



2007 WORKPLACE ISSUES REPORT

What are the top issues leaders face today?

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Six Seconds

In a changing business climate, what are the key challenges to organizational success?

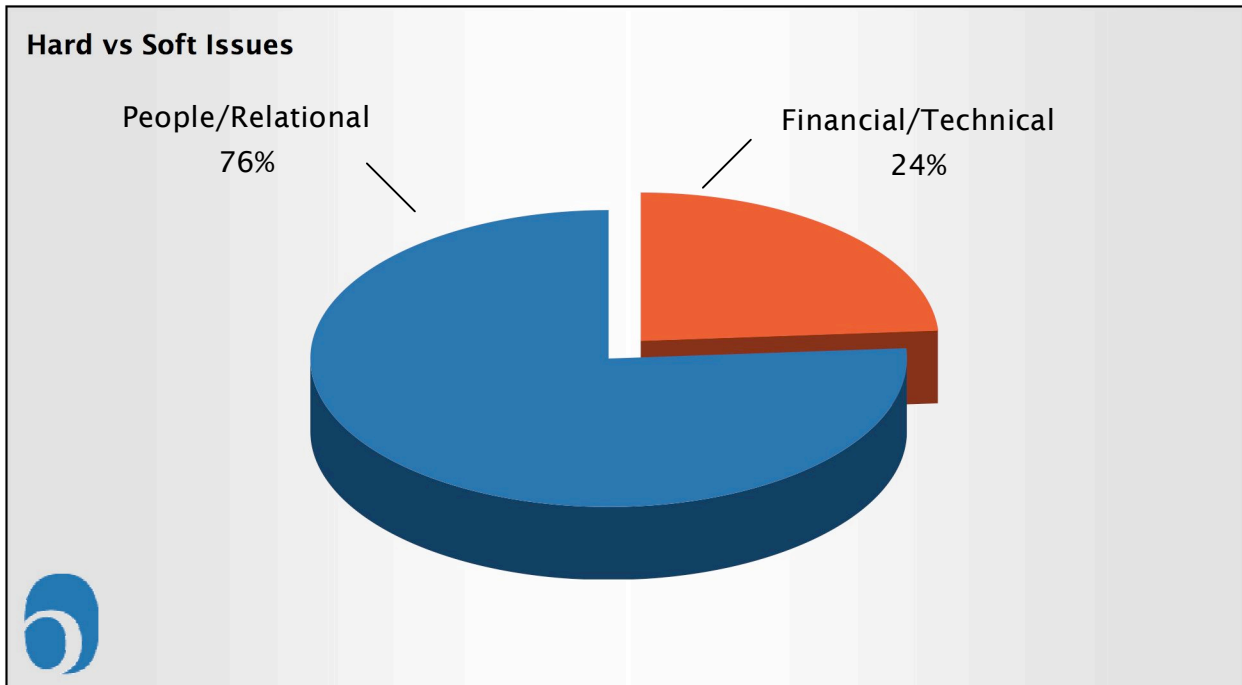
Six Seconds, an international not-for-profit organization, invited leaders to identify the key challenges in the workplace today — and particularly the “people side” of the equation. The survey explores top issues as well as employee attitudes and the role of emotional intelligence in solving those key issues.

Responses come from team leaders to executives in a broad range of industries and organizations ranging from under 20 to over 10,000 people. 135 responses were tabulated, primarily from North America but also from every other continent.

The survey finds that in 2007...

- “Soft” issues such as finding and keeping talent are over 3 times as prevalent as “hard” issues such as finance.
- Leaders are twice as concerned about leadership than all other issues combined.
- Emotional intelligence and feelings of team- and non-team-members were among the most important resources an organization has in addressing challenges and reaching goals.





In response to “What are 2-3 of the top challenges in your organization?” answers range from “gaining more market share” to “losing sight of our true mission” to “nimble adapting to change.”

When divided between “hard” issues such as finance and supply and “soft” issues such as culture and communication, the “soft stuff” appears to be three times harder.

People/Relational :: 76%

- “keeping good people/getting rid of not so good people”
- “creating a positive culture”
- “doing more with less”

Financial/Technical :: 24%

- “product quality”
- “legal compliance”
- “keeping up with low-priced competitors”



On the “people-side” many respondents are concerned with finding and keeping good people – especially in an time when they are expected to “do more with less.”

