

# MASTERING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE INTERVIEWS

A GUIDE FOR MANAGERS



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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the comprehensive guide on conducting interviews to assess Emotional Intelligence (EI) in candidates. In today's dynamic workplace, technical skills are essential, but they're not enough.

EI is the ability to accurately know and manage yourself, and effectively navigate relationships, which is a critical core competency to operate successfully at work and in life. EI is the greatest predictor of success, outdistancing IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and job skills at every organizational level.

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in organizational success. Companies that emphasize EI attract and retain talent, and sustain higher performance. As a hiring manager, it's your responsibility to identify candidates with high EI who can thrive in diverse team environments, navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, and drive positive outcomes. This booklet will provide you with insights, strategies, and practical tips to effectively assess emotional intelligence during the interview process.

# UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)

EI encompasses a range of competencies, including self-awareness (i.e., strengths, blind spots, triggers), self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. Candidates with high EI demonstrate empathy, resilience, adaptability, and strong interpersonal skills, making them valuable assets to any organization. When assessing emotional intelligence, it's essential to look beyond technical qualifications and evaluate candidates' ability to accurately understand their own emotions, manage stress, communicate effectively, build relationships, and influence others positively.

Companies who emphasize EI outperform those who do not. Extensive research has consistently shown that it fosters a collaborative team mentality that will outperform expectations. Leaders with EI handle their authority more constructively and sustain higher performance. People don't leave companies, they leave bosses.

## KEY COMPONENTS OF EI INTERVIEWS

1. Behavioral-Based Questions: Develop a set of interview questions that focus on specific ***behaviors*** and experiences versus theoretical responses related to demonstrating self-awareness, ability to navigate problems, recognize blind spots, and be influential with others. Ask candidates to provide examples of various situations, such as managing conflicts, dealing with triggers, receiving constructive feedback, or collaborating with diverse teams, particularly with differing opinions.
2. Empathy and Perspective-Taking: Probe candidates' ability to understand and empathize with others' emotions by asking questions that assess their perspective-taking skills. Encourage candidates to share instances where they have successfully put themselves in someone else's shoes and how it influenced their actions and decisions. Listen for context versus theory.
3. Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation: Explore candidates' self-awareness by asking about their strengths, weaknesses, blind spots, and areas for development. Inquire about how they manage their emotions, cope with stress, and maintain composure in challenging situations. Look for examples of self-regulation, such as staying calm under pressure, controlling impulses, and adapting to change.

## SAMPLE EI INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult colleague or client? How did you manage that situation, and what steps did you take to resolve the conflict?
2. Tell me about a time when you received constructive criticism or negative feedback. How did you react, and what actions did you take to address the feedback and improve your performance?
3. Give an example of a challenging project or task you faced. How did you handle setbacks or obstacles along the way, and what strategies did you use to stay motivated and focused?
4. Describe a situation where you had to work collaboratively with a diverse team. How did you navigate different personalities and perspectives to achieve common goals?
5. Can you share an experience where you had to adapt to a major change or unexpected situation at work? How did you manage your emotions during the transition, and what did you learn from the experience?

## TIPS FOR CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE EI INTERVIEWS

1. **Establish Trust and Rapport:** Create a supportive and non-judgmental environment where candidates feel comfortable sharing personal experiences and emotions.
2. **Active Listening:** Practice active listening during the interview, paying attention not only to what candidates say but also to their tone of voice, body language, and emotional cues.
3. **Observe Non-Verbal Behavior:** Pay close attention to candidates' non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, gestures, and posture, which can provide valuable insights into their emotional intelligence.
4. **Use Probing Techniques:** Ask follow-up questions to delve deeper into candidates' responses and uncover additional insights into their emotional intelligence competencies.
5. **Evaluate Holistically (i.e., context vs content):** Consider candidates' responses in conjunction with their overall demeanor, communication style, and interpersonal skills to form a comprehensive assessment of their emotional intelligence.

## CONCLUSION

Assessing emotional intelligence in candidates is a critical aspect of the hiring process, as it can significantly impact team dynamics, collaboration, and organizational performance. By incorporating emotional intelligence interviews into your recruitment strategy and leveraging the techniques outlined in this booklet, you can identify candidates who possess the EI competencies needed to thrive in today's workplace.

