The 2012 Workplace Issues Report

Insights on the People-Side of Performance

Joshua Freedman, Six Seconds

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What are the top 2-3 issues in your organization?

"Micromanagement, keeping employees motivated in the wake of salary cuts, expanding client base."

– Senior Account Manager, Professional Services - USA

Six Seconds, an international not-for-profit organization supporting positive change, invited leaders to identify the key challenges in the workplace today — and particularly the "people side" of the equation. The survey explores top issues as well as employee attitudes and the role of emotional intelligence in solving those key issues. The Workplace Issues project began in 2007 as part of Six Seconds' mission to support people to create positive change by increasing emotional intelligence.

These findings represent 775 responses from leaders and employees worldwide. They come from all levels (mostly management) and all sectors (mostly business & industry) and all global regions (mostly North America). See page 17 for more about the respondents.

"Transparency and communication. Accountability. Retaining talent."

- Assistant Director, Hospitality – Egypt

Got Talent?

We asked: **What are the top 2-3 issues facing your organization?**

Survey says:

It's the year of talent.

Find it. Keep it. Lead it. Feed it.

"**Retaining** and attracting **talent** in a shrinking competitive pool. Efficiently **aligning** internal infrastructure to support growth and new/emerging business models."
- HR Director, Technology – USA

"**Retaining talents**, innovations and its implementations"
- Executive Board Member, Finance – Turkey

"**Leadership**, developing new skills, increasing **alignment.**"
- Director, Professional Services – UK

"Increase productivity. **Retain talent**. Work life balance."
– Senior Manager, Healthcare – UAE

"Creation of an effective **talent** platform."
– Director, Business & Industry – Panama

Most Frequently Used Words...

Retention	13.7%
Talent	13.2%
Leadership	12.3%
Communication	10.1%
Competition	9.1%
Change	7.4%
Alignment	7%

"Improving **alignment** between team leaders and **retaining talent.**"
– Executive Director, Professional Services – Brazil

Top Issues: 2012

The graphic represents 775 open-text answers (translated to English) – most frequently used words are larger.

Made with wordle.net

"Leadership. Accountability. Change."

– Revenue Manager, Government - Australia

Can you hear me now?

We asked (again):

Of the important issues your organization is facing, what % are tied to people/relationships and what % are tied to technical/financial issues?
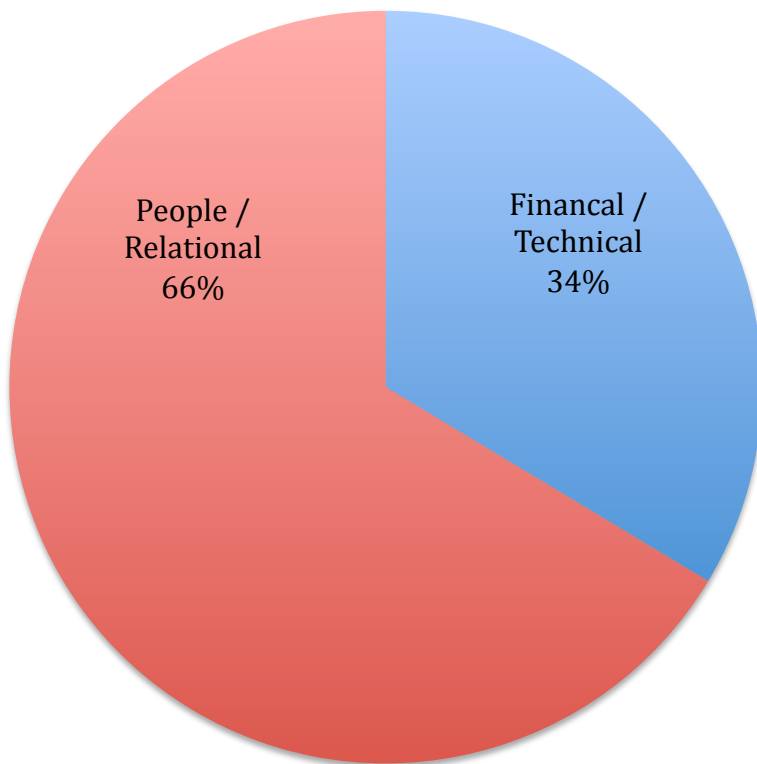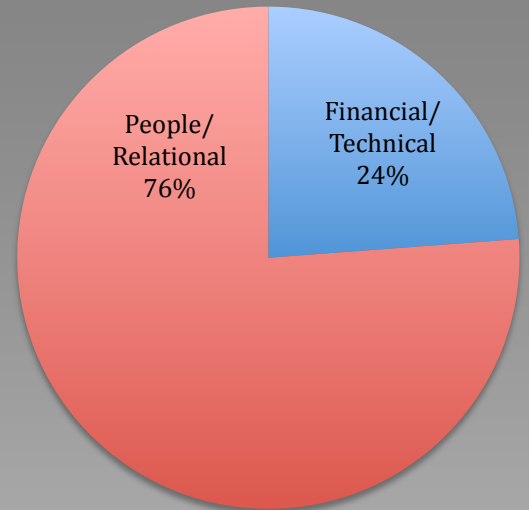
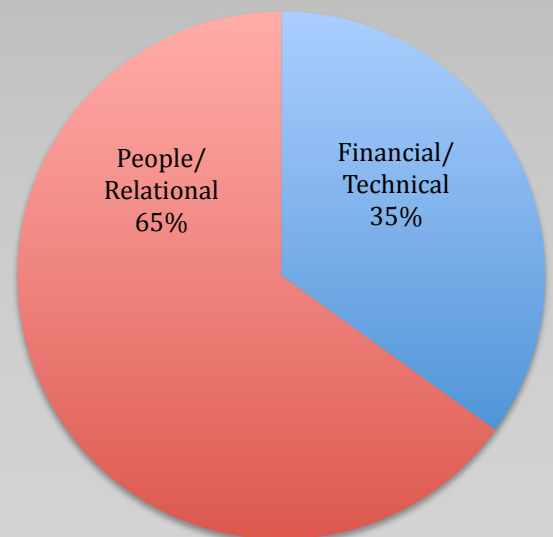Despite global economic crisis, people issues dominate.