Engaging Talent

“Finding, hiring, and keeping talented individuals”

“Developing talent – both internally and through finding and attracting good people – and equipping them for success”

“Recruiting, developing and most importantly retaining top quality experts”

Under Pressure

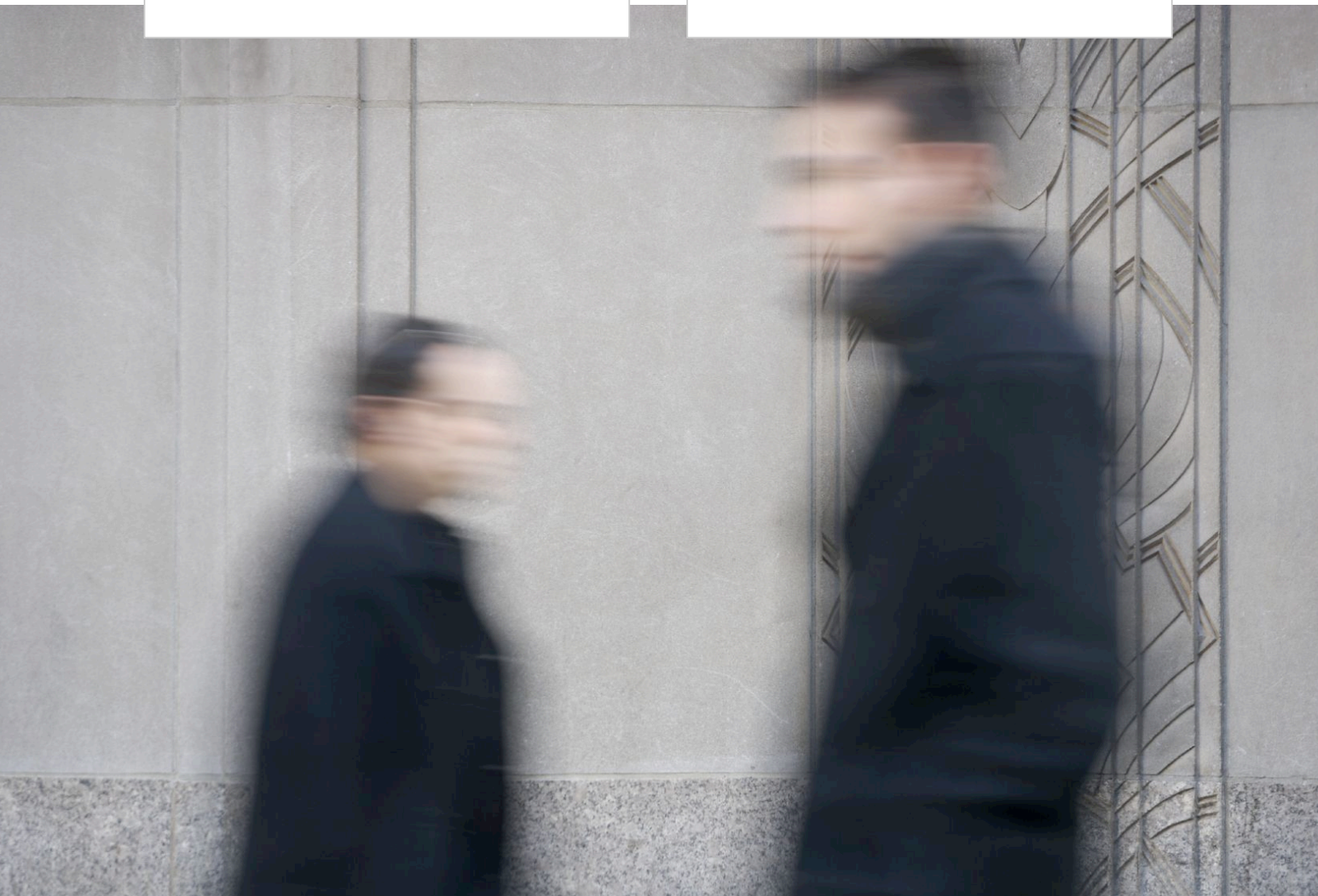
“Increased work responsibilities with less dollars”

