



Sanofi: How EI Training Boosts Sales and Benefits Employees

“I have seen improvements in behavior that have increased the bottom line with sales reps. From a management perspective, increased skills that have led to more buy-in, acceptance, spirit improved, and better communication.
— Sanofi participant in the emotional intelligence development program

Sanofi is the world's fourth largest pharmaceutical company,¹ employing over 100,000 people to provide healthcare solutions in over 170 countries.² Like all pharmaceutical companies, Sanofi's success depends heavily on its sales representatives (sales reps), and these sales reps depend heavily on emotional intelligence (EI). In this case, we take a look at how Sanofi used EI training to significantly improve employees' wellbeing, while at the same time enhancing the company's sales performance.

THE PROBLEM

At Sanofi, sales reps are responsible for selling products to a variety of external stakeholders. This includes educating healthcare professionals and decision makers on the competitive advantage of Sanofi's products and encouraging them to choose Sanofi over other providers. Similar to other industries, pharmaceutical sales reps face a lot of pressure; competition is strong and most healthcare professionals are (understandably) reluctant to sit through a product pitch or accept free trials and demos. As a result, sales rep positions show high rates of burnout, and in the U.S. turnover rates are as high as 27%. Sales reps often consider their job challenging, with around 54% describing their lifestyle as stressful and over a third reporting that their career negatively impacts their personal life.³ Could emotional intelligence training be the solution? And if so, how would it impact the company's bottom line? Sanofi implemented an EI training program to investigate just that.



→ THE STUDY

Sanofi collaborated with Genos, an EI assessment and training organization, to answer two questions: Could the emotional intelligence of a sales rep be increased? And if so, would this improved level of EI result in higher sales revenue?

Genos had already done research in the pharmaceutical sales domain and demonstrated a direct association between sales reps' overall revenue-generated performance and their EI. Now the task was to replicate findings among Sanofi's employees. Sanofi identified a group of sales reps with similar performance and equal levels of responsibility within the organization. Genos selected 70 of these sales reps for their study and divided them into two groups.¹ The first group (control group) was only assessed on their EI and sales performance. The second group (development group) took the same EI and sales performance assessments, but were also provided with an EI development program specifically designed for them and their managers. The program consisted of the following:¹

- A 360 degree (multi-source) emotional intelligence assessment
- One full-day workshop and two half-day workshops to educate sales reps and their managers on the benefits of EI in the sales environment
- Eight small group assessment classes (sales managers only)
- Five emotional intelligence coaching classes (sales reps and managers)
- A follow-up 360 degree emotional assessment

This experimental design used changes in metrics over time to assess the effectiveness of Sanofi's EI training program. By measuring EI before and after training, Sanofi was able to quantify improvements in sales reps' EI and attribute these improvements to their educational efforts.

Furthermore, in looking at the organization's sales performance, Sanofi was also able to determine a monetary return on investment (ROI) in addition to the qualitative benefit of improved EI and employee wellbeing.

A TIMELINE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT⁶

- In 1923, Hoechst, one of Sanofi's parent companies, launched the first animal origin insulin production. They also developed the crystallization process which allows better purification of insulin and improves its tolerance.
- In 1937, Delagrang Laboratories (acquired by Synthelabo) launched SEDO-CARENA® (aminophyllin/papaverine/phenobarbital), a cardio analgesic also known as "peace of heart." During the first half of the 20th century, Sanofi's founding laboratories researched and made available innovative cardiovascular therapeutic solutions.
- In 1949, Sanofi launched Maalox® (Magnesium hydroxyde + Aluminium oxyde), a digestive healthcare product which is now one of Sanofi's leading consumer healthcare brands.
- In 1968, Cérubidine® (Daunorubicin) was developed. It was the first anti-cancer medication marketed by Rhône-Poulenc. Since its launch in 1968, it has become the drug of choice in the treatment of various types of leukemia.
- In 1972, Sanofi launched Aspégic® (Acide acetylsalicylique) which became France's best-selling aspirin in 1976. Originally, the aspirin active principle is extracted from the willow tree.
- Sanofi has also played a leading role in vaccinations for polio, influenza, yellow fever, MMR, cholera, and others illnesses.



