

White Paper

Optimism and Job Performance

OPTIMISM AND JOB PERFORMANCE

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Publication Date: May 19, 2006

Last Updated: January 8, 2008



Abstract: In a in a multinational corporation, emotional intelligence scores were compared to scores in the company's performance management system. Emotional intelligence proved to significantly predict job success, and in particular the competency of Optimism was most highly predictive. This suggests that EQ, and particularly Optimism, are important assets for career success.

Numerous studies have shown links between optimism and sales, health, and relationships.¹ To what extent does optimism influence workplace performance? Do optimists score higher in performance management?

In a pilot project with an multi-national information technology company, the optimism scale on the Six Seconds' Emotional Intelligence Assessment (SEI)² predicted 17.9% of supervisor ratings.

In other words, optimism is a valuable trait for people who want to be recognized as high performers.

Optimism Defined

In Six Seconds' model of emotional intelligence, there are three primary pursuits:

- Know Yourself – increase awareness
- Choose Yourself – manage reactions
- Give Yourself – act from values

Optimism is one of the competencies central to “Choose Yourself.” By employing a habit of optimism, people recognize that they have a choice, which is an essential part of taking ownership of their behavior.

Informed by Martin Seligman's research on optimism³, the Six Seconds' Emotional Intelligence Assessment (SEI) explores three dimensions of optimism. When looking at adversity, for example, the three aspects are:

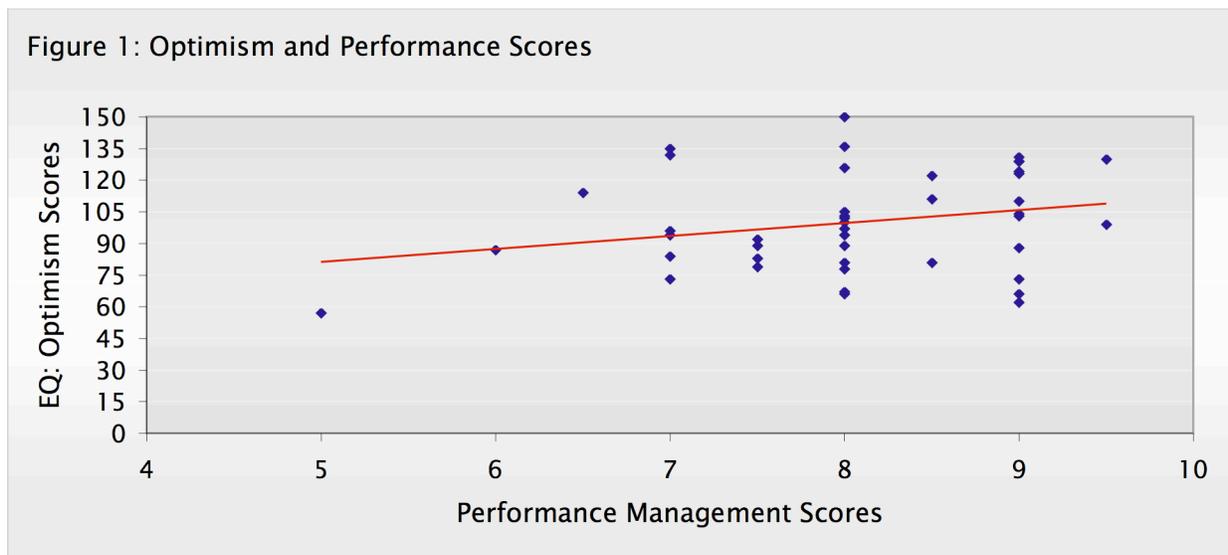
- Duration – does a person see adversity as permanent or temporary?
- Scope – is the adversity seen as all-encompassing or limited?
- Power – does the person perceive s/he is powerless or that s/he can take action?



Research Findings

The research was conducted in a unit of NextiraOne in Italy. NextiraOne is a leading provider of integrated enterprise network, IP telephony, data, voice and converged solutions and services that enable effective business communications (www.nextiraone.com). The highly technical Italian team is involved in IT service and solutions. There were 44 participants in the study. The research was conducted with the cooperation of Dr. Gianni Ferrari – product manager of NextiraOne.

Each participant completed the Six Seconds’ Emotional Intelligence Assessment (SEI), and scores were obtained from the company’s performance management process. The finding is shown graphically in Figure 1:



Using Multiple Regression Analysis, a method to predict the single dependent variable – performance – by a set of independent variables, the optimism factor emerged as an important predictor of performance scores:

Figure 2: Exercise Optimism vs Dependent Variable: Performance

Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations	
B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial
.0411	.013	1.001	3.120	.004	.251	.423



“Partial” shows the semi-partial correlation between scores on optimism and the performance variable. The square of this correlation indicates the percentage of variation that can be attributed to optimism. In other words, 17.9% of the variation in performance is predicted by optimism.⁴

It will be necessary to extend this research to a larger sample population, however, the finding is important. Even in a highly technical company, emotional competence is a key factor for success.

Background on the SEI:

To help people put the theory of emotional intelligence into practice, Six Seconds developed the three-part model in 1997. The model draws on the work of Peter Salovey (one of Six Seconds' advisory board members), and John Mayer who first defined EQ as a scientific concept. It also considers the five components of EQ popularized by Daniel Goleman in his 1995 book, *Emotional Intelligence*, which endorses Six Seconds' EQ curriculum *Self-Science* as a model curriculum, and research by leading scientists in this field including Reuven BarOn, Antonio Damasio, Joseph LeDoux, and Candace Pert (Six Seconds' Advisory Board member), and other leading authors including *Executive EQ* authors Robert Cooper and Ayman Sawaf (Six Seconds' Advisory Board members). The Six Seconds' EQ model integrates leading thinking on this emerging science into a practical, straightforward structure.

Six Seconds is a California-based 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation with the mission of helping all people learn to know themselves, choose themselves, and give themselves. Six Seconds provides training, consulting, and innovative tools for professionals facilitating individual and organizational change. Six Seconds consultants are available on every continent with offices in the US, Singapore, and Italy.

The Six Seconds' Emotional Intelligence Assessment (SEI -- which also means "six" in Italian) was developed and researched in Europe and has been validated in North America and Asia. The SEI questionnaire is composed of 104 items and includes two self-correcting indices and a consistency scale. This self-report questionnaire is available online or on paper in English, Italian, and Indonesian (Spanish, Chinese, and other languages pending). Information on the assessment is online at www.6seconds.org/sei/ .



References

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² Ghini, M., Freedman J., Jensen A (2005). *Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment*. SF: Six Seconds

³ Seligman, M. (1991). *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. NY: Knopf.

⁴ Significant at the 95 percent confidence level. Sample size = 44