“Lack of time to do an adequate job”

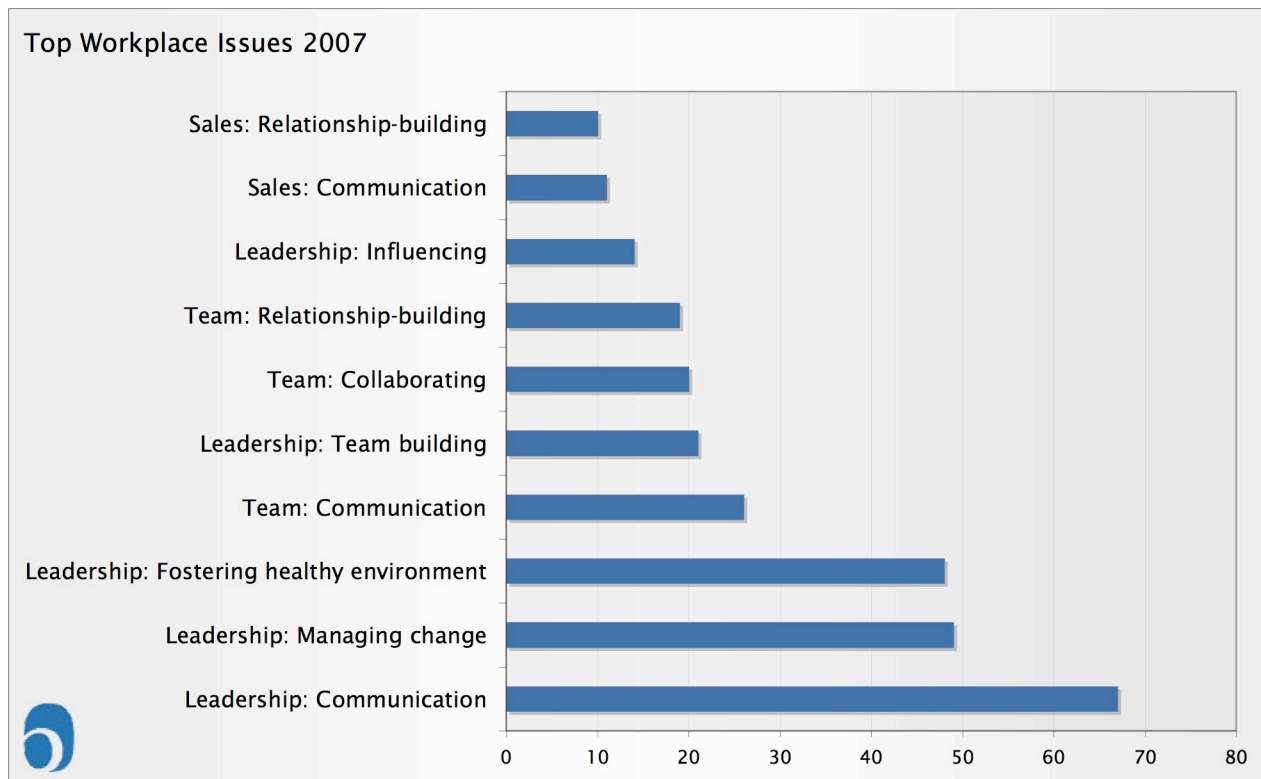
“Too little time to talk to colleagues”

“Managing increasing complexity, competition and regulation”

“Inadequate budgets”



Respondents were asked to identify the top issues in their organizations from a list of leadership, sales, and team performance, and customer service issues. The top issues are:



Respondents were asked to define these issues in their own words. Examples of leaders' definitions of the four top issues for 2007 are:

Leadership: Communication

- "Communication that is consistent and informative; training"
- "Communication breakdowns; holding people accountable"
- "Uncertainty with the goals and direction we're heading in"

