

A vertical column of ten white, 3D-style upward-pointing arrows on the left side of the cover. A red, 3D-style upward-pointing arrow is positioned to the right of the middle of the column. A white dotted line starts from the middle of the white arrows and curves upwards and to the right, ending at the red arrow.

# The Business Case for Emotional Intelligence

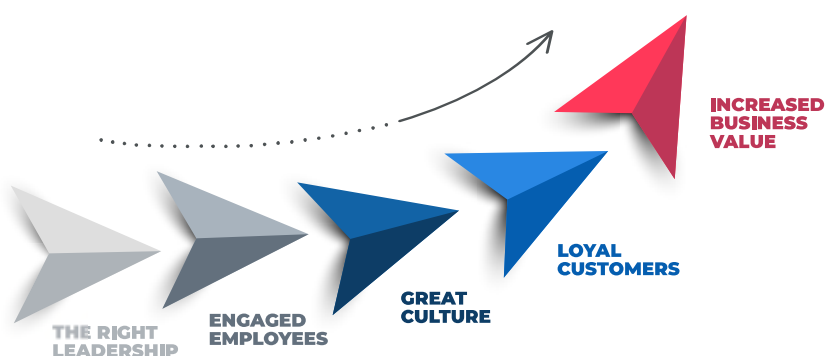
High emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of success for leaders, teams and organizations globally.

*by Joshua Freedman, Michael Miller  
and Patty Freedman*

# Executive Summary

*High emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of success for leaders, teams and entire organizations – all over the world.*

How does emotional intelligence create value inside organizations?



## 5 KEY FINDINGS

- What separates exceptional leaders? It's emotional intelligence. Leaders high in emotional intelligence are 7x as likely to be high in leadership performance outcomes.
- Employee engagement is the lifeblood of organizational performance – but only 21% of global employees are engaged. Emotional Intelligence is a key driver of engagement, accounting for as much as 70% of the variation.
- A healthy organizational climate matters, yet hybrid and remote work add emotional and logistical complexity. Organizations that prioritize EQ are 22x as likely to be high performing.
- Companies with higher emotional intelligence build better relationships with customers, which strengthens trust, which drives loyalty. A 5% increase in customer loyalty results in 25% increase in profit.
- High emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of performance and profitability for leaders, teams, and entire organizations.

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*Six Seconds is committed to bringing emotional intelligence into the workplace as we help global leaders solve their most pressing problems. In this report, we feature stories and case studies of organizations that are increasing value by leveraging emotional intelligence. We examine the role of emotional intelligence on essential business areas like leadership, employee engagement, organizational culture, and customer loyalty – and share best practices you can implement today.*

For more resources on assessing and growing emotional intelligence, please see [6seconds.org/business](https://6seconds.org/business) for the tools highlighted in some of the case studies.

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# Introduction to the Business Case for Emotional Intelligence

**Emotional intelligence is the difference that makes the difference.**

THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR: Emotional intelligence (EQ) is a key differentiator for the most successful leaders, teams and organizations all over the world. Across industries and company sizes, research links emotional intelligence to better business outcomes, like higher employee engagement, lower turnover and absenteeism, and greater profitability. Contrary to the popular belief that cognitive intelligence and technical capability are the real drivers of professional success, research shows that compared with IQ, emotional intelligence is more than twice as predictive of performance.<sup>1</sup> On an organizational level, the correlation is even stronger: Organizations that prioritize emotional intelligence are 22x as likely to be high performing.<sup>2</sup>

In this analysis, we'll explore case studies from nearly every sector of the economy with a single question in mind: What are the ways organizations are increasing value by leveraging emotional intelligence? These cases demonstrate the value of emotional intelligence in a variety of contexts – from hospitality to healthcare, energy to manufacturing, information technology to financial services. They also highlight the value of investing in emotional intelligence for team members up and down the organizational chart, from executives to middle managers to frontline employees.

First, let's define emotional intelligence and explore why this discussion matters more than ever in the current political and economic context.

## 2x

Emotional Intelligence is **more than 2x** as predictive of performance as IQ.<sup>3</sup>

## 22x

Organizations that prioritize emotional intelligence are **22x as likely to be high performing**.<sup>4</sup>

## What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to blend thinking and feeling to make optimal decisions. It's "being smarter with feelings." Just as we use mathematical intelligence to get accurate data and use it to solve math challenges, emotional intelligence helps us accurately perceive and solve emotional challenges.

For most of the 20th Century, researchers considered cognitive intelligence – measured by the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) – to be the main predictor of people's future success.

In the 1990s, however, new research posited that emotional factors – such as self-awareness, empathy, and relational ability – could more accurately predict professional success. This idea became popularized by Daniel Goleman's bestselling book in 1995, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Goleman's book was inspired by the research of two professors, Peter Salovey and John "Jack" Mayer, who published a seminal article in 1990, "Emotional Intelligence,"<sup>5</sup> that defined EQ as a scientifically testable "intelligence."

Emotional intelligence is correlated with essential building blocks for the workplace, such as problem-solving, leadership, collaboration, innovation, and influencing. It's also a driving force in wellbeing, personal relationships, and quality of life. So it's alarming to see that emotional intelligence is declining.

State of the Heart is the world's largest study of emotional intelligence tracking changing trends globally. The 2023 research<sup>6</sup> comes from a database of over 100,000 people assessed in 2021-2022, the analysis is based on a randomized, representative sample from 140 countries.

“Emotions are data.  
They are messages  
from you to you.”  
- Joshua Freedman, CEO Six Seconds

The implications for business are far-reaching. Given the importance of emotional intelligence as a driver of engagement and performance, this decline may exacerbate challenges around employee engagement. Knowing that emotional intelligence is strongly predictive of leadership performance, this decline may indicate a shortage of leadership excellence. On the other hand, it means that leaders who are strong in EQ will be even more valuable.