SALES AND EI

Many studies have looked at the benefits of EI across a range of industries, however it is a particularly important set of skills for positions like customer service and sales representatives. Research shows that EI is responsible for 58% of sales reps' professional success, with each percentage-point increase in EI corresponding to up to \$1,300 increase in annual salary. Recently, the World Economic Forum ranked EI as one of the most important skills to have by 2025, and studies showed that companies who select salespeople on the basis of EI have 63% less turnover in their first year of work.⁷ Sanofi is not the only company who has taken advantage of these results. Other organizations have launched initiatives and seen the direct benefits that EI can have for employee well being and the bottom line:⁸

- At PepsiCo, executives selected for EI competency were 10% more productive than the average
- At L'Oréal, employees who had strong EI brought in \$2.5 million more sales than those who didn't
- An EI initiative at Sheraton Hotels helped increase market share by 24%
- The US Air Force saved \$190 million by using EI to screen pararescue jumpers in their selection and hiring process.

→ WHAT HAPPENED

Over the course of the program, Genos' study showed an 18% improvement in the EI of sales managers (as measured with 360 degree assessments before and after EI training). These results demonstrated that EI can be learned or improved, and that the particular training Sanofi implemented was effective in helping employees to build these skills. Furthermore, the development group also showed a significantly higher sales performance than the control group (7.1% improvement in the first month, 15.4% improvement in the second month, and 13.4% improvement in the third month).¹ This indicated that training not only improved EI, but also improved sales concurrently. Overall, sales reps who received training outsold their control group counterparts by an average of \$55,200 (12%) over three months.⁴

In addition to improving sales performance, EI training has also been shown to benefit employees themselves. Studies have shown that individuals who are more emotionally intelligent are likely to report higher levels of happiness.⁵ Happier employees tend to provide better service, and potential clients are more likely to enjoy interacting with happy employees than those who are stressed or dejected. This finding has been demonstrated across multiple studies⁵ and confirms the benefit of investing in EI training both for the sake of improving sales and customer relations as well as preventing burnout and turnover among sales reps themselves.

→ KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **EI MATTERS** The value of EI is often underestimated and it is therefore usually overlooked in employee development programs. However, studies show that EI skills significantly benefit both the employee (in terms of well-being) and the company (in terms of performance) as a whole.
2. **EI PAYS** Sanofi's EI training had qualitative and quantitative returns. Over all, Sanofi saw a \$6 return for every \$1 invested in their EI training program, putting the monetary ROI of the program at an incredible 600% (all percentages calculated by the territorial growth in retail sales during this period; there were no changes or improvements seen within the control group during this time).¹
3. **EI CAN BE LEARNED** Sanofi's sales managers showed an 18% increase in EI scores following a tailored training program. This means that companies can invest in their people to help develop EI skills, prevent burnout and turnover, and boost the bottom line along the way.



ABOUT SANOFI

Together the companies Sanofi, Synthelabo, Hoechst, and Rhône-Poulenc Rorer led to the creation of Sanofi. Today, Sanofi is the world's fourth largest pharmaceutical company,¹ employing over 100,000 in their 90 locations worldwide. Of these locations, 69 are manufacturing and 21 are research and development sites. Together, the team at Sanofi provides healthcare solutions to over 170 different countries, creating medicines, developing vaccines, and conducting leading-edge clinical research.²

→ HOW SIGMA CAN HELP

Like Sanofi, you can boost your employees' EI and improve customer satisfaction. SIGMA is here to help! Take a look at our [Multidimensional Emotional Intelligence Assessment - Workplace - Revised \(MEIA-W-R\)](#). The MEIA-W-R is a brief, personality-based assessment that measures 11 distinct dimensions of EI, tailored to a workplace setting. The assessment can be used to understand employee behavior and emotion, develop self-awareness, build critical people skills, assist with interpersonal issues, and conduct research in a variety of settings. The assessment also includes a comprehensive MEIA-W-R Development Report that is customized to build self-awareness based on individual results.

[Contact us](#) if you have questions or would like to speak with an executive coach about how we can help you understand and develop your emotional intelligence. ■

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