Change Management

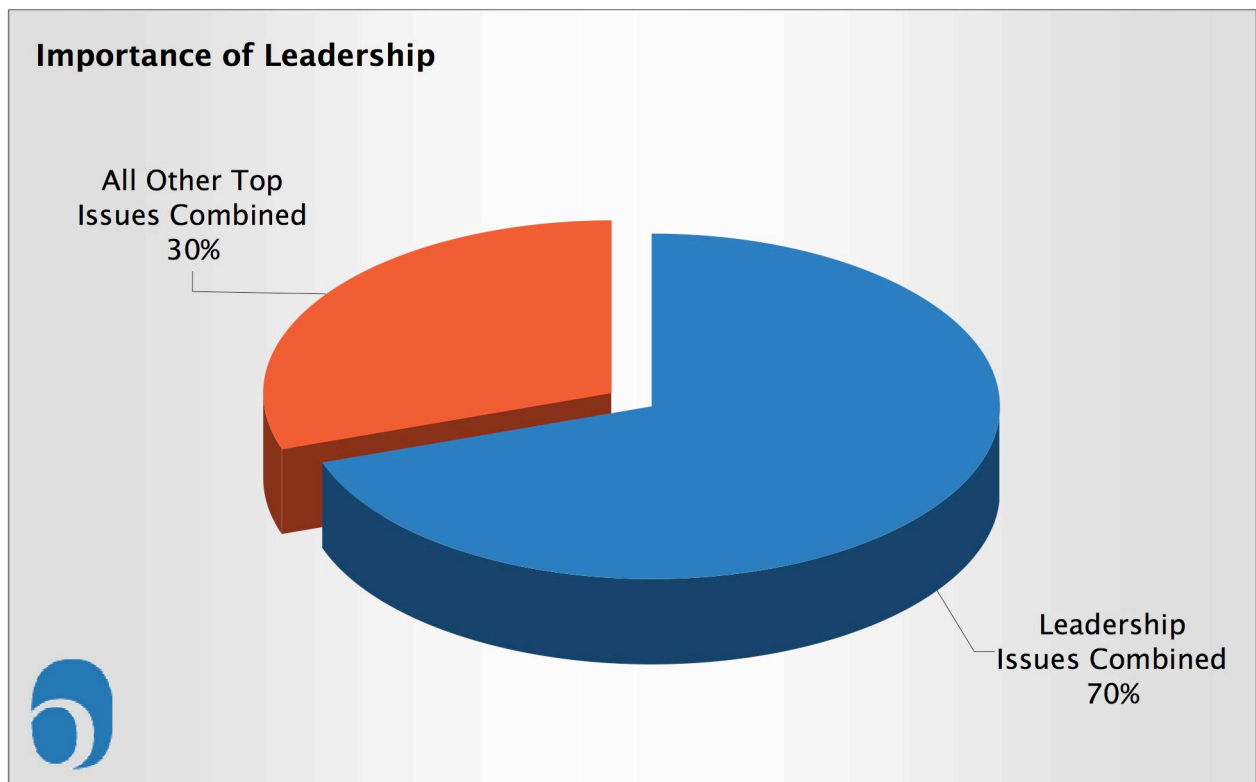
- "Development of effective personal and team traits to sustain change in a modern large government organization"
- "Organizational change and staff motivation"



- “Getting staff through the 'change' process/es that are required to meet and compete with outside competition”

Leadership: Fostering a Healthy Environment

- “Maintaining a balance of work and life”
- “Our leadership being absent and not in touch with the people”
- “Leaders spending little or no time with their teams.”



Within the 10 top issues above, 70% are in the leadership category.

Commonly, leaders identify a need for supplemental instruction regarding team communication and morale building. Furthermore, when asked about the role team members' and outside correspondents' emotions play in addressing these challenges, participants respond that the feelings and attitudes are important and sometimes essential to the processes involved in addressing these challenges.