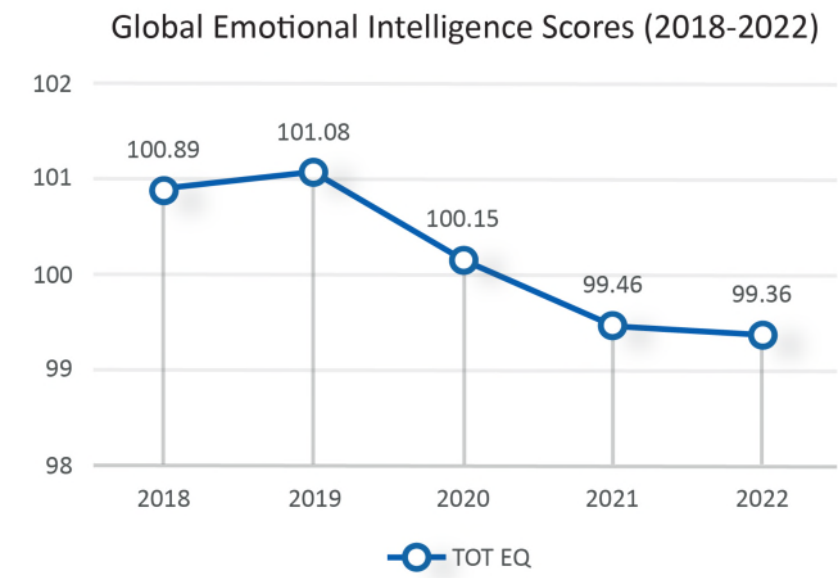


Diagram 1: Decline in global emotional intelligences skills from 2018-2022.<sup>11</sup>

## Decline is a Multi-year Trend

While the effects were amplified by the pandemic, the 2021 State of the Heart report showed an ongoing decline since 2014. In 2020-2021, some aspects of emotional intelligence increased (such as self-management and optimism) and others showed significant declines (such as emotional equilibrium and empathy). The study finds these declines are occurring in every global region, for both female and male respondents, and for people of all ages and roles – and are far more deleterious for younger generations.

“Declines are occurring in every global region, for both female and male respondents, and for people of all ages and roles – and are far more deleterious for younger generations.”<sup>12</sup>

- Joshua Freedman, CEO Six Seconds

## Pandemic Effects

It's likely that the pandemic and its consequential effects played a major part in this decline. Since emotional intelligence is, in part, used and developed in relationships, it would make sense that enforced isolation would degrade EQ. In general, stress/anxiety seem to reduce cognitive functioning,<sup>7</sup> and according to the World Health Organization in 2022, the pandemic triggered a 25% increase in anxiety.<sup>8</sup> The combination of uncertainty, isolation, and the need to make numerous adaptations taxed people's capacities.

## Generational Impact

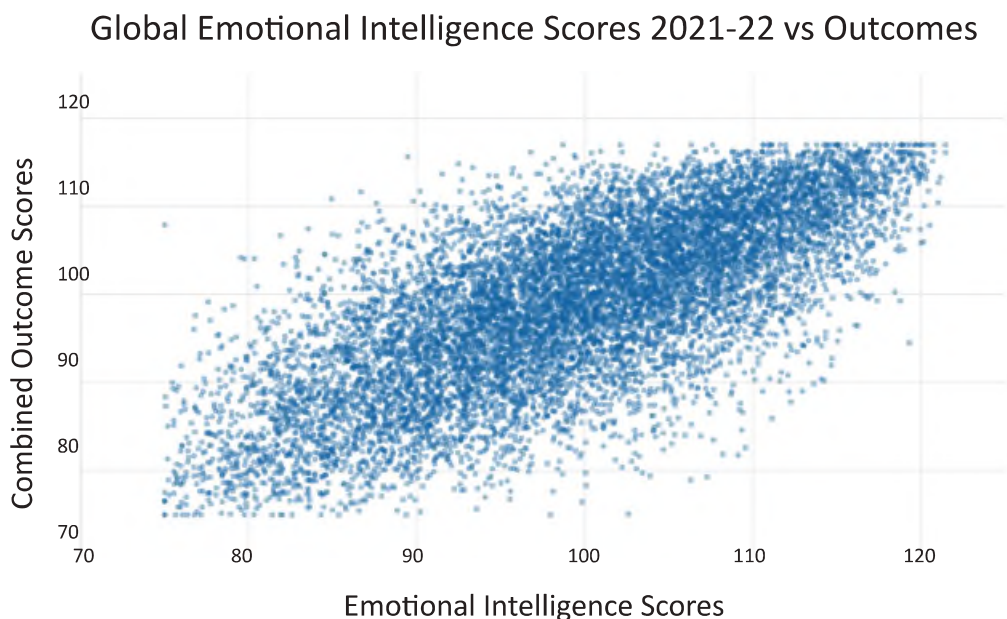
Matching the findings cited above from WHO, and multiple other studies, the 2021 State of the Heart report shows younger generations were more adversely affected.<sup>9</sup> A World Bank report goes so far as to say, Covid-19 “caused a hidden but massive collapse in the human capital of young people at critical moments in the life cycle.”<sup>10</sup> Businesses concerned with engaging a multigenerational workforce will face new challenges as a result.



## Emotional intelligence and Success

In the nearly 30 years since Goleman's book became a bestseller, the term 'emotional intelligence' became both a widespread and misunderstood topic in popular culture – and the subject of countless research studies. These studies largely corroborated and expanded the initial hypothesis, linking emotional intelligence to personal and professional success, greater wellbeing, and healthier relationships. Now that we have rigorous metrics and clear definitions, researchers are finding that emotional intelligence is learnable, measurable, and can be improved at any age. EQ is correlated with numerous performance outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

This graph shows the correlation of emotional intelligence (x-axis) and the combined performance outcomes (y-axis) of effectiveness, relationships, wellbeing, and quality of life. Each dot is one person; the trend shows a clear, positive correlation: Emotional intelligence scores predict 50-60% of the variation in outcome scores.



**Diagram 2: Emotional Intelligence scores are correlated with performance outcome scores in the State of the Heart.<sup>14</sup>**

# Letter from the CEO

The worst business advice I ever got was  
**“Leave emotions out of it.”**

The truth is, our emotions shape how we make decisions, come up with new ideas, and build relationships. Effective business strategy goes beyond the obvious: Great leaders tap their instincts and their emotional insights, to create a winning path.

“Emotions shape how we make decisions, come up with new ideas, and build relationships.

- Joshua Freedman, CEO Six Seconds

When we try to push our emotions aside, we miss important messages. Feelings such as trust, loyalty, confidence, and even fear are here for a reason: They're signals about relationships, people and culture. Ignoring this data, or pushing it away because it's uncomfortable, isn't good for us as people, and it is bad for business. The smart solution is to understand emotions as a strategic resource – a source of intelligence about ourselves and our people. Using EQ this way will transform your work.