2007

People/Relational 76%

Financial/Technical 24%

2012

People / Relational 66%

Financal / Technical 34%
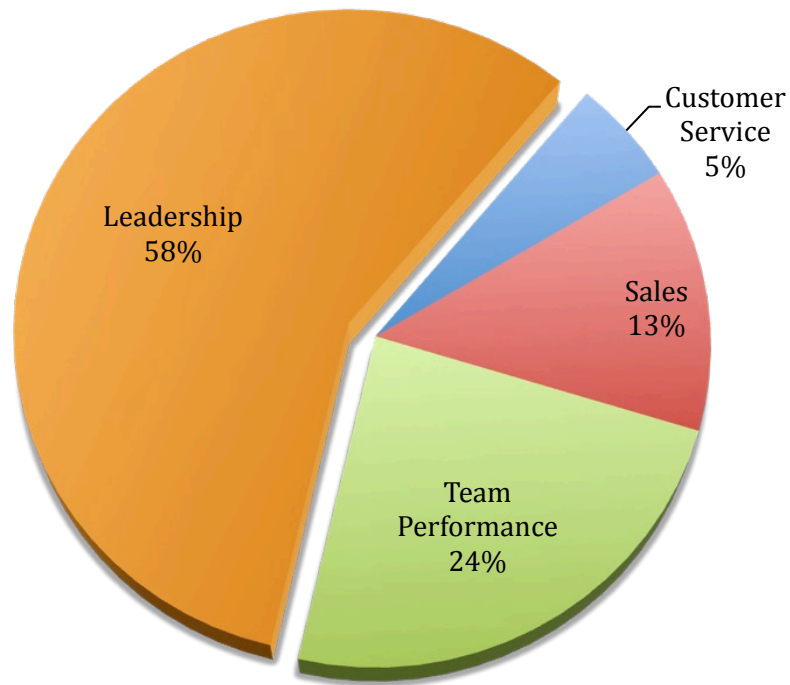
2010

People/Relational 65%

Financial/Technical 35%

"High employee turnover. Lack of proper training. Slow implementations."

- Regional Development Manager, Education, Kenya

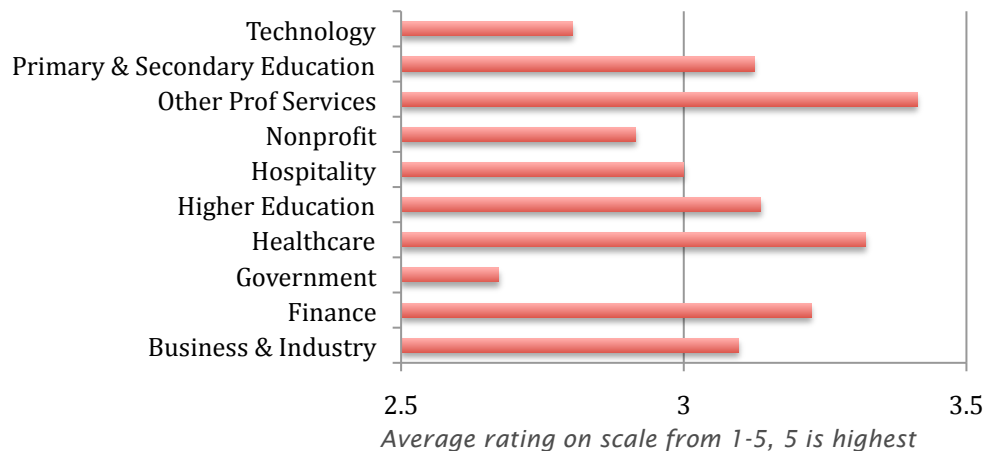# Which is the biggest "people-side" issue in your organization?

Leadership
58%

Customer
Service
5%

Sales
13%

Team
Performance
24%

"Lack of Leadership: Direction, Synergy."

- Senior Manager, Technology

India

Leadership Needed

How effective are leaders in your organization at driving change?
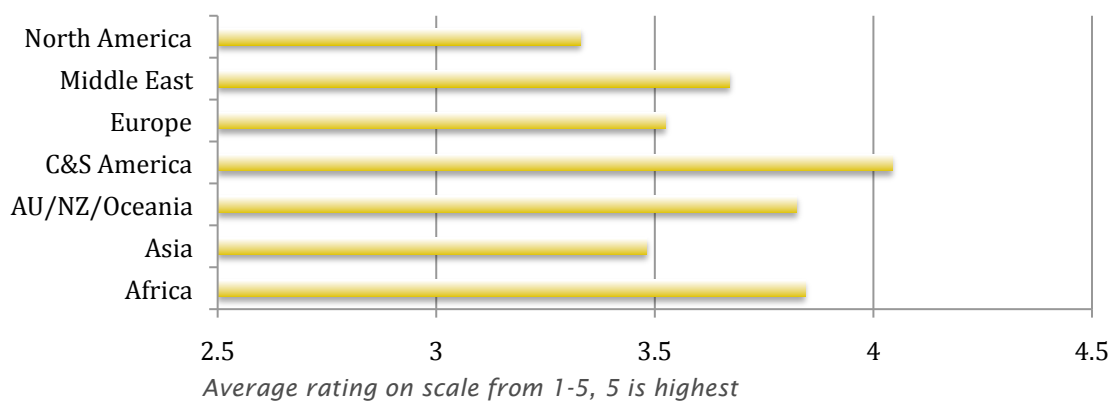
61.7%

D-

To what degree is the development of future leaders a priority in your organization?

70.9%

C-

How effective are leaders in your organization at driving change?