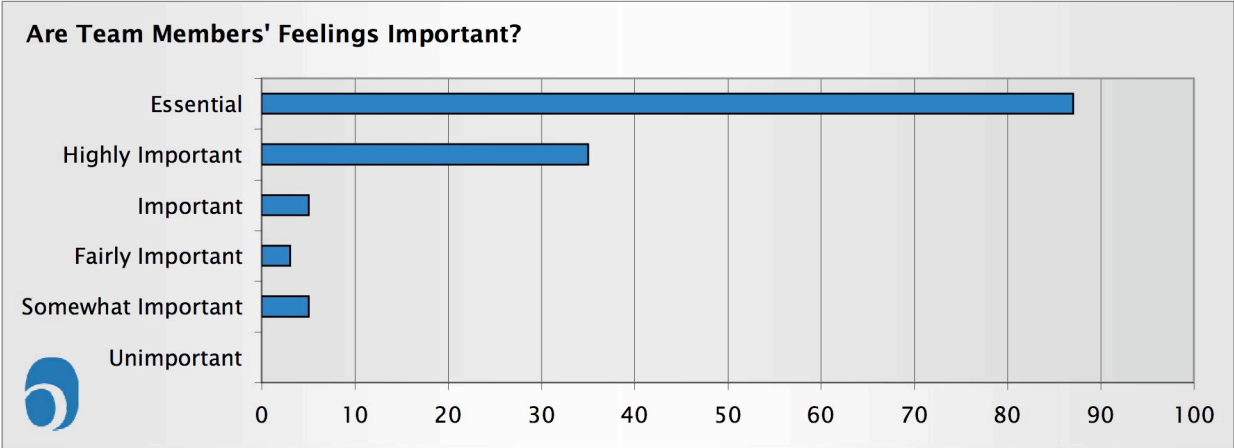


Feelings at Work

Respondents recognize that feelings are an important part of solving the issues at hand.

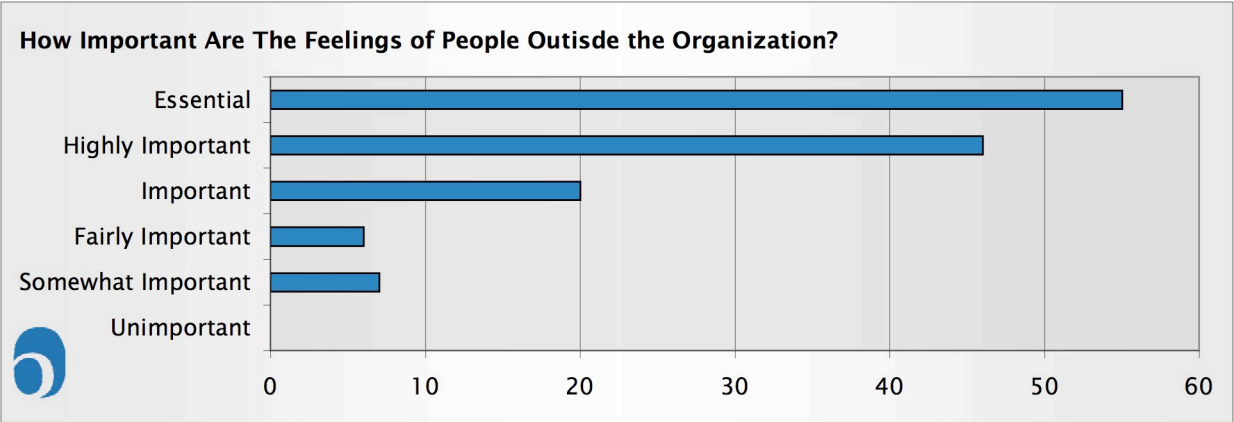
To address these challenges, how important are your people's (in the organization) attitudes / feelings?

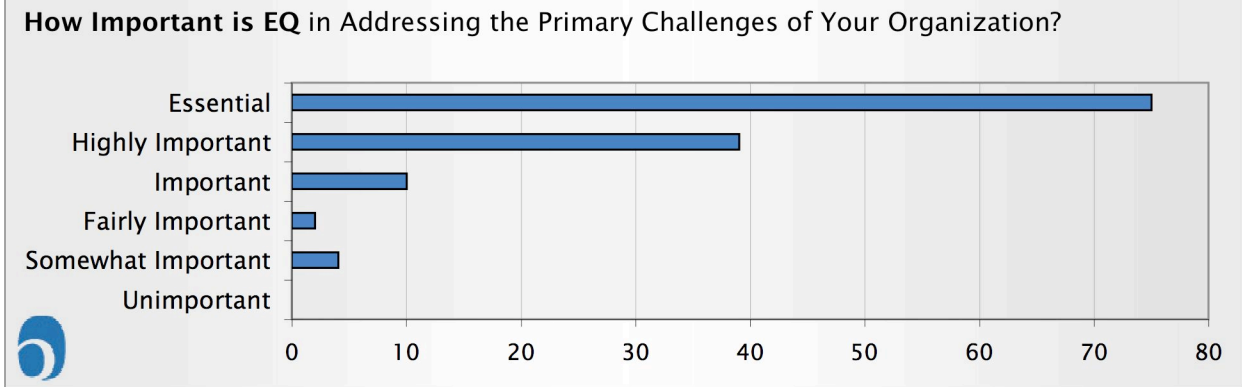
Overwhelmingly, the majority of respondents indicate that awareness and sensitivity to team members feelings is essential to addressing top organizational issues.