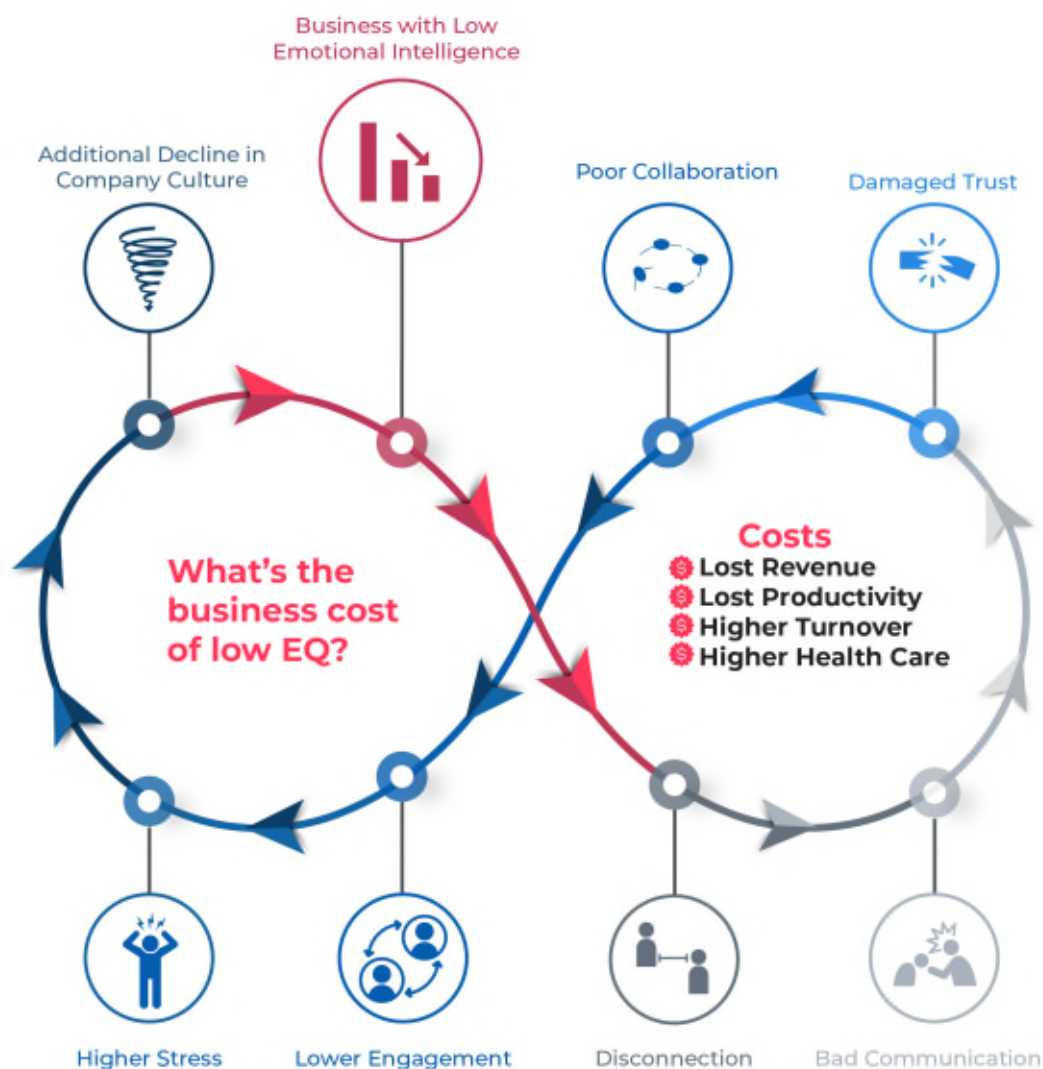
## How much is low emotional intelligence costing your business?

Most leaders don't look at the hidden costs of low emotional intelligence. Yet in the current economic climate, these significant risks are becoming harder to ignore. See the Infinite cycle (Diagram 3) that illustrates these costs.

Some of these costs are tangible: turnover, absenteeism, errors and customer dissatisfaction. Many leaders underestimate the role of low emotional intelligence because they're insulated from the hard truths. For example, we know that people don't leave companies, they leave leaders. Yet, how many people will be direct enough to tell a boss, “I'm leaving because

you've let toxic people pollute this company I can't stand working here anymore"? That would burn bridges. Instead, exit interviews are filled vague assertions about "seeking new opportunities," and companies ignore the root cause.

Other costs are more subtle, but even more destructive. Poor trust and communication lowers productivity and engagement. Low engagement stifles innovation and creativity, and leads to avoidable mistakes and bloated payroll costs. In turn, that leads to even lower trust and higher stress, and the cycle goes on. The cumulative effects add up and damage a brand's reputation, making it harder to recruit, to keep star talent, and to attract new customers.



**Diagram 3: Infinite cycle: The business cost of low emotional intelligence**

## If you could reverse these trends, how much would it be worth?

Emotional intelligence delivers a distinct competitive advantage – and that's even more valuable in challenging times.

*“Embracing the ‘next normal’ – means confronting uncertainty head-on and building it into your decision-making”<sup>16</sup>*  
- Deloitte “Covid-19: Confronting Uncertainty Through And Beyond The Crisis”

## Storm of Uncertainty

Today, leaders face turbulent economic and workplace climates never seen before. It's not just “complexity.” The combination of deep and persistent uncertainty, global interconnection, and rapid pace make it impossible to follow old ways of planning. The workforce has changed. A dispersed, digital, and dynamic workforce is now the norm.

Employee expectations have changed. Employees seek flexibility, autonomy, and meaning from work. They care about the company's values, and are asking that the company genuinely cares about them as a person.

Technology has changed and not just from new innovation; The very process of innovation is radically different than a decade ago. Just one example: AIs that create AIs.

This decade will be defined by uncertainty and rapid changes – years of adapting, pivoting, recalibrating, rightsizing, and reinventing. As business leaders, it's time to get to the core: these problems are not just economic, but also emotional.

To be successful leaders must shift from a short-term mindset of “navigating this challenge” to building resilient, adaptable organizations. We must shift from, “maybe a couple of ‘mental health days’ will fix it” to truly sustainable systems. That will demand leaders who are agile in uncertainty and skilled in supporting people to be top performers – no matter the size of the storm.

## A realistic solution

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is key to unlocking a more engaged, productive, and loyal workforce.

When you grow these learnable, measurable, scientifically grounded skills, leaders become more aware, and more skillful at the emotional side of the job. This is more essential than ever. When we consider the hard parts of leadership – such as influence, engagement, collaboration, and coaching – emotions are a central factor.