Industry	Rating
Technology	
Primary & Secondary Education	
Other Prof Services	
Nonprofit	
Hospitality	
Higher Education	
Healthcare	
Government	
Finance	
Business & Industry	

Average rating on scale from 1-5, 5 is highest

To what degree is the development of future leaders a priority in your organization?

| Region	Rating
North America	
Middle East	
Europe	
C&S America	
AU/NZ/Oceania	
Asia	
Africa	

Average rating on scale from 1-5, 5 is highest

"Lack of enthusiasm or ambition. Communication (5 people in a meeting walk away with 5 different interpretations). Lack of accountability."

- Head of Project Management, Technology, USA

What do you want from leaders?

We asked: **In previous surveys, leadership was a common concern. What are 2-3 needed improvements?**

The graphic represents 775 open-text answers (translated to English) – most frequently used words are larger. Made with wordle.net

"Influencing. Setting vision. Walking the walk - reaching the vision." - CAO, Government, Canada

"Better communication. Greater cohesion."
– Managing Director, Professional Services, Mauritius

"Setting vision. Being trustworthy."
- Country Manager, Healthcare, Greece

"Incompetent leaders, short-term vision, huge barriers between the head and the subordinates, leaders do not know how to identify the talents in their employees and therefore provide zero support." – Professor, Higher Education, Saudi Arabia

The Role of Feelings

We asked: **To address these challenges, how important are your own attitudes / feelings?**
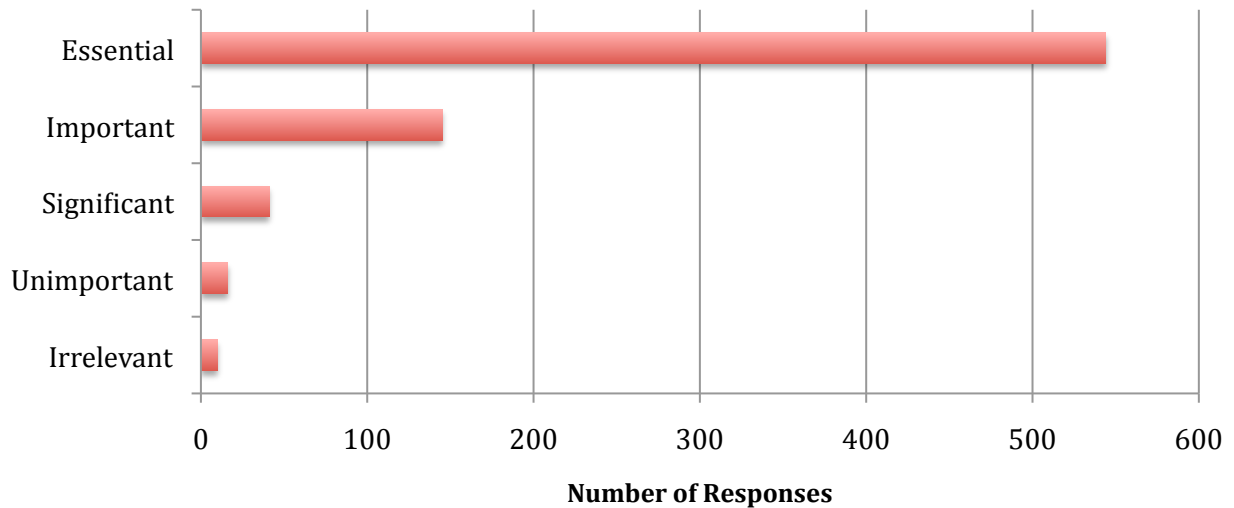
Respondents see feelings as essential to addressing the top issues – especially their own feelings.

To address these challenges, how important are…

Item	1-5 score	%
Your Own Feelings	4.58	91.7%
Your People's Feelings	4.46	89.2%
Others' Feelings	4.13	82.6%

"Lack of teamwork. Lack of efficiency. Ill feeling among employees."

- Director, Healthcare, UK

Emotional Intelligence

While respondents see emotional intelligence as extremely valuable,
they say their organizations don't get it (yet):
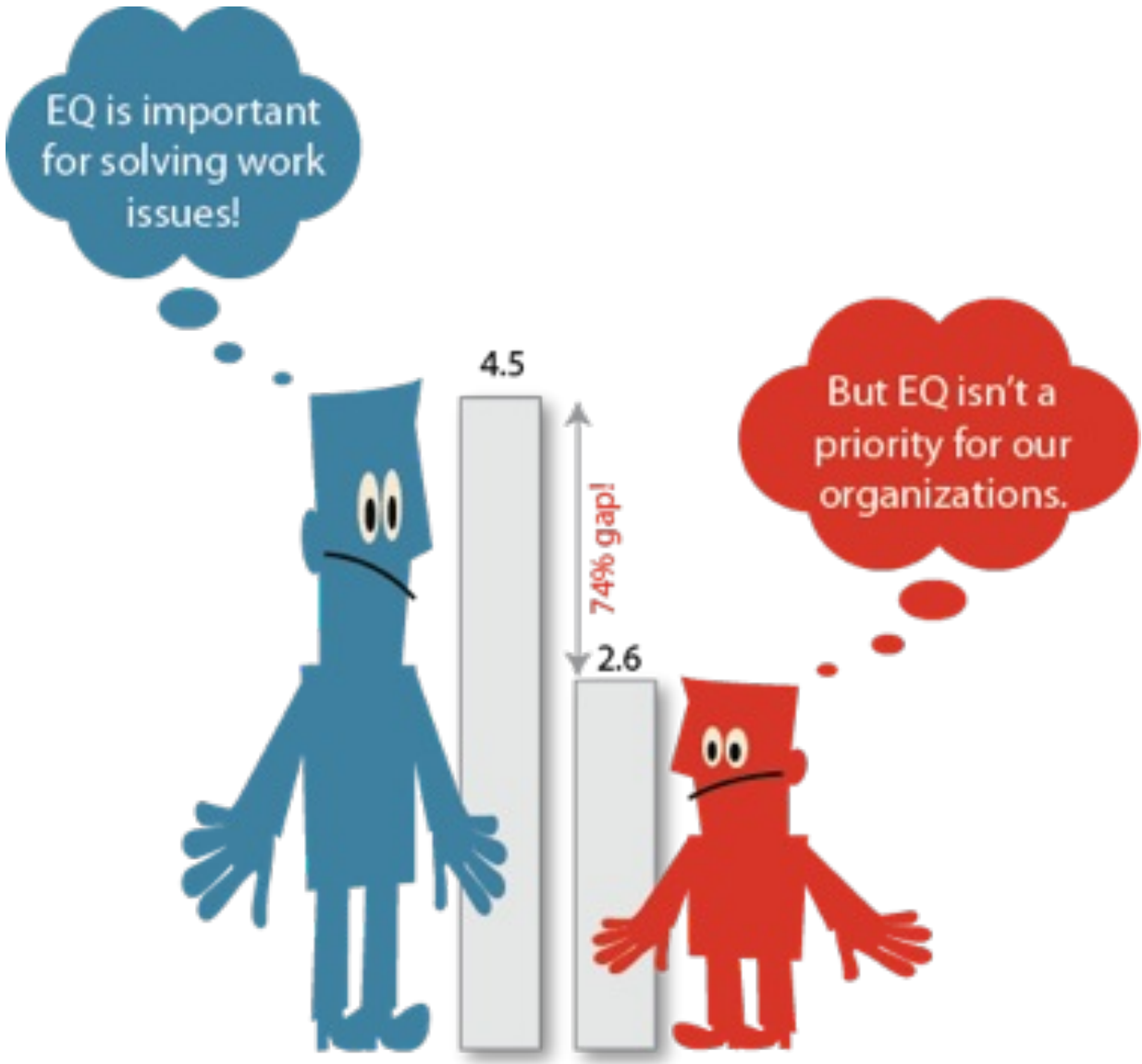
Blue: To what degree are emotional intelligence skills (e.g., recognizing & managing feelings, building trust, making careful decisions) important in addressing the top issues?

