

White Paper:
Emotional Intelligence
and Success

Joshua Freedman and Lorenzo Fariselli

2nd Edition, published March 25, 2016

Numerous studies show that emotional intelligence scores predict performance on critical life success factors. How strong is this effect? Many studies have been conducted with small samples, and frequently the samples are primarily university students. Examining over 75,000 individuals in the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment (SEI) database, 55% of the variation in success scores (wellbeing + effectiveness + quality of life + relationships) is predicted by scores on emotional intelligence. This sample population is large, global, and primarily composed of people in the workforce — suggesting that emotional intelligence is of critical importance in achieving success in these outcomes.

Background

The original, ground-breaking research on emotional intelligence (EQ) was conducted by Salovey and Mayer (1990).¹ EQ was brought to a much larger audience by Daniel Goleman (1995) in his best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*.² Goleman asserted that conventional measures such as intelligence quotient (IQ) only account for 20% of a person's success in life. While these claims were overstated by the media, it raised an important question: What is the role of emotional intelligence in success?

To develop a meaningful answer, we sampled the SEI norm base (which includes 100,000+ responses from around the globe). We analyzed this sample of 75,000 people to identify the correlations between emotional intelligence scores and success scores.

Measuring Emotional Intelligence

The Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessments (SEI™) is a set of effective measures that help people develop and apply emotional intelligence professionally and personally.³ The tools are used for a broad range of training, coaching, hiring, and development needs. The SEI focuses on and measures eight key skills for leadership and life and puts these key competencies into the context of important life and work outcomes.

The Six Seconds model is easy to understand and includes eight EQ competencies divided into three major domains, or “pursuits”:⁴

Know Yourself: Be more **aware** of emotions and reactions.

Choose Yourself: Be more **intentional** in responding.

Give Yourself: Be more **purposeful** as you move forward.



Pursuit	Competency	Definition
Know Yourself	Enhance Emotional Literacy	Accurately identifying and interpreting both simple and compound feelings.
	Recognise Patterns	Acknowledging frequently recurring reactions and behaviors.
Choose Yourself	Apply Consequential Thinking	Evaluating the costs and benefits of your choices
	Navigate Emotions	Assessing, harnessing, and transforming emotions as a strategic resource.
	Engage Intrinsic Motivation	Gaining energy from personal values & commitments vs. being driven by external forces.
	Exercise Optimism	Taking a proactive perspective of hope and possibility.
Give Yourself	Increase Empathy	Recognising and appropriately responding to others' emotions.
	Pursue Noble Goals	Connecting your daily choices with your overarching sense of purpose.

Measuring Success

In addition to the EQ scales, the SEI assessment includes a second questionnaire on key performance outcomes. This data is used by SEI Assessors to frame emotional intelligence in the context of important life and work outcomes. In other words, SEI measures emotional intelligence as applied to a practical purpose.⁵

The Success Factor include four component scales, each of which has a further two sub-factors:

- **Effectiveness:** capacity to generate results (includes Influence and Decision Making)
- **Relationships:** capacity to build and maintain networks (includes Network & Community)
- **Wellbeing:** capacity to maintain optimal energy and functioning (Balance and Health)
- **Quality of Life:** capacity to maintain balance & fulfillment (Achievement & Satisfaction)

These four scales are combined into an overall “Success” variable.

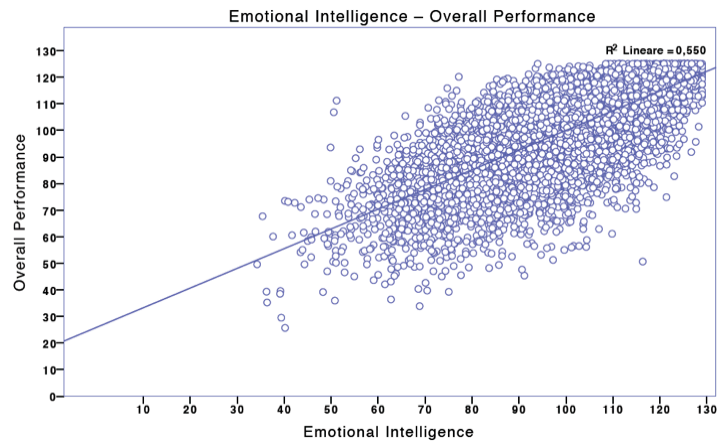
As shown in the SEI Technical Manual,⁴ the eight emotional intelligence scales and the four success scales are normed and validated.