***Emotional intelligence is a skill that can be developed and refined over time*** through the right training, coaching, or other development programs. By hiring candidates with high EI and fostering a culture that values emotional intelligence, you can create a more inclusive, resilient, and successful organization.

The organization must be committed to systemically reinforcing the value of EI. Hiring a high-performing employee in an organization that doesn't genuinely value it, will ultimately cost more in poor performance, bad reputation, and high turnover.

### ALSO SEE EBOOK

***“MASTERING BEHAVIORAL EVENT INTERVIEWS”***

## SELF-AWARENESS

- When do you feel most inspired, excited, energized, or motivated?
- Share an accomplishment you're proud of.
- What adjectives would best describe your strengths?
- What four adjectives would others use to describe you?
- What four adjectives would describe your weaknesses or blind spots?
- What do you feel are areas of development for you?
- What kind of behavior(s) make you angry or annoyed?
- What causes you stress?
- What's something you achieved that you're most proud of and why?
- Who are some of your top role models, and why or how do they inspire you?

## SELF-MANAGEMENT

- When you felt unmotivated, what did you do to overcome this?
- Tell me about a time you experienced a setback or failure and how you dealt with it, or recovered?
- Describe a time when you may have been disappointed in your behavior.
- Have you ever had to change your behavior, either at work or home, if so, why did you have to change, and how did you do it?
- How do you celebrate success?
- How do you manage stress in challenging situations at work?
- How do you de-stress after a bad day at work?
- How do you prefer to create a work-life balance?
- Tell me about a time when you felt triggered or angry and how you managed it.
- Tell me about a time you felt overwhelmed, the impact it had, and how you managed it?
- Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure and how you managed it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to change work mid-stream because of changing organization priorities.
- Tell me about a time when you were unable to complete a project on time and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to balance competing priorities and did it successfully?
- Tell me about a time when you received constructive criticism or negative feedback. How did you react and what actions did you take to address the feedback and improve your performance?
- Tell me about a time when your mood had an impact on your work (positive or negative).
- Tell me about a time when you had to handle a situation that didn't go as planned.
- Give an example of a challenging project or task you faced. How did you handle setbacks or obstacles along the way, and what strategies did you use to stay motivated and focused?
- When you start a new job, whether it's with a new company or transfer to another area, how do you adapt to your work environment?
- What have you done in the last year to continue your professional development?
- Share an example of when you had to manage conflicting emotions when making a tough decision.
- Describe a scenario where you had to control your emotions to maintain professionalism.
- How do you handle distractions and stay focused on your work, particularly during challenging or boring tasks?



## RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT & SOCIAL AWARENESS

- What would you do if you noticed a coworker was struggling with their work, or facing difficulties?
- How do you respond when a co-worker challenges you?
- How are you most likely to be misunderstood by others?
- When you're interacting with others, what role does body language play in your ability to communicate?
- Describe a time when you had to deliver some bad news to someone.
- Describe a situation where you successfully resolved a conflict by understanding the other person's perspective.
- How do you ensure that everyone's perspectives and opinions are considered during team discussions, or decision-making processes?
- How do you approach building relationships and rapport with team members?
- Describe how you would mediate a disagreement between two team members.
- Describe an example of when you had to be confrontational to achieve results. What did you do and how was it received?
- Describe a situation where you had to be persuasive and sell your idea to someone else?
- Can you describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult colleague or client? How did you manage the situation to resolve the conflict?
- Tell me about a time when you worked on a project that involved colleagues who seemed distracted by other issues not related to the task, which impacted your ability to complete the work. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work with a team or peer you didn't like.
- Tell me about a time when you had to neutralize a stressful situation in a professional environment.
- Tell me about a time when you played an integral role in working on a team and handled differing points of view to achieve common goals?
- Tell me a time when you had to deal with an irate customer and how you handled it?
- Tell me about a time when you used your political savvy to push a program through that you really believed in.
- Tell me about a situation that you had significant impact on because of your follow-through.
- Tell me about a time when you made a lasting, positive impression on a customer?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate customer?
- Tell me about a time you experienced a conflict at work and how you managed it.

**ALSO SEE EBOOK**  
***"MASTERING BEHAVIORAL EVENT INTERVIEWS"***