Red: To what degree is emotional intelligence training & development a priority in your organization?

"Increasing the emotional intelligence of teams to enhance supplier and customer relationships." - General Manager, Business & Industry, Singapore

Walking the Talk?

While employees at all levels are fairly aware of EQ, there are very different (though generally low) perceptions about implementation.

Senior Executives score their organizations a 3.2 on making EQ a priority. Middle Managers see it as a 2.1
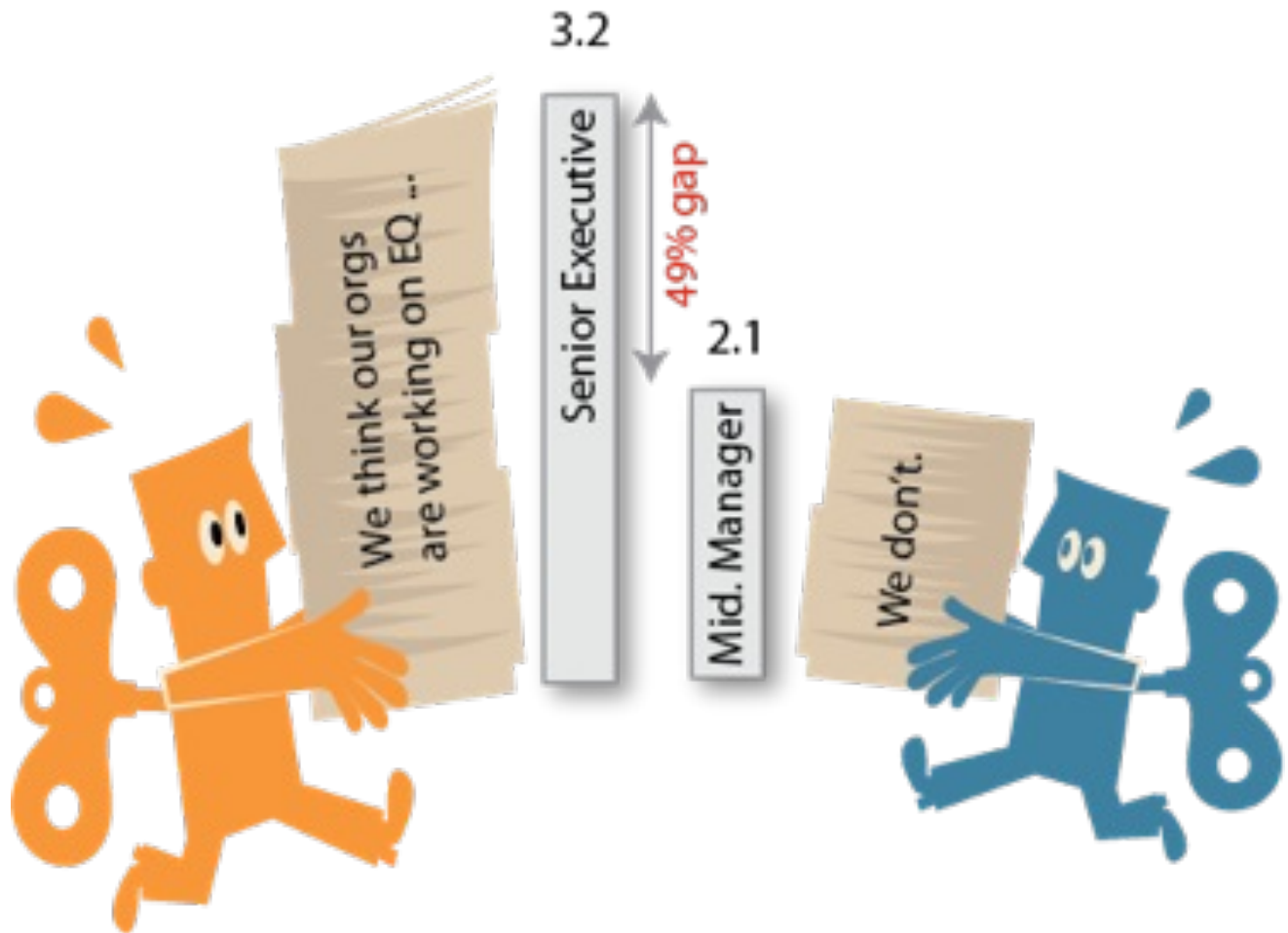
Senior Executives vs Middle Managers: To what degree is emotional intelligence training & development a priority in your organization?

