

THE SCIENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

When TalentSmartEQ® released the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal® in 2003, the concept of EQ was still taking root in the minds of business leaders, other professionals, and anyone who simply wanted to lead a happier and healthier life. By measuring people's EQ skills and showing them how to improve in one swoop, the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal quickly became the vehicle that enabled people to turn their newfound emotional mastery into strengthened relationships, better decisions, stronger leadership, and, ultimately, more successful organizations. At TalentSmartEQ, we've watched more than two million people from the top to the bottom of organizations take the journey to higher EQ.

The field of EQ skill development has truly blossomed since then, and we've taken a special interest in tracking the changing landscape all along the way. The revelations we find in the body of EQ research as well as the insights revealed in our own data often surprise us and encourage us. What remains constant throughout our discoveries is the vitally important role EQ skills play in the quest to lead a happy, healthy, and productive personal and professional life. All offer hope for those looking to increase their EQ skills.

To access ongoing trends, previous findings, and other interesting topics, visit our website at talentsmarteq.com/resources

We learn from you, our readers, that you are most interested in the latest trends. As time marches quickly, we invite you to continue reading for a high-level summary of the most robust EQ findings so far and to stay in touch with us for ongoing updates. What follows are highlights from published EQ research since 1995 and from TalentSmartEQ's data trends since 2009 when we first released Emotional Intelligence 2.0. To access our previous findings, additional findings, and to learn more about ongoing trends for specific demographic groups, professions, industries, and other interesting topics, please visit our website at www.talentsmarteq.com/eqtrends.

Here's what we understand now...

MOODS MATTER: Emotions Are Catchy

There is still the widespread notion that there's no place for emotions at work. Look up "descriptions of positive work cultures," and you will notice that there is no mention of people being encouraged to constructively express or talk about their emotions. Feeling respected is often mentioned, but the role emotions play in achieving a feeling of respect is not well understood or discussed.

An important and repeatable finding in EQ research shows that emotions in the workplace are contagious. A lack of awareness about this can lead to negative emotions spreading among people working together and interacting with each other. At work, school, and at home, understanding and constructively managing your moods matters because your moods affect those around you. And vice versa. The moods of your coworkers, classmates, and family affect how you feel for the rest of the day too.

Even more notable in the research is the contagion spreading from a specific group to another—leaders to followers. A leader's emotions have been found to be experienced more deeply by followers than by peers. Over time, employees remember more negative emotional displays from their leaders and more intensely. This is not surprising when you consider that supervisors hold power over the people they supervise and their schedules, pay increases, workloads, and work status. When a person's livelihood and professional growth opportunities are at stake, it makes more sense that followers are attuned to the emotions their leaders radiate. An employee's ability to read the boss's mood tells them when they can relax and when they need to be on alert.

The most important conclusion is for leaders. Leaders do not have the luxury of walking through the halls discharging a bad mood. Staff are watching, listening, and feeling their every move. Every leader is responsible for becoming more aware of their moods and which ones should not be spread around the workplace. When leaders want to vent or stew like the rest of us, they need to do so with intention, letting people know. Don't make the mistake of creating needless distraction among your staff. Say at the team meeting, "If you've seen me in a funk the last two days, it's because I'm sorting out schedules

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that don't line up, and it's not my favorite thing to do." You may not hear it, but a wave of relief will rush through the staff's hearts and minds, and they will get back to focusing on the work instead of absorbing or worrying about your bad mood.

