

# **The EQ-i 2.0 and Leadership:**

## **A recognized link between transformational leadership and high emotional intelligence**

Considering the role and responsibilities of a leader, it's not surprising that many studies have found a leader's emotional and social skills are critical to their performance. High performing leaders understand how they feel and are aware of how their emotions and actions can affect the people around them.



## Emotionally intelligent leaders in action

The concept of transformational leadership started with James V. Downton in 1973 and was expanded by James Burns in 1978. This model of leadership encourages leaders to demonstrate authentic, strong leadership with the idea that employees will be inspired to follow suit. This leadership style is displayed when a leader works with teams to identify needed change, create a vision to bring about the change by inspiring others, and execute the change in tandem with committed members of a group.

Transformational leaders enhance followers' motivation, morale, and job performance through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These leaders can also understand and manage their own emotions – making it possible for them to be flexible and creative in their decision-making, consider alternative approaches, and have the self-confidence needed to take action.

Emotional intelligence (EI), as measured by the EQ-i 2.0, contains several factors that have been identified as integral to effective leadership, including Stress Tolerance, Empathy, Optimism, Assertiveness, Independence, Flexibility, Self-Actualization, Problem Solving, and Social Responsibility.

Due to rapidly changing market forces, volatile environments, and pressure to accomplish more with fewer resources, leaders today often require more than technical knowledge to succeed in their roles. However, as employees progress through the organizational hierarchy, researchers note that emotional skills become increasingly important (compared to IQ or technical savvy). By the time the executive level is reached, strong emotional skills are critical for successful leadership performance. Over the years, a large base of academic literature has been built to examine EI's relationship to leadership styles and leadership performance.

### The EQ-i<sup>2.0</sup> Model

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## Linking leadership performance to emotional intelligence

The importance of a leader's EI was demonstrated in a study conducted by Carmeli. In this study, 98 senior managers employed as chief financial officers in local governments in Israel completed a questionnaire that included the EQ-i and measures for outcomes such as job performance, withdrawal intentions, work attitudes (including job satisfaction), and altruistic behaviors. The results showed a positive relationship between EQ-i scores and work attitudes. EQ-i scores were also related to increased altruistic behaviors and work outcomes, such as increased job performance and decreased intentions to withdraw from the organization.

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Similarly, Kotze and Venter also examined the impact of EI on leader performance. They conducted a study to determine if there were statistically significant differences in EI between effective and ineffective leaders. The sample they used included 114 leaders at the middle management level in a public sector institution in South Africa. In their study, effective leaders scored significantly higher on Total EI, as measured using the EQ-i 2.0. These leaders also scored significantly higher on the Interpersonal and Stress Management composite scales and the Self-Actualization, Empathy, Social Responsibility, Stress Tolerance, Problem Solving, and Optimism subscales.



The Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) also conducted a study to examine the relationship between leadership skills and EI. Over 300 managers attending CCL's Leadership Development Program® volunteered to participate in this research by completing the EQ-i 2.0 and Benchmarks, a multi-rater feedback tool offered by CCL that measures 16 leadership competencies and five career derailers. Findings from this study revealed that higher EQ-i 2.0 scores were associated with better performance in the following areas:

- Self-Awareness
- Decisiveness
- Doing Whatever it Takes
- Straightforwardness and Composure
- Confronting Problem Employees
- Putting People at Ease
- Building and Mending Relationships
- Participative Management
- Change Management
- Balance Between Personal Life and Work
- CCL's analyses also revealed that EQ-i 2.0 scores were related to career derailment. Managers who demonstrated lower EQ-i 2.0 scores had greater difficulty changing or adapting, and they also experienced more problems with interpersonal relationships. Specifically, ratings on "Problems with Interpersonal Relationships" from all co-workers (i.e., managers, peers, and direct reports) were associated with lower scores on Impulse Control, and "Problems with Interpersonal Relationships" ratings from direct reports and peers were related to lower Stress Tolerance scores.

Lastly, rather than conducting an individual study, Mills examined the overall state of leadership and EI research by performing a meta-analysis of 48 studies (totaling over 7,000 participants) and found that a consistent, research-based link could be established between the concept of EI and effective leadership.

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This relationship between EI and effective leadership is found consistently regardless of the industry or type of work one is doing. In a study with a sample of 464 school principals, researchers measured EI and the principals' ability to complete leadership tasks and build relationships. The results showed that high-performing principals had higher scores on Emotional Self-Awareness, Self-Actualization, Empathy, Interpersonal Relationships, Flexibility, Problem Solving, and Impulse Control. Similarly, a study of 424 law enforcement leaders found that leaders who had been selected for the FBI National Academy scored higher on Social Responsibility, Problem Solving, Self-Actualization, and Interpersonal Relationships compared to their counterparts. Regardless of working in education or public safety, higher-performing leaders tend to have higher EQ-i 2.0 scores.

In a study that compared leaders from different industries, a sample of 32 non-profit leaders and 32 for-profit leaders completed the EQ-i, and non-profit leaders scored higher than the for-profit leaders in Total EQ-i and on the five composite scales. This finding suggests that the purpose of non-profit companies, that is, to provide for society's needs, possibly draws leaders who are high in EI or nurtures leaders to be high in EI. In other words, even though effective leaders tend to score higher in EI in general, there are still differences between industries as these companies serve different purposes.

Studies also show that leadership and coaching training can improve EI. For example, one research program examined the influence of an EI training program on practicing pharmacists. The researchers compared the EQ-i 2.0 scores of pharmacists who took part in a leadership training program and pharmacists who did not. Total EQ-i scores were higher for the pharmacists in the training program, with significant differences on the Self-Expression, Decision Making, and Interpersonal Skills subscales.

## Comparing leaders to the general population

Executives who possessed higher levels of Empathy, Self-Regard, Reality Testing, and Problem Solving were more likely to head companies earning high profits.

Researchers Stein, Papadogiannis, Yip, and Sitarenios assessed the difference in EI levels between high-profile executives and the general population. This study also examined the relationship between EI scores and various organizational outcomes such as net profit, growth management, and employee management and retention. One hundred eighty-six executives (159 male and 27 female) recruited from the Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) and the Innovators' Alliance (IA) completed the EQ-i 2.0 and answered questions relating to business challenges, pre-tax operating profits over the past three years, and the previous year's net profits. Statistical analyses showed that EQ-i 2.0 scores for top executives differed significantly from the normative population across 8 of the 15 subscales. Executives who possessed higher levels of Empathy, Self-Regard, Reality Testing, and Problem Solving were more likely to head companies earning higher profits. Additionally, Total EQ-i 2.0 scores were positively related to the degree to which challenges such as managing growth, managing others, and training and retaining employees were perceived as easy.

### Key takeaways:

- Multiple studies over the past three decades indicate that a high level of EI is linked to the traits needed for effective, transformational leadership.
- Emotional intelligence is closely related to increased altruistic behaviors and improved work outcomes, such as increased job performance and decreased intentions to withdraw from the organization.
- Leaders who demonstrate lower EI scores have greater difficulty changing or adapting and experience more problems with interpersonal relationships.
- EI scores may vary in leaders whose companies serve different purposes.
- Studies also show that leadership and coaching training can improve EI.
- Executives who possess higher Empathy, Self-Regard, Reality Testing, and Problem Solving are more likely to head companies earning high profits.



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