"Keeping competition at bay. Minimizing loss of market share. Tying in all stakeholders to the shared vision of the organization."

- Sales Director, Technology, Jordan

Why EQ?

"Low morale and demoralization due to layoffs. Too much work for remaining staff. High stress levels." Manager, Nonprofit - USA

Why is emotional intelligence a priority in your organization?

Examples from those who answered 5 out of 5 that it is a priority

"It drives effective change."
– President, Business & Industry
USA

"In order to understand the employees and the leaders in the organizations."
– Researcher, Higher Education
Saudi Arabia

"Simply, it's critical to behaving better and developing a more healthy workplace."
–Director, Professional Services
UK

"Essential element in managing relationships and complex situations."
– Line Manager, Professional Services
Colombia

"EI is fundamental for improving communication, relationships, collaboration, teamwork and increasing self-esteem and enjoying work."
– President, Business & Industry
Mexico

"Lack of trust in the organization. Organization is unable to retain talent. Middle management lacking leadership skills." - Senior L&D Manager, Hospitality, Spain
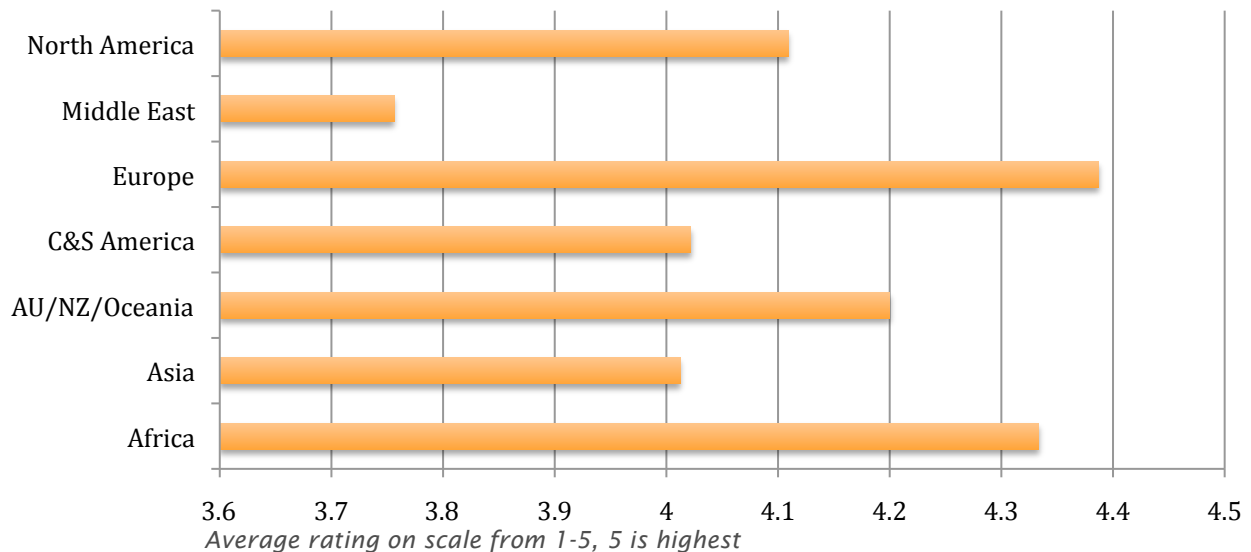
Looking for a High-EQ Boss?

We asked: **How aware are you of 'emotional intelligence' and how it can be used in the workplace?**

Older and Wiser?

Average rating on scale from 1-5, 5 is highest
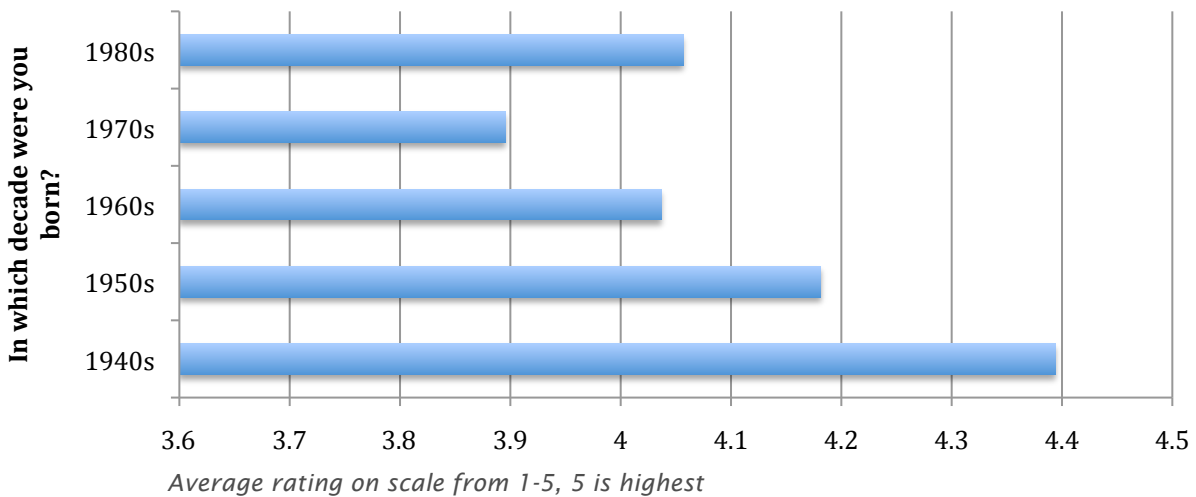
Location, Location, Location

Average rating on scale from 1-5, 5 is highest

"Cooperation with stakeholders. Raise funds. Leadership."