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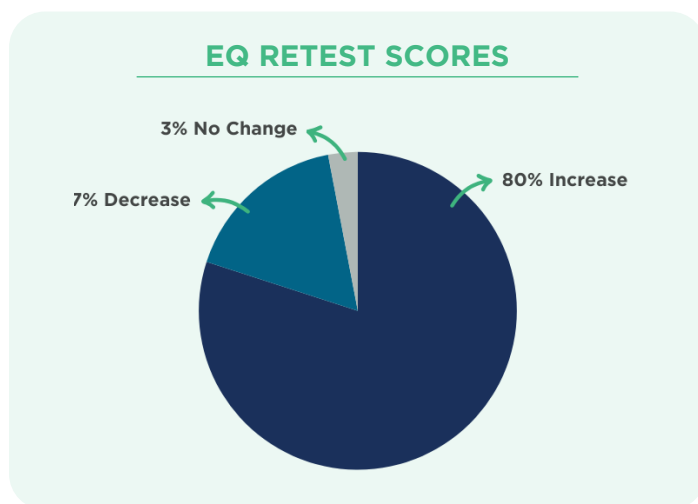
There is also good news about emotional contagion. Emotional intelligence skills and positive emotions—much like negative emotions—are contagious. That means our EQ skills are highly dependent on the surrounding people and circumstances. The more time we spend with people who openly discuss emotions, the more skilled we become at identifying and understanding emotions. People who operate with higher emotional intelligence will also encourage our behaviors. The more we interact with empathetic people, the more empathetic we become. That is precisely what makes emotional intelligence a learned skill rather than some unalterable trait bestowed only upon a lucky few at birth.

THE JOURNEY IS ONGOING: EQ Skills Can Fluctuate

The team at TalentSmartEQ took a good look at how the collective EQ of our readers and working professionals changed over time. While we are not surprised to see that the people who we test and train successfully improve their EQ, we are interested to learn more about those who don't improve. Though people can make marked progress on their EQ skills once they get practicing, external pressures can also slow, stop, or decrease how often they are putting their EQ skills to work. Hard times of any kind—financial, familial, job-related, health-related—create more intense and often prolonged negative emotions that ultimately result in stress. In addition to the physical costs of stress, such as weight gain and heart disease, stress also taxes our mental resources. Under stress-free conditions, we can consciously devote extra effort to staying calm and collected during the trials and tribulations of everyday life. We are more confident in our abilities to handle unexpected events, and we allow our minds to overcome troublesome matters.

Unmanaged stress, however, consumes many of those mental resources. It reduces our minds to something like

a state of martial law in which emotions single-handedly dictate behavior, while our rational capacities are busy trying to turn lemons into lemonade. Suddenly, a little setback in your project at work that would have been no big deal in relatively prosperous times feels more like a catastrophe than a minor nuisance. For many people, their EQ skills desert them at precisely the time when they need these skills the most—under stress. Only those with well-trained and second-nature EQ skills can effectively weather the storm.



As people work to make progress on increasing their emotional intelligence skills, we find there are three types of experiences along the way. Most people, 80%, see an increase in their EQ score after several months of practice, 3% see no change at all, and 17% see a decrease (a lower EQ score than their first). For people who see a decrease in their retest score, there may be two explanations. First, they may be more engaged. Now that they understand the importance of emotional intelligence, they become more aware of the moments they slip back into low EQ habits. When they take the retest, they rate themselves more realistically or hold themselves to a higher EQ standard. Second, they may hit a rough patch in life only to discover that their high EQ behaviors are less frequent than before.

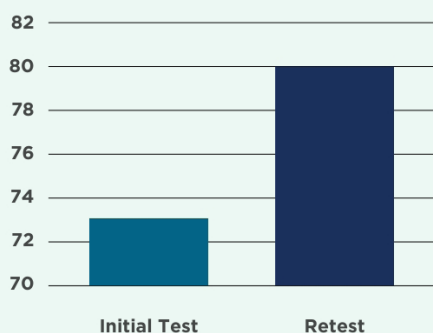
Everyone's EQ journey is ongoing. Your EQ can fluctuate based on how self-aware you are or the difficulties you face. Just as you may take your foot off the pedal of a bike only to find your progress slows, you can also press the pedals and get going again. Periodically measuring your EQ scores gives you an appraisal of how much progress you are making in your efforts to master emotional intelligence skills.

MAKE A QUANTUM LEAP: EQ Skills Can Learned

Developing emotional intelligence skills takes time, but a little conscious effort can cut that time down to a fraction of how long it would ordinarily take. Habits stem from well-traveled neural pathways in your brain, and increasing your EQ takes repeated practice until new neural connections give your brain a high EQ superhighway. Your destination is not having to spend much mental or emotional energy on what to say or do to be your best self.

Across the hundreds of thousands of learners who practice the EQ strategies in this book and then measure their progress using the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal, we have found an average seven-point increase in their EQ scores in a three- to six-month time frame. This is more than double the increase anyone could expect from improvements and growth that happen during the normal course of life experience. The average increase in emotional intelligence scores grows to nine points for those who keep practicing several more months and then take the retest in a seven- to ten-month time frame. This means people on average make significant improvements in their EQ skills with less than a year of practice.