Analysis: EQ and Success

The analysis showed a strong and substantial relationship between EQ and outcomes scores. Stepwise regression analysis revealed that SEI predicts 55% of overall performance where “performance” is a combination of the reported success factors.

The relationship between EQ and Success is shown in the scatter graph to the right, where each dot represents one individual’s overall EQ score and overall Success score.

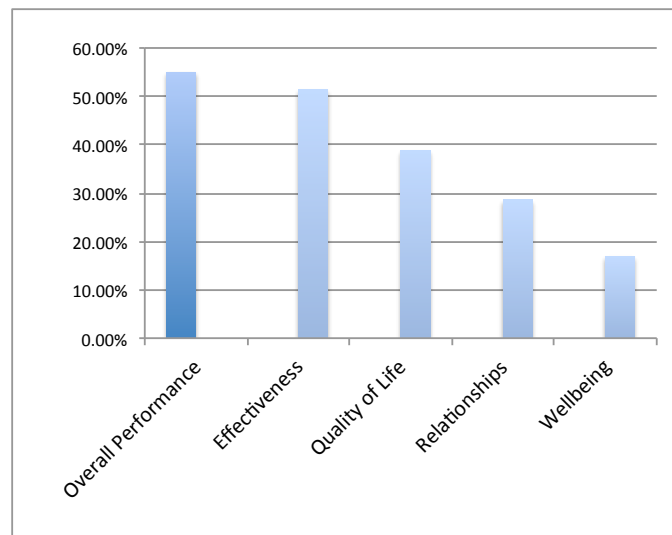


To further understand the impact of emotional intelligence on performance, a regression model was created to show the EQ competencies with the highest effect on the Success scores. As shown to the right, the largest single contributors to the model are “Exercise Optimism” (seeing possibilities) and “Engage Intrinsic Motivation” (internal drive). These are both in the “Choose Yourself” part of the Six Seconds Model, which focuses on taking responsibility for personal action.

OVERALL	Partial
Exercise Optimism	0.229381116
Engage Intrinsic Motivation	0.192575667
Pursue Noble Goal	0.148276774
Increase Empathy	0.108610248

Individual Success Factors

After disaggregating the overall success factor into its components, EQ scores showed a positive contribution to each of the factors (effectiveness, quality of life, good relationships, and wellbeing). The graph to the right shows the relative impact of emotional intelligence on each success factor.



The value of the predictive results is that the variation in each success factor is explained by a different combination of the eight competencies. This points to the specificity of the SEI in reflecting the unique characteristics of individual respondents and groups.

In the tables below, the column labeled “Partial” shows the relationship between the individual competency and the outcome factor, expressed in R^2 . These scores can be interpreted as the percentage of variation predicted, e.g., R^2 of 0.229 in the first table means that 22.9% of the variation in Overall Success is predicted by variation in the scores on Exercise Optimism. Each competency listed has a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance.

Effectiveness

The EQ competency of Exercising Optimism shows the strongest predictive relationship with the outcome of Effectiveness. Exercising Optimism means, “Taking a proactive perspective of hope and possibility.” The competence allows people to create possibilities and seek solutions.

Competencies	Partial
Exercise Optimism	0.346761663
Pursue Noble Goal	0.118552348
Apply Consequential Thinking	0.116349106
Engage Intrinsic Motivation	0.09863838
Enhance Emotional Literacy	0.097401433

Relationships

The EQ competency of Increase Empathy shows the strongest predictive relationship with the outcome of Effectiveness. Increase Empathy means, “Recognizing and appropriately responding to others’ emotions.” The competence allows people to understand others and build strong emotional connections.

Competencies	Partial
Increase Empathy	0.122941748
Engage Intrinsic Motivation	0.098479245
Exercise Optimism	0.08855283
Navigate Emotions	0.082018147



Wellbeing

The EQ competency of Increase Empathy shows the strongest predictive relationship with the outcome of Wellbeing. Increase Empathy means, “Recognizing and appropriately responding to others’ emotions.” The competence allows people to understand others and build strong emotional connections.

Competencies	Partial
Increase Empathy	0.116111982
Engage Intrinsic Motivation	0.094893002
Navigate Emotions	0.078463259

Quality of Life

The EQ competency of Engage Intrinsic Motivation shows the strongest predictive relationship with the outcome of Quality of Life. Engage Intrinsic Motivation means, “Gaining energy from personal values & commitments vs. being driven by external forces.” The competence allows people to identify what’s important and create the energy to pursue it.