- Doctor, Healthcare, Netherlands

EQ Leverage

To what degree is emotional intelligence training & development a priority in your organization? (5 is "high")
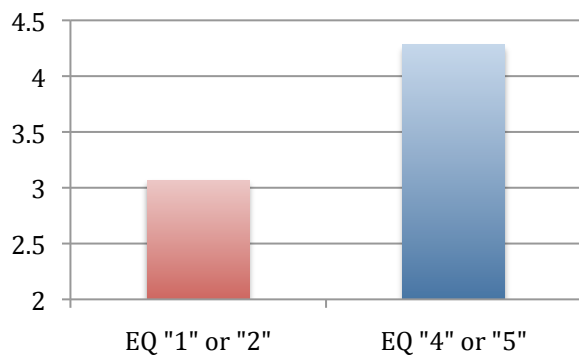
22.8% report a "4" or "5"

vs.

44.4% report a "1" or "2"

How effective are leaders in your organization at driving change?
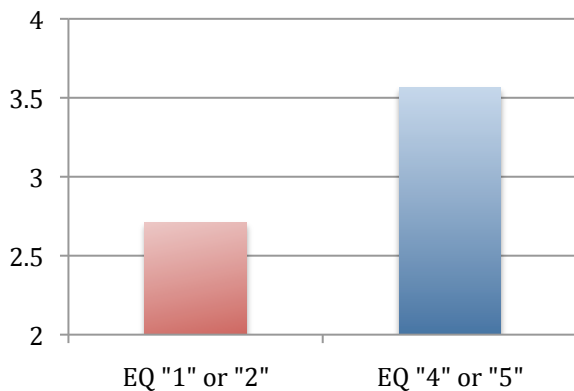
To what degree is the development of future leaders a priority in your organization?

EQ can be a "nice to have" (a cost), or a strategic resource for a culture of competitive advantage (an asset).

High EQ Orgs:

32% advantage on leading change

High EQ Orgs:

39% advantage on future leadership

"Employee Communication. Change Management."

- Sr. Regional Manager, Technology, Singapore

Industries by EQ

We asked: **To what degree is emotional intelligence training & development a priority in your organization?**

Average scores by sector. Perhaps surprisingly, those in K-12 school organizations see the least commitment to developing EQ in the organization.

From the point of view of our respondents, Professional Services & Hospitality are the most serious about creating an emotionally intelligent organization.

Average rating on scale from 1-5, 5 is highest
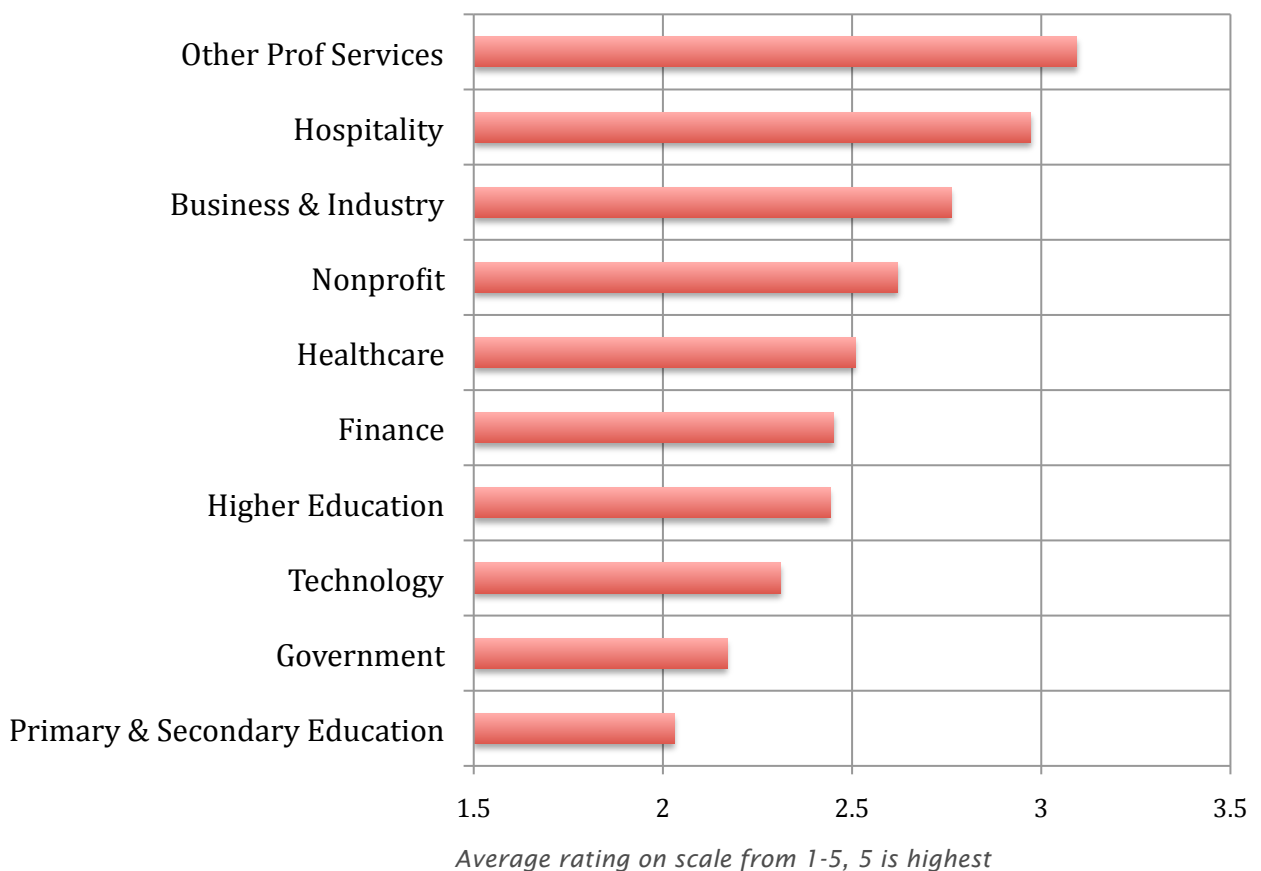
"Maintaining leadership in the market despite the crisis, retain human talent."

