

White Paper

Leaders in the United Arab Emirates, Emotional Intelligence, and Success

# LEADERSHIP SUCCESS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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### Abstract:

*The United Arab Emirates is emerging as the business capital of the Middle East. In this complex, demanding environment, to what extent do the “soft skills” of emotional intelligence matter? In a study of 418 leaders living in the region, there is a very strong relationship between emotional intelligence skills and performance outcomes. Scores on the SEI (Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment) predict over 58% of the variation in critical professional and personal success factors (such as effectiveness, influence, relationships, and career status). This means that if you want to get ahead in the Middle East, emotional intelligence is one of the most important capacities to develop.*

## Background

There are numerous studies documenting the relationship between emotional intelligence and various aspects of performance, but this is one of the first studies of this kind in the Middle East. The UAE, one of the region’s business centers, is the base for a wide range of businesses led by an incredibly diverse mix of leaders from all over the globe.

This study was conducted by Six Seconds (global) and Six Seconds Middle East in partnership with Dubai Knowledge Village (DKV), the region’s first and largest center for human resource management professionals. Focused on Human Resources, Learning, and Leadership, the 450 business partners form part of a long-term economic strategy to develop the region’s talent pool and accelerate its move into a knowledge-based economy. DKV is part of TECOM Investments, a subsidiary of Dubai Holdings, one of the major economic engines of the region.

## Sample Group

The invitation to participate in this study was sent by email to CEOs, General Managers, Executives, Managers and Leaders based in The Middle East by Dubai



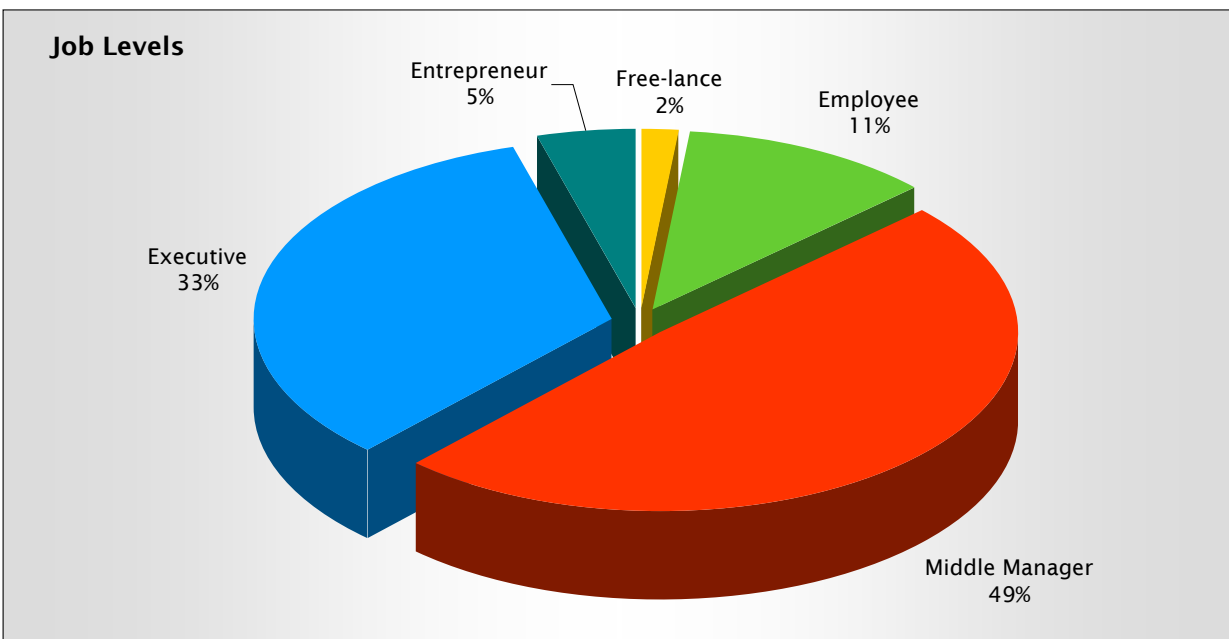
Knowledge Village as well as to those on the Six Seconds Middle East mailing list. The 418 individuals who responded by taking the assessment and performance survey range from entry-level managers to senior executives from a wide variety of organizations.

The sample group is 41% female and 59% male, ranging in age from 18-63 years (mean age is 35 years); 91% hold university degrees.

