

INTERVIEWS II: THEORIES AND TECHNIQUES

3. THE TRANSPERSONAL APPROACH TO INTERVIEWS

3.1 Identifying Emotional Intelligence in Employees

Transpersonal refers to that which goes beyond the personal level. In this context, the word personal refers to the mask our personality wears in the world or to the everyday, ordinary I am ness. The personal level has to do with the realms of the ego and the thinking mind whereas the transpersonal level has to do with the trans-rational state we can recognize when we go beyond the limited and rational person that we usually identify with and are trapped in. Really, the word transpersonal refers to that which is spiritual. There is a connection with Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) plays a key role in hiring employees who are competent and achieve a high degree of success in their roles. A person with a high regard for social and emotional skills has the ability to work well with others, accomplish organizational goals and be effective in business and social settings. Below are some tips to consider the next time you are interested in hiring an applicant who demonstrates social emotional intelligence competencies. When hiring for EQ, identify what you are looking for in an applicant, signs that indicate a “red flag,” (e.g., criticizing others they have worked with and/or demonstrating poor social skills or impulse control in the interview), and the hiring method you will use. In terms of hiring methods, the two basic type of interviews to consider are outlined below;

- **Situational Interview:** Interviewer provides a scenario and asks the applicant a series of questions on “how they would handle the situation.”
- **Behavioral Interview:** Interviewer delves into the applicants past experiences and asks job specific questions. Example: “Tell me about a time when...”

3.2 Interviewing With a Focus On Emotional Intelligence – Phase 1

Emotional Intelligence is no new kid on the block. For years, employers have widely acknowledged the importance of qualities like self-awareness and empathy to the success of the business professional and their organization. What is new is

the push to incorporate an evaluation of EQ into the employee selection process. Here's how companies and consultants are approaching the various rewards and risks of EQ assessments and some interview questions that shed light on the candidate's EQ.

Select candidates who are honest about themselves. It takes emotional maturity to be realistic about one's own psychological makeup, and many otherwise competent professionals lack this form of EQ. Look for ways to probe this in the interview with questions such as, "People with high Emotional Intelligence would answer honestly the question, 'How do you get around one of your weaknesses?'" "

Be direct. In the interview, ask candidates to talk about how they've resolved stressful situations. You can ask, "How do you handle a procrastinator who has something due every Wednesday and doesn't deliver?" These "how do you handle" questions give you a lot of keys.

Look at experience and education in Emotional Intelligence. Academic programs are beginning to include Emotional Intelligence in their curriculum. For example, the course of study in some pharmacy programs incorporates EQ. In the interview process, ask the candidate to give examples of how they apply what they learned in their EQ training.

Seek hires who will attract collaborators. After self-knowledge, EQ is really about knowing how to relate and how to work with people. Professional success comes down to three things and asking these questions in the interview:

- "Do you have the skills and IQ to learn the job?"
- "Will you work hard?"
- "Are you rewarding to deal with?"

Emotional Intelligence is the key to determining if you are choosing the right employees. Also ask the candidate how his colleagues benefit from working with him.

Consider formal assessments, in context. Firms such as Hogan Assessments offer testing instruments specifically intended to evaluate a professional's Emotional Intelligence in the workplace. These written assessments may play a role in your overall evaluation of a candidate's EQ, but they won't tell the whole story. Interviewing candidates across a range of situations such as phone, video,

peer-to-peer and group situations, as well as traditional one-to-one meetings can also yield valuable insights on EQ.

Look out for cultural bias. Human emotions may be universal, but their expression is not. For example, body language, particularly avoidance of eye contact during the interview process may signify fear or disagreement in one culture, and in another, simple respect. So beware of the risks of assessing EQ by way of gestures or other communications in the interview, verbal or nonverbal, whose meaning may be culture dependent. But ultimately, if bad hires are made and tyrannical executives leave too many bodies by the wayside, the interpersonal liability will become so great that they'll be jettisoned. To circumvent this type of situation, take the time to check an executive candidate's track record via references.

Here are some questions to ask during the interview process to help determine EQ competencies:

- Has there ever been a time where your performance was affected by your mood? Please describe.
- How have your life experiences helped or hindered you?
- Describe your top three strengths?
- What tasks or processes are hardest for you? What practices have you implemented to help develop this area?
- Have you ever been in a situation where...
- Tell me about a conflict you had when...
- Is there a person in your life that has influenced your career? How did they influence you?
- What would you want people to say about you at your retirement party?
- What would you put on your tombstone?