- Organizational Psychologist, Finance, Peru

Haves and Have Nots

A follow-up to "To what degree is emotional intelligence training & develop a priority in your organization?" we asked, Why or Why Not? To the right are coded reasons from those who score a "1" or "2" vs. those who score a "4" or "5"

* **Gap** refers to a disconnect between the organization's culture and EQ.

For example:

"We have abandoned all leadership training, in large part because upper management was frightened by the gap between information presented and their own leadership practices."
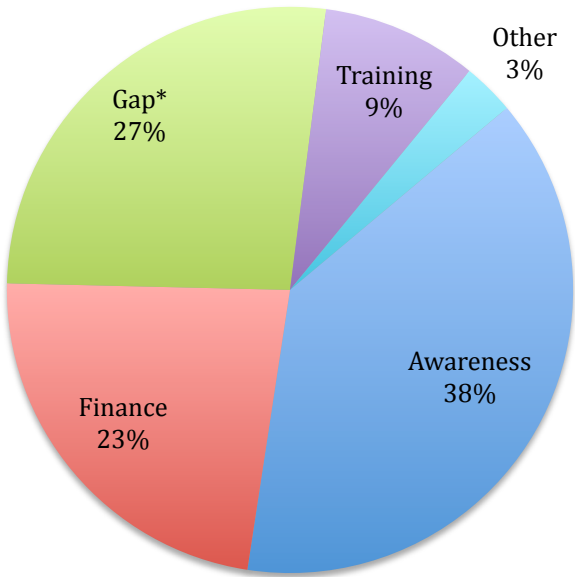–Senior Consultant, Government, USA

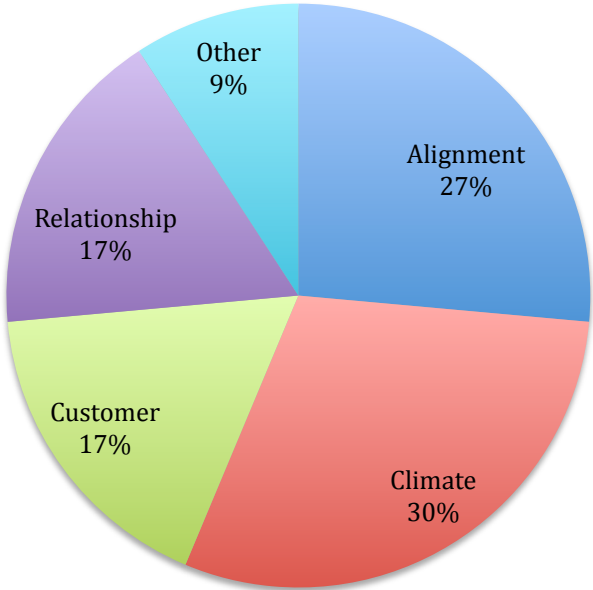"The boss doesn't really care…"
– Property Manager, Nonprofit, Ireland

"Because I'm working in a Military University and our bosses 'have no feelings.'"
- MBA Professor, Higher Education, Colombia

"Wrong self-perception of greatness and wisdom prevents top leaders from participating in good training programs -- they already think they are perfect and training is only for very junior staff or for everybody else except themselves. Requesting training is viewed as an admission of weakness or even of failure."
– Executive, Business & Industry, UAE

Why Isn't EQ a priority in your organization?

Other 3%
Training 9%
Gap* 27%
Awareness 38%
Finance 23%

Why Is EQ a priority in your organization?

Other 9%
Alignment 27%
Relationship 17%
Climate 30%
Customer 17%

"Increasing alignment between leaders and teams. Finding & retaining talent. Training employees in better communication skills."
- Owner, Business & Industry, Australia

The Heart of the Matter

Many respondents' comments reflect the "new normal" of business: Economic pressure is higher – so there is an impulse to push people issues to the back burner.

Now after years of this intense "do more with less" climate, the cracks are showing.

Can we sustain performance – and find breakthroughs – when people are so burned out?

"Interest rate compression. Increased regulatory oversight. Low loan demand."

- Senior Manager, Finance, Cameroon

"People, talent management, structure and framework to develop people. Career development. EQ training. "

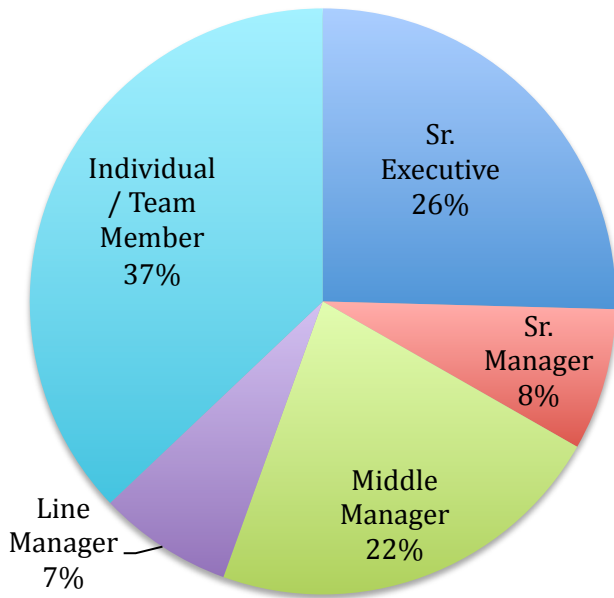- VP Medical Affairs, Healthcare, Singapore