The roles represented are:

Job Level	Number	Percentage
Free-lance	7	1.7%
Employee	48	11.5%
Manager	204	48.7%
Executive	140	33.4%
Entrepreneur	19	4.5%

Or, graphically:



The sectors represented are:

Work Sector	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Education	43	10.3%
Entertainment	9	2.1%
Finance	60	14.3%



Healthcare	9	2.1%
Hospitality/Travel	89	21.2%
Industrial	23	5.5%
Other	98	23.6%
Service	40	9.5%
Technology	47	11.2%

Participants live in a variety of countries in The Middle East and represent 51 different nationalities reflecting the wide cultural diversity of the region. The most frequent nationality groups in the study include:

Country	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Jordan	9	2.15%
Germany	11	2.63%
Sweden	11	2.63%
Sri Lanka	12	2.86%
United States	12	2.86%
Egypt	13	3.10%
Philippines	18	4.30%
Lebanon	24	5.73%
Pakistan	27	6.44%
United Arab Emirates	32	7.64%
United Kingdom	39	9.31%
India	121	28.88%

## Assessments

### Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was measured with the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment (SEI).<sup>1</sup> The SEI is based on the Six Seconds Model of Emotional Intelligence consisting of eight core competencies associated with three macro areas: Self Awareness, Self Management, and Self Direction.

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<sup>1</sup> The only tool based on Six Seconds' model, the SEI is focused on developing key capacities for living and leading with emotional intelligence. ([www.6seconds.org/sei](http://www.6seconds.org/sei))



- Self Awareness, called “Know Yourself” includes two competencies: Enhance Emotional Literacy and Recognize Patterns.
- Self Management, called “Choose Yourself” includes four competencies: Apply Consequential Thinking, Navigate Emotions, Engage Intrinsic Motivation, and Exercise Optimism.
- The Self Direction area, called “Give Yourself,” includes Increase Empathy and Pursue Noble Goals.

The assessment provides an overall EQ score, scores for each of the three macro areas, and scores for each of the eight competencies for a total of 12 normative values.

## Performance

The Performance scale was developed from a questionnaire Six Seconds has used for previous research<sup>2</sup> and expanded for the purposes of this study. Using a 5-point Likert scale respondents rated themselves on 42 items related to:

1. Effectiveness (completing the right work in the right timeframe)
2. Influence (engaging others in ideas)
3. Decision Making (accurately evaluating options)
4. Career (growing professionally, both in skills and revenue)
5. Relationships (building mutually supportive alliances)
6. Finance (creating prosperity)
7. Health (maintaining physical and mental fitness)
8. Quality of Life (living in a fulfilling manner)
9. Family (developing caring and connected relations)

Respondents are asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements, such as, “My choices are effective,” “People come to me to get the job done,” “I have a strong network,” “My career is progressing smoothly,” and “I am financially secure.” The 42 items form a combined variable called “Performance,” with a Cronbach alpha of  $\alpha = .91$  indicating high scale reliability.

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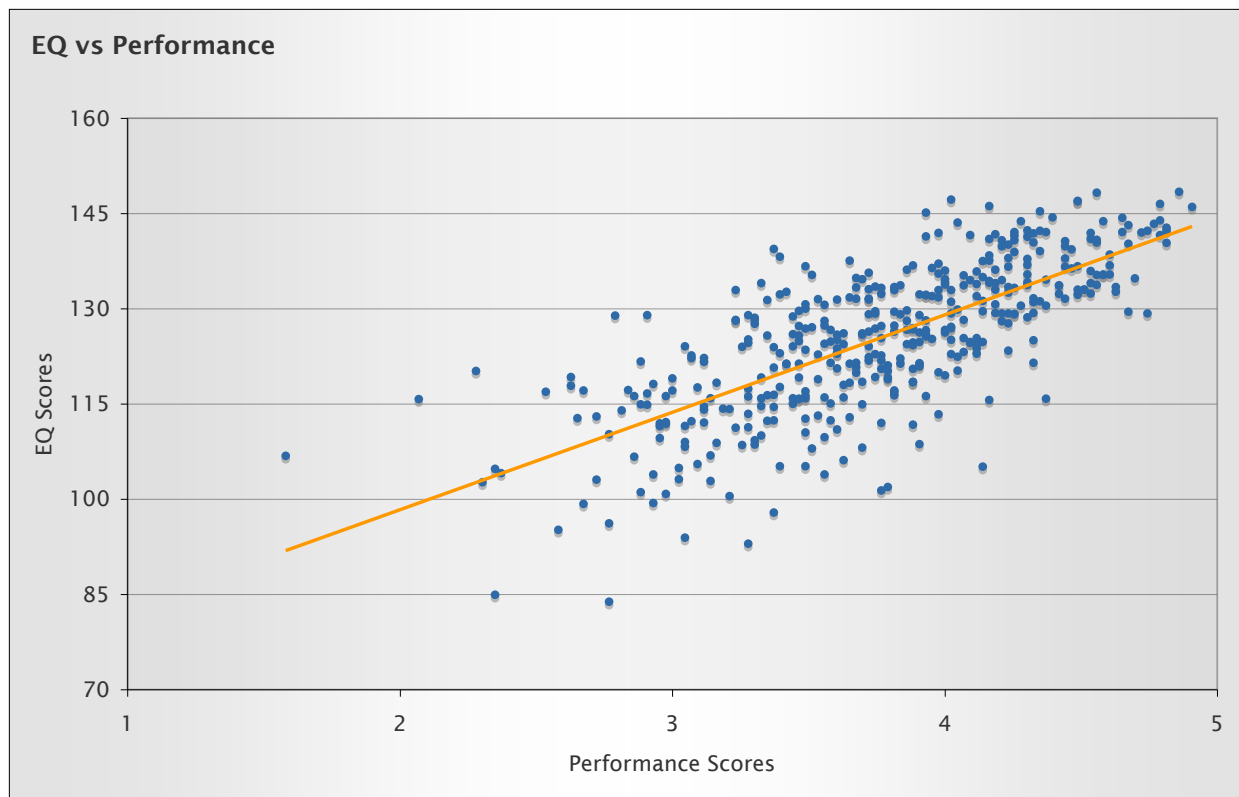
<sup>2</sup> Joshua Freedman, Massimiliano Ghini and Carina Fiedeldey-Van Dijk, “Emotional Intelligence and Performance” [www.6seconds.org/sei](http://www.6seconds.org/sei) 2006.