AVERAGE EQ SCORE FROM TEST TO RETEST



Seasoned working professionals frequently share with our training team that they wish they had learned about emotional intelligence earlier in life. For Gen Xers and Boomers who are midway through their careers and beyond, the wonderful news is that it is never too late to get started. People who are over 40 years old see an eight-point increase in their EQ score, on average, after practicing EQ strategies for six to nine months.

One of the signature traits of every “younger generation” is its enormous capacity to soak up new information and to acquire new skills. That means it’s almost entirely up to each person to do the legwork necessary to speed up the developmental pace of their EQ. For members of Gen Y and Gen Z, the option is to either let years of experience run their course (waiting until their 50s to master their emotions) or to take their development into their own hands. If they choose to, they can start now.

With Boomers retiring sooner rather than later, talented twenty-somethings not only can prepare themselves for leadership roles today, but they must. Those with the foresight to make the effort to train themselves to resist the temptation to speak when it won’t help a situation, and to keep the lines of communication open even when upset, will be the ones tapped to fill the vacant leadership positions in tomorrow’s organizations. Along with those positions will come not only better pay but also the ability to make the changes they so desperately want to see in the world.

A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR NATIONS: EQ and Culture

Making business personal is nothing new in many cultures. In collectivistic cultures, executives ordinarily schedule dinner meetings with their staff to talk about business trends, career aspirations, and family. People expect their leaders to set an eminent example in how they make decisions, connect with others, and improve. There is genuine shame in not fulfilling these duties because staff really care.

As we discussed earlier, EQ is susceptible to cultural influence. If you grow up in a culture where emotional outbursts and careless self-gratification are not only discouraged but are also considered personally shameful, such an upbringing is going to affect the way you manage yourself and others. The question here is whether that culture promotes or prohibits emotionally intelligent behaviors.

Now, we have insights from another decade of research. An analysis of EQ and culture studies—12 studies on more than 6,000 employees—revealed that the impact of leaders’ EQ on employee performance and behaviors yields statistical significance in every culture. The implications for “just business” cultures are clear: pay attention to managing emotions, or you will suffer the consequences. Whether for countries trying to protect their existing competitive advantage in the global

economy or for those nations whose stars are rising, the link between EQ and outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, and economic prosperity cannot be overestimated.

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There’s an old Chinese proverb that says, “Give a man a pole and he’ll catch a fish a week. Tell him what bait to use, and he’ll catch a fish a day. Show him how and where to fish, and he’ll have fish to eat for a lifetime.” The flip side to that proverb is that the person without a pole, without bait, and without knowledge of the how and the where runs a serious risk of famine. Similarly, emotionally ignorant people with little understanding of how and where emotions affect their lives will have an exceedingly difficult time reeling in success. On the other hand, those who use the right tools and strategies for harnessing their emotions put themselves in a position to prosper. That same truth applies to individuals, organizations, and even entire communities and countries.

CLOSING THOUGHTS: EQ and the Future

While the sum total of these findings is encouraging, these discoveries also act as a stern warning. For every person setting out to increase their EQ, keep in mind that emotional intelligence is a skill set that can be unlearned during periods of stress or hardship. For those who are in leadership positions today or who desire a leadership role in the future, learn how to manage your moods constructively with the strategies in this book, or the performance of the people you lead can suffer.

The important point is to keep at it. Just as you can work hard to lose weight over the summer only to pack those pounds on again over the winter holidays, you can sharpen your EQ skills only to see them go dull again. That is precisely why we recommend reading this book, putting your new knowledge into action, and reviewing these skill development strategies at least once a year.

You wouldn’t expect to forever master the game of golf or playing the piano after practicing for six months and then quitting, would you? The same is true with EQ skill development. If you let up and stop consciously practicing these skills, somewhere down the road, you will almost certainly allow tough circumstances to overpower you. You will slide right back into those old bad habits. These hard-earned skills can be lost almost as easily as they were gained, and with them the higher performance, stronger relationships, and better decisions you’ve come to enjoy.