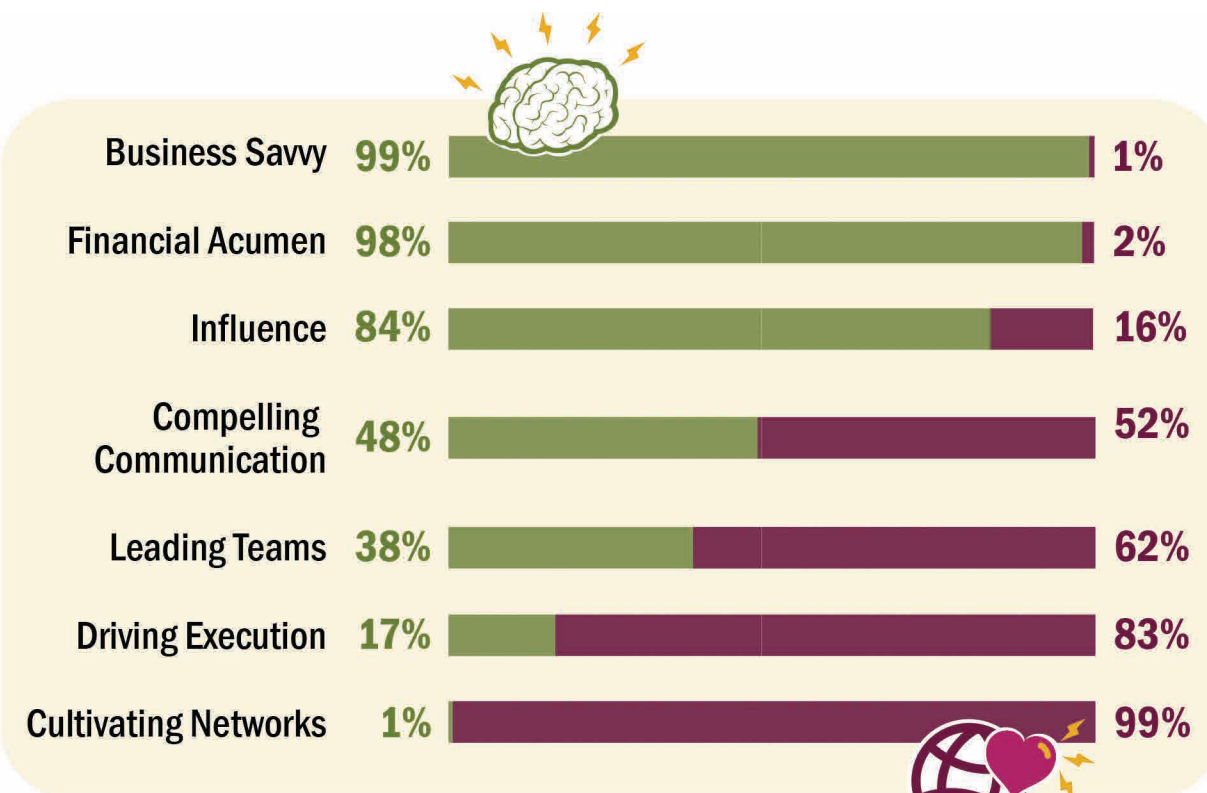


# EQ vs IQ

## The Surprising Skills Where Each Matters Most



Predicting Leader Skills—What Happens When We Pit IQ Against EQ



% indicates the degree to which IQ or EQ accounts for effectiveness in each skill.

## Not All Skills Are Equal

When it comes to sustainable leadership performance, what really matters most—emotional intelligence (EQ) or cognitive ability (IQ)? On the one hand, a study by Daniel Goleman, one of the earlier pioneers of EQ, revealed that EQ and technical skills accounted for a far larger percentage of the variance in leadership performance than IQ\*. But on the other hand, a more rigorous study across multiple independent findings on IQ versus EQ showed that IQ was five times more important in predicting performance than EQ\*\*.

The likely reality is that both matter. And, when it comes to the leadership ranks, it's fair to say that a larger percentage of leadership failures may be attributed to insensitivity than stupidity. Using our assessment database, we attempted to drill a bit deeper. While both EQ and IQ relate to overall leadership skill, we wanted to determine the difference between the two in predicting specific leader skills.

### [ EVIDENCE ]

We began our investigation by determining the best possible indices of EQ and IQ. For IQ we relied on scores from the Raven's Progressive Matrices and Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking tests, both standard and accepted measures of cognitive ability. The EQ index was calculated with data from our global leadership personality inventories, using a combination of two factors: interpersonal sensitivity and imperceptivity (reverse-coded). Finally, we looked at which of the two indices were more critical in predicting assessment center performance in seven different behavioral skills. The results are shown in the "Predicting Leader Skills" graphic.

As you might expect, brainpower did a better job in predicting the more business-focused aspects of leader performance—business savvy and financial acumen. EQ, meanwhile, related more strongly to performance in the people-focused competencies, such as leading teams and building networks.

Perhaps a bit more surprising is influence and driving execution. Influence seems to depend far more on IQ than EQ. The implication? If you want to win someone over, a business case and strong rationale may be more critical than interpersonal sensitivity and skills. On the other hand, once you've influenced someone to take a particular direction, EQ will play a far stronger role in its execution due to the necessity of getting everyone marching in the same direction.

\*Goleman, D. (2006). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York: Bantam Dell.

\*\*O'Boyle, E. H., Humphrey, R. H., Pollack, J. M., Hawver, T. H., & Story, P. A. (2011). The relation between emotional intelligence and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32(5), 788-818.

## Action

- .01 Integrate both EQ and IQ into your expectation-setting about strong leadership. Leaders deficient in either will be imbalanced and at severe risk of failure. Some vital leadership skills, such as networking and team leadership, will rely more on EQ; others, such as business savvy and financial acumen, much more on IQ.
- .02 Capture information about EQ and IQ as early as possible, ideally during selection and promotion decisions. IQ is not developable, and research supports that EQ is influenced at a fairly early age. One of the world's largest personal care product companies tests its new associates for both EQ and IQ competence. That being said, current approaches to measuring IQ may have adverse impact against protected employee groups, and most companies rightfully avoid using them as a standalone preemployment instrument, instead choosing to combine them with other measures.
- .03 Devote learning and practice opportunities to EQ-related leader behaviors such as maintaining esteem, empathy, listening, and supporting. On-the-job practice is essential to make formal training in these skills stick once a leader re-engages with employees.