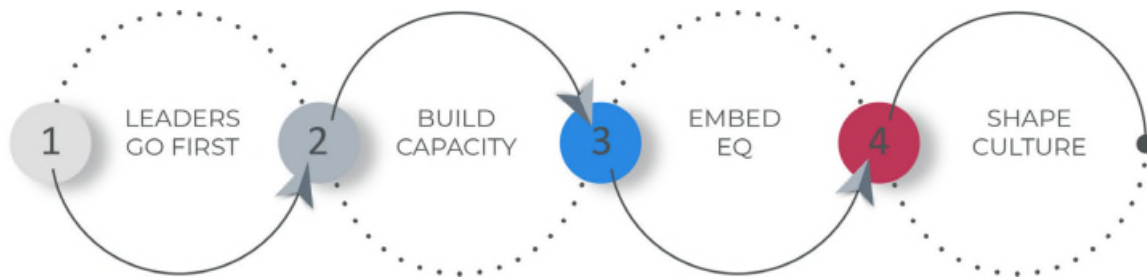
High emotional intelligence leads to people working better together. It ignites an upward spiral of teamwork, communication, and better decisions – which fuels positive culture for sustainable performance. That means even in times of economic challenge, you'll build a resilient organization where great people want to do their best work.

## How to implement emotional intelligence in 4 steps

I challenge you to optimize the value in your people, relationships, and teams. Rather than thinking of emotional intelligence as, something to learn about or a one-off training, use it as a method for building a winning culture.

“High emotional intelligence leads to people working better together. It ignites an upward spiral of teamwork, communication, and better decisions”

- Joshua Freedman, CEO Six Seconds



**Diagram 4: 4 Steps to implement emotional intelligence in organizations**

***1. Leaders go first.***

Start by using a robust assessment and coaching to learn about your own emotional intelligence and how to leverage it as a leader. Then build strategic alignment: Get crystal clear that these skills are ‘Must Haves,’ not ‘nice to haves’ and show your people why this impacts your top and bottom line.

***2. Build capacity.***

Develop your internal champions and experts who will infuse emotional intelligence into your culture. Equip and support them.

***3. Embed emotional intelligence.***

Put emotional intelligence into your systems and processes for every stage of talent development from selection to advancement. Make emotional intelligence a core competency that is measured and deployed at all levels of your organization.

***4. Shape the culture.***

Use coaching and ongoing events to keep these skills top-of-mind. Get real and normalize authentic dialogue. Create an environment where emotions are not only recognized but also leveraged as a competitive advantage.

## The gist

In this time of uncertainty Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft says, “the best leaders will bring clarity, energy and work to unconstrain their teams setting them up for success.”<sup>15</sup>

As we advance into the post-Covid era, one of the biggest mistakes we can make is to use our old ways of thinking and leading in the next era. What we miss when we “leave emotions out of it” is critical information, essential messages that unlock successful teams. By combining the power of emotions and objectively measured qualitative data, we can make sustainable decisions leading our organizations into the future.

It's time to embrace a simple formula for breakthrough results:

**Emotions drive people, and people drive performance.**

- Joshua Freedman,  
CEO Six Seconds

# Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

In this section, we'll explore 3 key findings on leadership and emotional intelligence, including research and case studies leveraging emotional intelligence to improve leadership.

**1.1** A leader's effectiveness is strongly correlated with emotional intelligence. Leaders who score high in emotional intelligence are 7x as likely to score high in leadership performance outcomes.

**1.2** A company's success depends on its leaders' emotional intelligence, including key metrics like employee productivity and retention, customer satisfaction, and bottom line results.

**1.3** Research shows leaders can learn and develop emotional intelligence – improving both leadership effectiveness and key performance outcomes.



## What separates exceptional leaders? It's emotional intelligence.

People don't leave companies, they leave leaders. Why have *you* left a leader? In decades of working with organizations all around the world, the most frequent answers revolve around a lack of emotional intelligence, citing distrust, disrespect, or even toxicity.

How effective a leader is at their job is largely predicted by emotional intelligence. That reality is reflected in the data. Researched outcomes of leaders' emotional intelligence include: employee satisfaction, wellbeing, retention, productivity, and motivation; and ultimately, a company's profitability and success.

**Leadership is about people and relationships, and exceptional leaders use emotional intelligence to create a context for people to thrive.**

Learn how Six Seconds helps organizations **improve leadership performance** with emotional intelligence.

### 7x HIGH PERFORMERS

*Leaders who score high on emotional intelligence are 7x as likely to have high leadership performance outcomes.<sup>17</sup>*


High EQ Leaders



vs

Low EQ Leaders



 = high performance

## 1.1 Emotional intelligence predicts leadership effectiveness

“Most effective leaders are alike in one critical way,” Daniel Goleman wrote nearly 20 years ago for Harvard Business Review, “they all have a high degree of what has become known as emotional intelligence.” In the two decades since, a growing body of research supports this claim: Goleman’s own findings are that emotional intelligence accounted for nearly 90% of what set apart exceptional leaders from average ones.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Six Seconds’ Workplace Vitality Research found that leaders who score high on emotional intelligence are 7x as likely to have high leadership performance outcomes.<sup>19</sup> Higher EQ leaders are more likely to make better decisions, engage and influence more effectively, and create the right mood for the job.

“Emotional intelligence is the sine non qua of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won’t make a great leader.”<sup>24</sup>

- Daniel Goleman, “What Makes a Leader?”  
Harvard Business Review

All around the world, across dozens of industries, studies at major brands like Google, Johnson & Johnson and FedEx have found a strong link between emotional intelligence and leadership performance.<sup>20</sup>

Why is a leader’s emotional intelligence so important? They set the tone for the organization. At a neurobiological level, people in positions of power or authority spread emotions more easily than others.<sup>21</sup> Aware of this responsibility and equipped with the ability to navigate emotions, leaders skilled in emotional intelligence tend to create a more positive organizational climate, foster a culture of positive mental health, and sustain a state of high vitality.<sup>22</sup> A healthy and vital organizational climate then creates the conditions for employees to perform better, feel that their work is worthwhile, and connect with each other, which we’ll explore in detail in the next section on employee engagement. This positive cycle then takes on a life of its own to fuel a higher-performing organizational climate. It all starts at the top.

Consider the Siemens case: In a hostile business context, a focus on emotional intelligence equipped leaders to build trust. In eight months, this translated to a 46% increase in engagement.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.2 Emotionally intelligent leaders fuels organizational success

How do leaders' emotional intelligence skills translate to company success?

Consider these case studies:

An executive development program with 300 leaders at a Fortune 10 company tested the extent to which accurate self-awareness correlated to team effectiveness and positive results in key metrics like market share, ROA, customer awareness, and productivity.<sup>25</sup> The result? Less self-aware individuals made worse decisions, engaged in less coordination, and showed less conflict management, ultimately cutting the chances of team success in half.

Further research corroborates these findings and links emotionally intelligent leadership to specific financial results for teams, divisions, and entire organizations. In 1996, David McClelland, a renowned researcher in organizational psychology, led a study at a global food and beverage company that found that when senior managers had a critical mass of emotional intelligence capabilities, their divisions outperformed yearly earning goals by 20%.<sup>26</sup> The findings held true across global regions, including the US, Europe and Asia. This finding inspired further research on the link between leaders' emotional intelligence and organizational performance, and research has corroborated McClelland's findings with leaders across dozens of industries.