"Effective internal communication. Empowerment. Top management inconsistency/lack of alignment between company objectives vs. personal objectives"
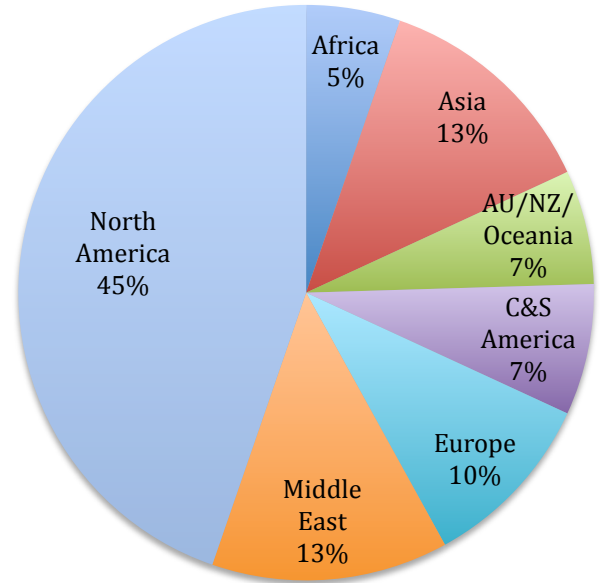
- Head of Marketing, Healthcare, Algeria

Who Responded?

The sample population for this exploratory study consisted of 775 voluntary respondents recruited via Six Seconds' web sites and email groups during 2011-2012. Respondents come from organizations in all work sectors, in a wide range of regions and organizations of all sizes.
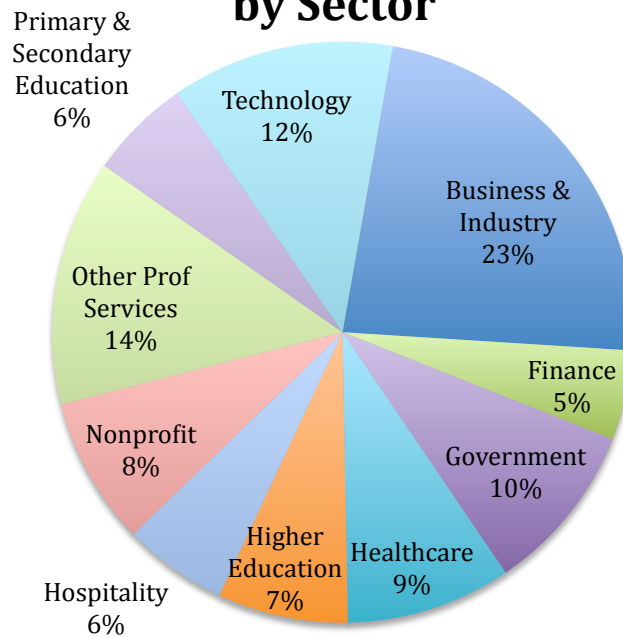
by Role

- Sr. Executive 26%
- Sr. Manager 8%
- Middle Manager 22%
- Line Manager 7%
- Individual / Team Member 37%

by Region

- Africa 5%
- Asia 13%
- AU/NZ/ Oceania 7%
- C&S America 7%
- Europe 10%
- Middle East 13%
- North America 45%

by Sector

- Primary & Secondary Education 6%
- Technology 12%
- Business & Industry 23%
- Finance 5%
- Government 10%
- Healthcare 9%
- Higher Education 7%
- Hospitality 6%
- Nonprofit 8%
- Other Prof Services 14%

"Retaining talent. Increasing alignment between leaders and teams. Restructuring supply chain." - General Manager, Business & Industry - Pakistan

Conclusion

People?

Profits?
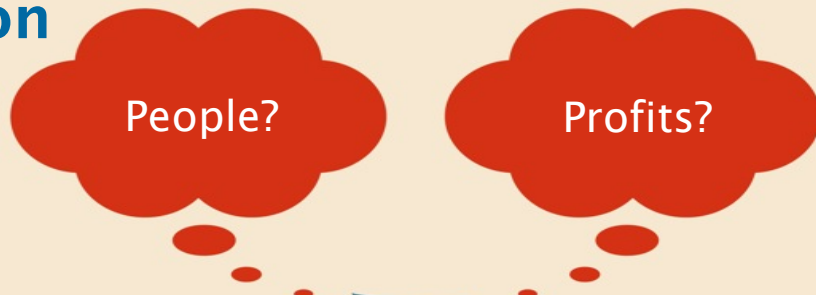
Both!

Fortunately, it's a false choice – real leadership means creating value for all stakeholders.

While we've attempted to present this report in a light-hearted way, the unfortunate reality is many respondents are experiencing real and wasteful suffering.

- Organizational chaos and stress is high and the "people needs" are not being met.
- While respondents recognize there are economic realities to the workplace, "do more with less" is not a sustainable condition.
- The perceived shortage of talent is growing globally, but only a few companies are making it a priority to be a place where great people want to work.

The "good" news is that since the bar is so low, companies that make even a modest effort will stand out as great employers – and reap the rewards of top talent.
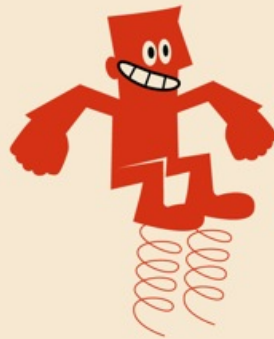
If you found this report valuable, support the project by taking the survey and getting 5 colleagues to do likewise: www.6seconds.org/wi

"Retaining talents. Align strategies. Obtain budget."

- Director, Hospitality, France

Enough with the Problems…
Let's Go!

While the challenges shared in this report are serious and daunting, we know change is possible.

People are your only real competitive advantage. Strong leaders and organizations are using emotional intelligence to build organizations where teams excel and talent thrives.

About the Author

Joshua Freedman is COO of Six Seconds, The Emotional Intelligence Network (www.6seconds.org). Freedman is author of At the Heart of Leadership *and, with Massimiliano Ghini:* Inside Change, Transforming Your Organization with Emotional Intelligence – *as well as numerous assessments and development tools for individual, team, and organizational performance.*

The Workplace Issues study is an ongoing project of Six Seconds, a global organization supporting people to create positive change by harnessing the power and wisdom of emotions.

www.6seconds.org