The nine sub-scales of the performance questionnaire have Cronbach Alphas ranging from .57 to .83, indicating that some subscales are effective independently while others are only statistically meaningful in combination with the whole.

## Analysis

A high correlation appeared between the emotional intelligence (EQ) scales and the performance outcomes. As shown in this graph, there is a strong positive relationship between EQ and Performance. Generally speaking those with higher EQ had higher Performance scores:



To assess the strength of the relationship, a linear regression analysis found in this sample, EQ is a strong predictor of the Performance variable:  $F(8) = 73.22$ ,  $p < .001$  (R square = .58).

**In other words, over 58% of the variation in Performance among these Middle East leaders is explained by emotional intelligence.**

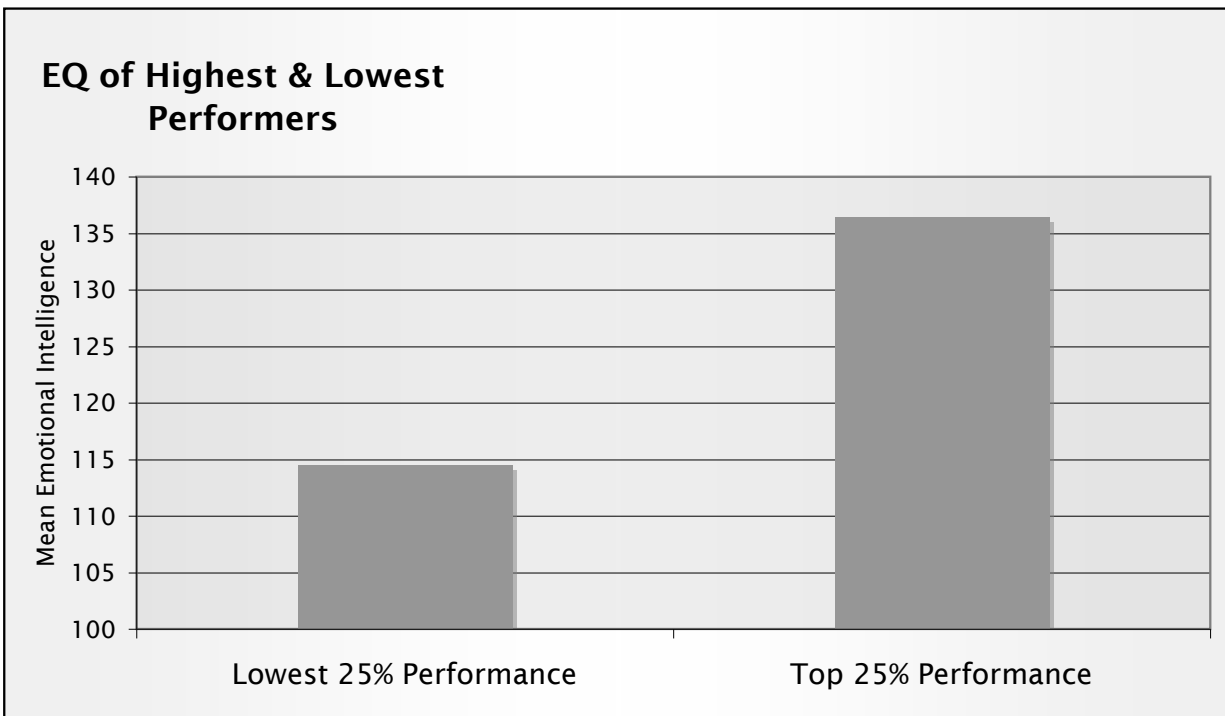


### Variations by Job Level

The relationship between emotional intelligence and performance was strongest in the group of “Entrepreneurs” where over 70% of the variation in performance is predicted by EQ scores. The relationship is still powerful, but lowest for the group of Middle Managers where 47% of the variation in performance is predicted by EQ.

### Highs and Lows

Emotional Intelligence scores were also compared for those who scored in the top 25% of Performance versus those who scored in the lowest 25% in Performance. As shown in this graph, the top performers have, on average, almost 1.2x higher scores on Emotional Intelligence.



### Performance Factors

To further understand the relationship between EQ and Performance, several of the Performance subscales were examined separately. This table shows the name of the



scale, the Cronbach alpha<sup>3</sup>, a sample item from the scale, and the R-squared value in percentages.<sup>4</sup>

Scale	Alpha	Sample item	R <sup>2</sup>
Effectiveness	.58	I am achieving what I've set out to accomplish	44% <sup>5</sup>
Quality of Life	.68	I feel good about life	34% <sup>6</sup>
Relationships	.75	I have a strong network	34% <sup>7</sup>
Decision Making	.57	I have more priorities than I can handle	49% <sup>8</sup>
Health	.69	I eat a balanced diet	23% <sup>9</sup>
Finance	.83	I am financially secure	10% <sup>10</sup>
Family	.68	I have a healthy work-life balance	17% <sup>11</sup>
Influence	.66	Others follow my ideas	38% <sup>12</sup>
Career	.77	I have many job opportunities	30% <sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

There is a very strong relationship between emotional intelligence and performance; a very large percentage of the variation in performance is predicted by EQ, especially for entrepreneurs. This finding suggests that the skills of emotional intelligence are

<sup>3</sup> Cronbach Alpha is a measure of the internal consistency of the scale; numbers from .55-.65 represent moderate consistency, .66 and higher represent good scale consistency.