# 20%

*overperformance of  
yearly earning goals for  
managers in divisions  
with a critical mass of  
emotional intelligence  
capabilities<sup>28</sup>*

One analysis of 186 executives from two executive mentoring associations, the Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) and the Innovators' Alliance, found a strong correlation between emotionally intelligent leadership and highly profitable results.<sup>27</sup> Similar studies have found a correlation between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee productivity, retention, and wellbeing, which of course all contribute to success and profitability.

Having established the relationship between emotional intelligence and key business outcomes, the question is: Can leaders learn and improve emotional intelligence, and measurably improve business outcomes as a result?

According to a growing body of research, the answer is yes.

“Higher EQ leaders are more likely to make better decisions, engage and influence more effectively, and create the right mood for the job.”

- Joshua Freedman, CEO Six Seconds

### 1.3 Leaders can learn and develop emotional intelligence – improving both leadership effectiveness and key performance outcomes

Case studies at organizations all around the world – like PepsiCo, the US Air Force, and Excelitas Technologies – show the ROI of investing in emotional intelligence. While each case focuses on different areas – selection and hiring, retention, productivity – the overall finding is consistent: Investing in high quality emotional intelligence training leads to better business outcomes.



**73%**  
**LEADERSHIP  
IMPROVEMENT**

*73% of leaders receiving emotional intelligence training improved their leadership effectiveness in global technical company contexts.<sup>29</sup>*



Facing expensive setbacks in its hiring and training of Pararescue Jumper candidates, the US Air Force invested in identifying specific emotional intelligence skills that predicted completion of the highly demanding course. The net savings coming from introducing measurements of those specific emotional intelligence skills into selection reached \$190 million.<sup>30</sup>

*“The challenge of a leader is looking around the corner... and making the change before it's too late to make the change.”*

-Indra Nooyi, CEO Pepsi Co



At PepsiCo, a pilot project with selected leaders showed an 10% increase in productivity and an 87% reduction in turnover, and ultimately to \$4M in savings. Encouraged by the results, they expanded the program and the overall economic value has risen to over \$30M, with the ROI on leaders' training costs exceeding 1000%.<sup>32</sup>



At Excelitas Technologies, a global leader in optoelectric and photonic solutions, emotional intelligence training led to 73% of leaders improving their leadership effectiveness<sup>31</sup> – based on objective, multi-rater feedback from others using the Six Seconds SEI360 leadership tool. The leaders were spread across three global regions, showing that emotional intelligence training can work in a global context and at highly technical companies.

Emotional intelligence fuels effective leaders, who in turn fuel bottom line results for companies. It's a set of skills you can learn and improve at any age.

# Employee Engagement and Productivity

In this section, we'll explore 5 key findings on employee engagement and emotional intelligence, including case studies of interventions aimed at improving engagement and performance.

**2.1** Engagement is an emotional experience, so perks alone don't work.

**2.2** An employee's emotional intelligence has a significant, positive relationship with their engagement, across industries, roles, and countries.

**2.3** A manager's emotional intelligence has a significant impact on employee engagement.

**2.4** Employee engagement drives business results.

**2.5** Emotional intelligence interventions are effective to achieve higher engagement levels and bottom line results.

# Employee engagement is the lifeblood of any organization – but global levels remain low

Gallup defines employee engagement as the involvement and enthusiasm of an employee in their work and workplace. It's the degree to which employees feel committed to the organization, satisfied with their job, and energized at work.

The problem? This is a minority of the global workforce. Only 21% of employees worldwide score as engaged, per research from Gallup. This alarming statistic has troubling financial implications as well: Employees who are not engaged or who are actively disengaged cost the world \$7.8 trillion in lost productivity, according to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace: 2022 Report.<sup>33</sup>

That's equal to 11% of global GDP. "Business units with engaged workers have 23% higher profit compared with business units with miserable workers," says Jon Clifton, Gallup CEO and coauthor of the study. "Additionally, teams with thriving workers see significantly lower absenteeism, turnover and accidents; they also see higher customer loyalty."<sup>34</sup>

How can teams and entire organizations improve employee engagement? Research consistently finds a strong correlation between emotional intelligence – both a manager's and an employee's – and employee engagement.

Connect with Six Seconds to learn how we can help you **develop engaged and thriving employees** who boost your business outcomes.



## 21%

*of employees are engaged at work<sup>35</sup>*



## 23%

*higher profits for business units with engaged employees<sup>36</sup>*



## 2.1 Engagement is an emotional experience, so perks alone don't work.

In the 20 years since Silicon Valley tech start-ups popularized new types of perks at work, from espresso machines to ping pong tables to on-campus bikes, many leaders assume these material markers are essential to sustain high employee engagement and keep the top performers.

But the research does not back this up: Engagement and retention don't correlate with benefits awards. Fortune 500 companies are spending more on benefits and perks than ever – almost \$2,500 a year per employee, on average. Yet engagement scores have remained stable for years.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, Six Seconds' 2022 Workplace Vitality Report<sup>38</sup> found that joy has become increasingly more predictive of team performance and engagement every year since 2019. "Companies often conflate and confuse the material markers with human experience," says Joshua Freedman in Six Seconds' 2022 Workplace Vitality Report. "Toys and perks are things; joy is an emotion. What managers need is to gain new awareness and skill in focusing on people's moods and cultivating positive emotions."<sup>39</sup>

"Once people's basic needs are met," says Carolina Valencia, VP of HR practice at Gartner, "people are more powerfully motivated by feelings than by material features."<sup>40</sup>

**"Toys and perks are things; joy is an emotion. What managers need is to gain new awareness and skill in focusing on people's moods and cultivating positive emotions."<sup>41</sup>**

- Joshua Freedman, "Six Seconds' 2022 Workplace Vitality Report"

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## 2.2 An employee's emotional intelligence has a significant, positive relationship with their engagement.

Across industries, roles, and countries, there is a strong correlation between employee emotional intelligence and employee engagement. This correlation indicates that employees with high emotional intelligence are more likely to be engaged with the organization and vice versa.

These findings have been replicated in diverse work settings such as automobile workers in India,<sup>42</sup> elderly care facility employees in Australia,<sup>43</sup> and manufacturing plants in the USA<sup>44</sup> – indicating that this relationship exists on a global scale.