To address these challenges, how important are other people's (outside the organization) attitudes / feelings?

Again, the majority of respondents indicate that being able to recognize and adjust to the feelings of correspondents outside the organization is essential to solving its top challenges.





To assess respondents' impressions of the importance of emotional intelligence in addressing the primary challenges of the organizations, respondents were asked about the importance of emotional intelligence in addressing each major organizational challenge / problem. Using the scale where 1 = "totally unimportant" and 5 = "essential", participants indicate that emotional intelligence and feelings of team- and non-team-members are among the most important resources an organization has in addressing challenges and reaching goals. Independent samples t-tests indicate response similarities among all participants, regardless of organizational size.



Three Views of EQ

When asked whether the development of emotional intelligence is an organizational priority, responses fell into three distinct categories.

1. Current Asset

First, many of the respondents suggested that EQ is a recognized asset to the company and one that is currently being integrated into the workplace. For example, one participant noted: “Yes. We believe it will help us do our job better, and help those we serve do their jobs better.”

Another respondent revealed: “Yes, we are in a self-proclaimed strengths-based, family-centered program. The work hinges on building relationships in the community while maintaining professional boundaries -- both directly and indirectly we tie EQ into our interpersonal issues.”

2. Off the Radar

On the opposite side of the spectrum, several respondents claimed that EQ is not currently being integrated in the workplace: “Our company doesn't recognize the importance of the role emotional intelligence plays in managing a company and doing business with the public.”

3: Present Need

An additional subset of respondents noted that while EQ was not currently being emphasized by their organization, they recognize the value of EQ training in the workplace. One respondent suggested: “The development of emotional intelligence should be a priority in this organization because an understanding of co-workers would help to foster a cohesive and pleasant work environment rather than the abusive environment that currently exists.”



Sample Group

The sample population for this exploratory study consisted of 135 voluntary respondents recruited via Six Seconds' web sites and email groups. Respondents come from organizations in all work sectors and approximately equally divided between Executive, Upper Manager, Middle Manager, and Team Member roles. 54% are from North America, 16% Europe, 10% Asia, and others from C&S America, Oceania, and Africa.

Analysis

In addition to both open-ended and ranking questions about issues, respondents were asked to report on their impressions of the roles emotional intelligence, EQ awareness, team affect, and outsiders' feelings in the success and health of their organizations. Response frequencies were measured and independent samples t-tests were conducted to confirm response consistency across a number of demographic variables.

Conclusion

The 2007 pilot study demonstrates that emotional intelligence and feelings of team- and non-team-members are among the most important resources an organization has in addressing challenges and reaching goals. Although the vast majority of participants in this study (81.5%) reported having had at least basic training or knowledge of Emotional Intelligence, independent samples t-tests indicate no significant response differences when compared to those with little or no EQ training or awareness. Results presented here suggest that supplemental emotional intelligence development may be the key remedy for many current workplace issues plaguing even our most successful organizations.



About the Authors

Joshua Freedman is COO and Melissa Bayne is Research Associate at Six Seconds, The Emotional Intelligence Network (www.6seconds.org). Six Seconds helps all people develop essential EQ skills so businesses, schools, and communities thrive. With offices in six countries and practitioners in over 50, five validated assessments, and numerous training and consulting programs, Six Seconds is the world's preeminent resource for emotional intelligence development.