<sup>4</sup> R-squared is a measure of one variable's capacity to predict another variable; the higher the percentage, the more closely the two variables will cluster. A higher R-squared indicates a stronger relationship; 1, or 100%, would mean a perfect match between the two variables.

<sup>5</sup> EQ vs Effectiveness:  $F(8) = 41.48, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .45, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .44$

<sup>6</sup> EQ vs Quality of Life:  $F(8) = 28.04, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .35, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .34$

<sup>7</sup> EQ vs Relationships:  $F(8) = 27.43, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .35, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .34$

<sup>8</sup> EQ vs Decision Making:  $F(8) = 51.23, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .50, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .49$

<sup>9</sup> EQ vs Health:  $F(8) = 16.50, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .24, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .23$

<sup>10</sup> EQ vs Effectiveness:  $F(8) = 6.62, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .12, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .10$

<sup>11</sup> EQ vs Family:  $F(8) = 11.65, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .19, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .17$

<sup>12</sup> EQ vs Influence:  $F(8) = 33.14, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .39, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .38$

<sup>13</sup> EQ vs Career:  $F(8) = 23.12, p < .001, R \text{ square} = .31, \text{ Adjusted R Square} .30$



critical for professional success at all levels, and even more critical for those creating new enterprises.

All the aspects of performance in this study can be predicted by emotional intelligence scores, but there is a great deal of variation in the strength of that correlation. The performance factors most strongly predicted by EQ are Decision Making, Effectiveness, and Influence. These outcomes are critical to leadership, suggesting that emotional intelligence is most important in this domain.

In short: It appears that leaders who develop greater emotional intelligence are more likely to succeed.

### **About Six Seconds**

Six Seconds is a 501(c)3 organization based in California (USA) with offices in Amman, Bologna, Brisbane, Beijing, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, San Francisco, and Singapore. Established in 1997 Six Seconds is a global organization supporting people to make a positive difference - everywhere, all the time. Six Seconds teaches the skills of emotional intelligence so leaders, team members, educators, children, parents, and change agents make better decisions -- decisions that are life sustaining and make places where people can be and do their very best. For more information, please visit: [www.6seconds.org](http://www.6seconds.org)

### **About Dubai Knowledge Village**

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