**76%**  
of **employee engagement scores** are predicted by emotional intelligence.<sup>46</sup>

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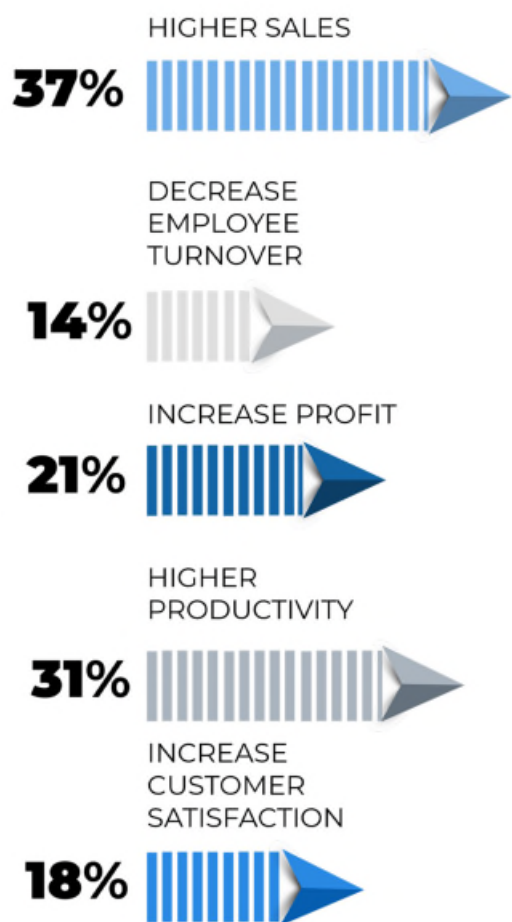
## 2.3 A manager's emotional intelligence has a significant impact on employee engagement.

In addition to an employee's own levels of emotional intelligence, a manager's emotional intelligence strongly correlates with employee engagement. In one 3-year study at Amadori, a leading supplier of McDonald's in Europe, managerial EQ predicted 76% of the variation in employee engagement scores.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.4 Employee engagement drives business results.

Why does an employee's level of engagement matter? Engaged employees perform better, experience less burnout, and stay in organizations longer. Any company's strategy depends on high levels of employee engagement.

A meta-analysis of employee engagement globally correlated high engagement with the following outcomes:<sup>47</sup>



### HIGH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT RESULTS IN BETTER OUTCOMES

While the percentages vary in individual case studies, the evidence is clear: employee engagement drives business performance.

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## 2.5 Emotional intelligence interventions can effectively improve engagement levels and bottom line results.

Is emotional intelligence a measurable, learnable skill set? Research says yes. People all over the world, at any age, can improve emotional intelligence.<sup>48</sup> Even in industries where emotional intelligence may not seem important, like at a manufacturing plant, research studies have found that proper training can increase emotional intelligence, employee engagement, and KPIs like reportable safety incidents or plant performance.

**“EMOTIONS DRIVE  
PEOPLE.  
PEOPLE DRIVE  
PERFORMANCE.”**

- Joshua Freedman, CEO Six Seconds

Consider the Komatsu case. The world's second largest manufacturer of mining equipment, Komatsu faced a crisis of morale and productivity at one of its plants in Italy. The leadership team developed a customized, high impact program focused on managerial skills and improving employee engagement. The result? The overall Engagement Index increased 112% over the pre-test, and the percentage of team members who scored as disengaged declined from 41% to 9%, transforming the culture. How did this increase correlate with performance metrics? Plant performance increased 9.4% over the same period.<sup>49</sup>

In another case study, at a special chemical plant based in the eastern United States, a multi-year emotional intelligence intervention led to a 91% improvement in employee engagement and an 83% decrease in safety incidents.<sup>50</sup> When organizations commit to changing the culture, it leads to better bottom line results.

As Six Seconds' CEO Joshua Freedman says, “Emotions drive people, and people drive performance.”

# Organizational Culture

In this section, we'll explore 3 key findings on organizational culture, including case studies of interventions aimed at improving climate with emotional intelligence.

**3.1** A strong company culture is a competitive advantage.

**3.2** Creating that culture is more difficult than ever with a digital, dispersed and dynamic workforce.

**3.3** Emotional intelligence – and specific emotions like joy and trust – are critical differentiators for high performing organizations.

## An organization's emotional climate matters – more than ever

Organizational culture is the collective set of values, beliefs, and assumptions that govern how employees think, feel, and behave at work. Organizational Culture is a collection of consistent, observable patterns of behavior and the why behind them. Because industries and situations vary significantly, there is not a one-size-fits-all culture template that meets the needs of all organizations, but there are common elements of high performing cultures, like high levels of trust and accountability.

Learn how Six Seconds helps organizations like yours **harness human potential** to improve business performance with emotional intelligence.



# 27%

*of US employees strongly agree that they believe in their organization's values.<sup>51</sup>*



# 22x

*Organizations that prioritize EQ are 22x as likely to be high performing.<sup>52</sup>*

### 3.1 A strong company culture is a competitive advantage.

Why should organizations care about creating a healthy climate?

People want to enjoy work and feel valued by their organization. They also want to make a difference — to believe in their company's mission and contribute to worthwhile goals. When they do, they are much more likely to be highly engaged – a key driver of performance, as discussed in the previous section.

By developing a culture where people feel connected and supported, organizations can attract top talent, keep employees engaged, and inspire a collective sense of ownership that drives performance and bottom line results.

According to research from Gallup, a strong organizational culture has a massive impact on key performance metrics. Consider this research:

Among U.S. employees, four in 10 strongly agree with the statement, “The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.” By moving that ratio to eight in 10 employees, organizations could realize a 41% reduction in absenteeism, a 50% drop in patient safety incidents and a 33% improvement in quality.<sup>53</sup>

This is because a challenging or toxic culture leads to disengaged employees, high turnover, poor customer relations and lower profits. High turnover alone is an expensive problem. The Society for Human Resource Management estimates the cost of replacing an employee is between 50% to 200% of their annual salary.<sup>54</sup>

A strong company culture attracts top talent and empowers them to do great work – leading to high retention and sustainable high performance.

“Corporate culture matters. How management chooses to treat its people impacts everything for better or worse.” – Simon Sinek

## 3.2 Creating that culture is more difficult than ever.

Culture can be understood as “how we do things around here.” For many organizations around the world, “how we do things” has undergone an unprecedented transformation in recent years – and continues to change and evolve at a rapid pace.

“We have an opportunity to create an even better workplace...ultimately leading to increased innovation and better business outcomes.”