Competencies	Partial
Engage Intrinsic Motivation	0.195049336
Exercise Optimism	0.167548642
Pursue Noble Goal	0.158053199

Interpretation

At first glance, 55% might not appear to represent a major impact. The power of this finding is visible in the scatter graph above, where there are almost no individuals who score low on EQ and high on Success - or visa versa. The R^2 of 0.550 means that of all the reasons for a person to achieve a certain Success score, over half can be explained just through their emotional intelligence scores. Since we know that emotional intelligence is learnable,⁶ this finding creates a compelling reason to make emotional intelligence development a priority.

The competency of Exercise Optimism appears to be one of the most powerful ingredients in the developing the Success outcomes. In today’s fast-paced and complex world, it may be that



maintaining a sense of possibility is increasingly important. This competency helps people stay positive about reaching the goal, be adaptable in the process, and create resilience in the face of complexity. In the face of adversity and complexity, it seems that people who develop the capabilities of Exercise Optimism create more options and therefore more effective.

Close personal relationships are at the heart of satisfaction in life. This research suggests that strong relationships with people are driven by an increase in empathy. If you approach others with empathy, try to listen to them and understand their emotions better, a bond will be formed. In that way, you transfer your energy to them which, in turn, comes back to you, providing motivation for both. These EQ competencies also help you achieve a sense of wellbeing. Increasing empathy, gaining a better understanding of others at work, at home, and in your social life, will result in feeling better about life and a stronger network.

In summary, emotional intelligence is a key ingredient in life success. In particular, three competencies appear to be most powerful: Exercise Optimism, Engage Intrinsic Motivation, Pursue Noble Goals, and Increase Empathy. The first two of these competencies are linked to self-management and drive. It means that while self-awareness is an invaluable starting point, performance requires action.

These EQ competencies can be seen as strategic resources for moving from awareness to action. The ingredient of Pursue Noble Goals suggests that success also requires a long-term purpose - it's not enough to be active, we need direction. Finally, adding Increase Empathy to the model reveals that to succeed in life, we need to connect with others. In summary, these findings say that success requires us to create new possibilities, be proactive in taking action that is linked to long-term purpose - and to connect with others.

Background on Six Seconds and the SEI

Six Seconds is a global nonprofit network supporting people to create positive change – everywhere, all the time. Our vision is a billion people practicing the skills of emotional intelligence worldwide. Founded in 1997, Six Seconds is the first and largest organization 100% dedicated to the development of emotional intelligence. We research the value of emotional intelligence and best practices for learning and developing these skills.



Six Seconds provides certification courses to train coaches, educators, and leaders in the use of Six Seconds' evidence-based tools. These include individual and organizational assessments, case studies, and publications.

The Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence (SEI) Assessment was developed internationally in conjunction with Six Seconds' offices world-wide. The tool was developed to support people to put emotional intelligence into action by understand how their brain works and their key competencies for performance. The SEI was first published in 2005.

There are now over 100,000 people in the SEI norm group and the tool is well validated and widely used in business, government, nonprofit, and education – including organizations such as HSBC, the US Navy, Amazon, Microsoft, BMW, the UN, and Rotana. The database includes people from more than 125 countries and is one of the most frequently used EQ tools in the world. The SEI is available in various languages (see <http://6sec.org/seivs> for the current list). For more about SEI, please visit www.6seconds.org/sei which includes additional research and the full Technical Manual.

Thanks to Giacomo Nottoli from the MGMTLAB.eu research lab for analysis for this paper.

References

- ¹ Salovey, P. & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9, 185-211.
- ² Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York, NY: Bantam
- ³ Freedman, J., Ghini M., & Jensen. A. (2004). *Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment*, Six Seconds (www.6seconds.org/sei)
- ⁴ Freedman, J et al (2015). *SEI Technical Manual*, Six Seconds
- ⁵ For example, see Freedman J and Daniel J, *Case Study: Emotional Intelligence for People First Leadership at FedEx Express* (<http://www.6seconds.org/2014/01/14/case-study-emotional-intelligence-people-first-leadership-fedex-express/>)
- ⁶ Fariselli et al (2006). *Increasing Emotional Intelligence*. Six Seconds

