use in studying conflict, with each category representing either a higher concern for one's self or one's concern for others.

Rahim's third edition will include an extra chapter on management ethics, which he said he overlooked in his previous edition. “Without an understanding of ethics, conflict cannot be handled,” he said.

Rahim said he has always sought to measure the success of his endeavors; he said it is not enough to merely write journal articles and speculate about theories. He seeks quantifiable results that have practical applications.

“Faculty members have studies, but what is the impact?” he said. “One or two people will read it and it doesn't go anywhere. That means other professors don't find it useful.”

Perhaps Rahim's most famous accomplishment is the



Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI), cited in more than 175 doctoral dissertations and now marketed nationwide. The inventory, developed in the mid-1980s, is a questionnaire designed to determine how an individual handles conflict with his superiors, employees or peers.

Rahim said that *ROCI* is truly unique and is still the measuring stick for surveys of organizational conflict. His electronic mailing list for that questionnaire is testimony to the survey's usefulness to people; 135 people correspond regularly with the professor.

He has had requests to translate the survey into different languages.

The *ROCI* has been so popular, Rahim said, that the survey has been used to resolve other conflict management situations. For example, in one application of the questionnaire, the word “spouse” was substituted for

why some people are effective and some are not.”

He blames that on consultants attending the conference who look at hard results too much and not at EQ. His goal was to provide the consultants with information on the newest research on organizational quality, so that they could bring the latest advice to the companies they represent.

Singapore is just one of the countries where Rahim has spoken. He has traveled the world ever since he picked up an undergraduate degree in commerce at the University of Dhaka in his native Bangladesh. “I wanted to come to the United States but that was very difficult,” he said. “I was looking for a scholarship and I was really lucky to get a full graduate scholarship.”

That scholarship was the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship,



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“boss,” so that the survey could be used to counsel married couples.

All these accomplishments have turned Rahim into something of a world traveler. Before the end of the spring semester, Rahim was the keynote speaker at the 15th International Conference of the International Standards Association and Total Quality Management. He spent the last week of April in Singapore, speaking at the conference and at Asia's largest business college at Nanyang Technical University. His speech was on how to improve quality in organizations and was met warmly.

What I found there, all were tech people,” he said. “They have forgotten

which paid his way through Miami University (Ohio). He picked up a master's degree in marketing, then returned to Bangladesh for three years to work, as the Fulbright mandated. He then returned to the States, getting his doctorate in management at the University of Pittsburgh in 1976. Rahim was a business professor at Youngstown (Ohio) State University before making his way to Western in 1983.

Rahim said he is very happy in Bowling Green and he doesn't think he will be bored with his management specialties anytime soon.

“Management is always changing. It is always dynamic,” he said. “That is why I find it challenging.”

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