- Brent Hyder, President and Chief People Officer at Salesforce

Even before the pandemic, many observers began to push back on the view of organizational culture as something uniform and static, and suggest a more realistic view would be one of many cultures that are overlapping and dynamic. Different departments, teams, and leaders create distinct cultures – even within one dominant culture. Now, with the rise of remote work and a workforce that is more dispersed and dynamic than ever before, this view of multiple cultures seems even more accurate. How does hybrid work impact an organization’s culture? On the one hand, it adds much more emotional complexity, especially for leaders. This requires emotional intelligence to navigate.

While increasing complexity, hybrid work also presents an opportunity for organizations to create climates that are even healthier than what existed previously. “We have an opportunity to create an even better workplace,” says Brent Hyder, president and chief people officer at Salesforce. “One that allows us to be more connected to each other, find more balance between work and home, and advance equality – ultimately leading to increased innovation and better business outcomes.”

Hybrid or not, a growing body of research has identified the key drivers of successful organizational climates.



### 3.3 A positive emotional climate – fueled by emotional intelligence – is a critical differentiator for high performing organizations.

Emotional intelligence is a hallmark of a healthy organizational culture — it helps colleagues support one another through stress and conflict, leads to greater empathy and understanding, and ultimately increases morale and cohesion.

Organizations that prioritize emotional intelligence are 22x as likely to be high performing,<sup>55</sup> according to Six Seconds' Workplace Vitality research.

The 2022 edition of that report found that since 2019, emotions have become even more important predictors of team performance at organizations all over the world. Three emotions in particular – trust, joy and empathy – correlate strongly with success.

Trust predicted 72.53% of the variance in overall performance outcomes among individual team members, and teams that experienced joy were 10x as likely to be high achieving and satisfied with their work.<sup>56</sup>

Further research corroborates these findings, and expands the definition of beneficial emotions. Consider the research led by Wharton management professor Michael Parke.<sup>57</sup> His team found that when employees express emotions at work, and coworkers respond empathetically, it unlocks a whole range of productive and beneficial outcomes for the group. Results included: more creativity, more effective problem solving, and an increased ability to generate new ideas.



**72.53%**  
OF PERFORMANCE IS  
PREDICTED BY TRUST

*Trust predicted 72.53%  
of the variance in overall  
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members.<sup>58</sup>*

This finding runs counter to old-school management beliefs – still pervasive in organizations around the world – that it's best to “leave emotions out of it” at work. Because of this belief, it has become common practice to ignore, suppress or dismiss employees' emotions, but this study suggests leaders should do exactly the opposite. Parke says “I think most significantly and probably urgently for leaders is having the courage to deal with emotions, and not just the positive ones, but being curious, validating people's experiences, not trying to shove them away, not trying to ignore them.”

A positive emotional climate – fueled by emotional intelligence – is a critical differentiator for high performing organizations.

“It's not IQ that leads to success. EQ is more important: emotional intelligence, social skills, how you relate, can you get things done. That's what makes a difference, especially in management.”

- Jamie Dimon, CEO of JP Morgan Chase

# Customer Loyalty

In this section, we'll explore 3 key findings on customer loyalty and satisfaction, including case studies of interventions aimed at improving the customer experience with emotional intelligence.

**4.1**

Emotional intelligence fuels customer loyalty and satisfaction.

**4.2**

Customer satisfaction and loyalty translates into more sales and added value for companies.

**4.3**

Emotional intelligence interventions effectively improve outcomes in sales and customer service.

# Customer loyalty comes from positive emotional experiences – and creating those requires emotional intelligence.

How can companies use emotional intelligence to drive customer loyalty and generate value for the organization? Consider this story.

In August, 2021, a customer walked into a Trader Joe's, a national grocery chain store in the US, to do his weekly shopping. At check-out, the cashier genuinely asked how he was doing, and he responded good but exhausted – he and his wife welcomed their first baby less than a week ago. The cashier said congratulations, and excused herself. She came back with chocolate covered

espresso beans and flowers. “I imagine this has been a difficult time. Here’s a gift from Trader Joe’s to help your family through this,” she said. The customer couldn’t wait to get home and share the story – and gifts – with his wife.

With empathy and emotional intelligence, Trader Joe’s created a positive, memorable experience – and fueled customer loyalty. “Work on creating emotional connections,” writes Shep Hyken in Forbes, “and your customers will come back for the right reasons – because they love doing business with you.”<sup>59</sup>

Emotional intelligence – the set of skills needed to consistently create emotional connections – is the key driver of customer loyalty.

Help your employees **create memorable emotional experiences for customers** with emotional intelligence.

“Emotional connection creates preference over the competition. Customers don’t just come back out of convenience. They see a difference between doing business with your company and other companies.”<sup>60</sup>

-Zhecho Dobrev, *The Big Miss: How Organizations Overlook the Value of Emotions*

## 4.1 Emotional intelligence fuels customer loyalty and satisfaction.

A company's success depends on its relationship with customers. The ideal relationship with customers is one based on consistent, positive experiences, like in the Trader Joe's example above. What skills do salespeople, customer service representatives and other employees need to consistently create positive emotional experiences for customers? Empathy and emotional intelligence.

Zhecho Dobrev, the bestselling author of *The Big Miss: How Organizations Overlook the Value of Emotions*, surveyed more than 19,000 customers in the U.S. and UK and found emotional attachment to be the biggest driver of value, responsible for about 43% of business value.<sup>61</sup> So what helps customers feel that kind of emotional attachment? In part it is the products or facilities, but mostly it's from relationships with people.

A case from UCB Pharma tested the link between emotional intelligence and customer experience. It found 98% of salespeople reported better customer relationships after the program.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps even more significant this program focused on developing sales managers with emotional intelligence tools – and that flowed outward to sales staff and then to customers.

This ripple effect of the staff's emotional intelligence improving the customer experience is also evident in a case from Sheraton Hotel Group. A new General Manager was brought into the Sheraton Studio City to turn around declining business. The GM implemented a year-long focus on emo-



tional intelligence for everyone working there. As teams began to interact more effectively the culture became more positive; for example, collaboration scores improved by over 20%. This led to a 19.6% drop in staff turnover. In turn, the engaged employees did a better job connecting with customers, leading the hotel to earn over 8% better customer satisfaction scores, which is enough that it became the #1 rated Sheraton for staff friendliness. This all translated to a 23.8% year-over-year increase in market share.<sup>63</sup>

### Additional research about customer loyalty and emotional intelligence:



In a study of 738 casino dealers in Macao, Catherine Prentice explores the role of emotional intelligence on customers. Dealers with higher EQ led to more customer satisfaction, less complaints, and longer play time. Further, dealers with higher EQ are more satisfied with their jobs and less likely to leave the role.<sup>66</sup>



Research in one of the UK's largest restaurant groups evaluated restaurant performance comparing managers with higher and lower EQ scores. Steve Langhorn found that managers high in emotional intelligence had restaurants that outperformed others in terms of increased guest satisfaction, lower turnover, and 34% greater annual profit growth.<sup>67</sup>



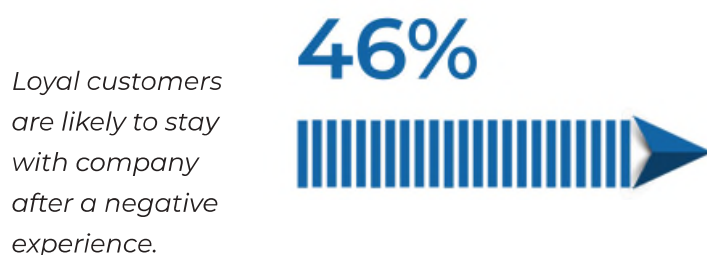
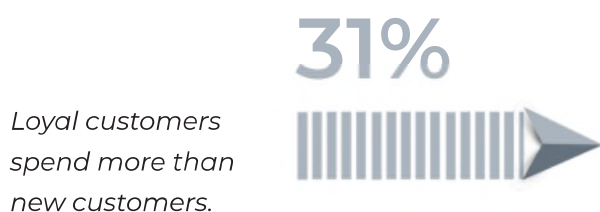
Assessing customer satisfaction in the telecom sector, Frank Frimpong Opuni found 79% in the variance of service quality is predicted by emotional intelligence scores. Further, a combination of service quality and emotional intelligence predict 57.3% of the variance in customer satisfaction.<sup>68</sup>

## 4.2

### Customer satisfaction and loyalty translates into more sales and added value for the company.

It pays to have loyal customers. Studies show that loyal customers spend 67% more on products and services than new customers. For many companies, even though the most loyal customers might only make up 20% of the client base, they provide up to 80% of the revenue.<sup>69</sup>

Further research on customer loyalty shows its importance.<sup>70</sup>



Can organizations leverage emotional intelligence to fuel customer loyalty and improve bottom line results? A collection of case studies says yes.

### 4.3 Emotional intelligence interventions effectively improve outcomes in sales and customer service.

Case studies from a wide range of industries show that when done right, emotional intelligence interventions can improve key business outcomes.

Consider these 3 examples:



At Sanofi-Aventis, a pharmaceutical company, a controlled study split salespeople into two groups. One group received emotional intelligence training, while the other did not. After the intervention, the experiment group's emotional intelligence had increased an average of 18% more than the control group, and had an average of 12% more sales than the control group. That 12% growth resulted in a monthly total increase of more than \$2.2 million for the 40 sales reps in the experimental group – resulting in a 500% ROI for the investment in the training.<sup>72</sup>



At Sheraton Studio City Hotel in Orlando, Florida, USA, an emotional intelligence intervention resulted in a 19.6% reduction in unwanted employee turnover, a 8.4% increase in guest satisfaction, and a 23.4% increase in market share.<sup>51</sup>



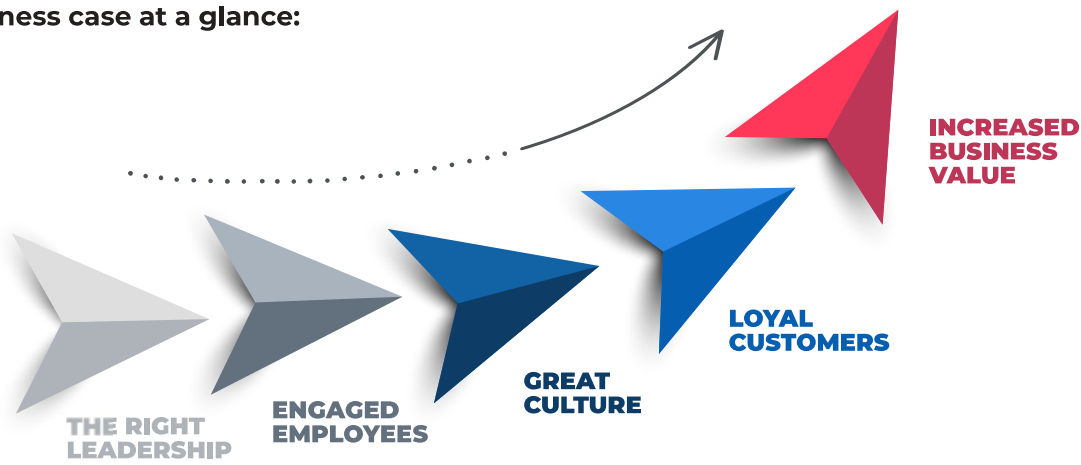
## SUNNDAYS

At Restaurant Sunndays in Valkenburg, Netherlands, an emotional intelligence training program for staff resulted in a 50% increase in guest satisfaction, a 25% increase in return customers, and a 25% increase in annual revenue.<sup>73</sup>

As these case studies demonstrate, emotional intelligence interventions can fuel dramatic increases in a company's performance in a wide range of industries, from hospitality to healthcare to insurance.

# Leveraging the value of emotional intelligence

## The business case at a glance:



In summary: When leaders are properly equipped, they build relationships and set a context for employees to fully engage.

At the same time, these factors cut costs by reducing absenteeism and turnover, limiting loss from errors, and protecting against representational damage. In addition, EQ has recently been associated with positive mental health,<sup>7</sup> which further reduces costs and improves people's lives.

That kind of buy-in drives a great culture – which cycles back to ignite the best in people. Performance spirals upward because you attract and keep talent, groups become teams, and collaboration blossoms.

In turn, companies with a great culture deliver a better customer experience. They provide superior products and more personalized, caring, interactions. That ladders up to being a trusted brand – creating greater value.

Even more compelling: This kind of competitive advantage is low-cost, offering tremendous ROI to companies that commit to putting people at the center.

# Why Six Seconds?

*Six Seconds supports organizations all over the world to create value with emotional intelligence.*

Six Seconds is the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence assessments, training, certification, and coaching. We partner with organizations to build more engaged, connected, and high-performing workplaces where people thrive.

We measure what matters. Our assessments are easy to use, normed and validated with a global data set, and actionable so you can build strategic people-centered goals.

We believe in transformation from the inside out. Our certification programs are grounded in research and equip you with practical skills that you can apply immediately.

We meet you where you are. Over 20,000 professionals have developed their emotional intelligence through our digital and in-person transformational learning experiences.

Six Seconds is the largest global network with over 10,000 certified, expert facilitators and coaches in 150 countries. As pioneers in the field of emotional intelligence, we have supported leaders and teams for over 25 years to help them increase productivity and effectiveness in the workplace.

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