An interesting method to help determine an applicant's level of EQ is through a written exercise. Have the applicant write a letter introducing himself / herself to staff or customers. Upon completion, review the letter. How welcoming is the letter? How representative is the letter of organizational mission and values? Afterwards, the following post interview reflection questions can be used to evaluate the process and applicant(s);

- What is your overall impression of the applicant?
- How will the applicant acclimate to the current culture?

- Does the applicant have both the social, emotional and job related skills to do the job?
- What contributions can the applicant make to your team?

3.3. Interviewing With a Focus On Emotional Intelligence – Phase 2

Making a hire can be a hit or miss affair. A promising candidate can turn out to be a disaster, leaving frustrated colleagues and tattered client relationships in his/her wake. Sooner than anyone planned, the new hire and the organization part ways, with recrimination and regret on both sides. To increase their chances of making good hiring decisions, many companies subject candidates to an extended battery of interviews. But conducting more interviews is not really the answer. What is needed are **better** interviews, interviews that take a measure of candidates' Emotional Intelligence. EQ accounts for anywhere from 24% to 69% of performance success. Some positions require more EQ than others, but there are very few jobs in which a solid level of EQ does not confer advantage. For managers it is crucial, as it is for anyone who needs to be adept at the give and take of working as part of a creative, dynamic team.

What follows are guidelines for questions to ask and answers to listen for in interviews. The advice here is also pertinent to managers who need to interview colleagues outside their units to decide whether to appoint them to cross functional teams. There are multiple aspects to Emotional Intelligence, but honing in on these three in the interview process will go a long way toward identifying candidates with high EQ and eliminating those likely to destroy more value than they create.

1. Self-awareness and self-regulation - The candidate understands the needs and wishes that drive him and how they affect his behavior. He regulates his emotions so that any fear, anger, or anxiety he experiences doesn't spread to his colleagues or make him lose control. Anyone working in an organization needs to recognize his moods, his emotions, and the deeper emotional needs that drive him and how they shape his behavior. Generally people are competent at labeling their moods ("I'm in a good/bad/restless/mellow mood") and emotions ("I'm happy/sad/angry/anxious"), but fewer can articulate the strong emotional desires that shape much of their behavior and identity, such as a longing for validation, a hunger for power and status, a strong need to be liked.

This is the case for Ian, a manager in a midsize specialty consumer products company. Ian places a high premium on always being right but is unaware of this need and how it makes him arrogant, defensive, and cautious in turn. When a project falters or a client is unhappy, Ian is unable to work with his direct reports, his boss, and his coworkers to reach a common understanding of the problem. Instead, he focuses on demonstrating his blamelessness for it, not very helpful when what's needed is a solution. In addition to understanding their emotions, an EQ person is able to regulate them and control their behavior. When anxious or fearful, he/she is self-aware enough to recognize that she tends to broadcast these emotions nonverbally, allowing his/her to put extra effort into projecting calm optimism. When angry, they have the self-control not to rage at their colleagues or direct reports.

2. Reading others and recognizing the impact of his behavior on them - The candidate has well developed emotional and social radar and can sense how his words and actions influence his colleagues. Because so much of a manager's work is accomplished with and through others, the ability to read other people, to pick up their emotions and discern their opinions can spell the difference between success and failure. Managers also need to recognize how their behavior influences that of others. High EQ individuals are deft persuaders and motivators because they can read others' cues and adjust their own words and behaviors accordingly.

To assess a candidate's skill level in this aspect of Emotional Intelligence, ask questions such as:

- Tell me about a time when you did or said something that had a negative impact on a customer, peer, or direct report. How did you know the impact was negative?
- Have you ever been in a business situation where you thought you needed to adjust your behavior? How did you know and what did you do?

In one interview, a candidate gave a few examples of when he had a negative impact on someone, but in each case, he said someone called him aside and told him where he fell short. So he didn't seem able to recognize these things on his own. In contrast, another candidate for the same position pointed to very specific examples of when he was able to read another's body language and behavior that indicated that something was wrong. Needless to say, the second candidate landed the job. No doubt that built in radar system will help him read other people and situations, too. Misreading customers can be fatal to business relationships. A

financial services account manager directed a customer he took to be of modest means to a less expensive product than the one the man had been considering. Feeling insulted and humiliated, the client took his business elsewhere.

3. The ability to learn from mistakes – The candidate can acknowledge their mistakes, reflect critically upon them, and learn from them. Missteps and outright failure offer opportunities for growth, and high EQ individuals are able to learn from them. Here again, look for positive patterns in candidates' past experiences:

- Have you ever been in a situation where you felt you needed to modify or change your behavior? How did you know? How have you been able to take lessons learned from that situation and apply them to another?
- Tell me about a situation when you discovered that you were on the wrong course. How did you know? What did you do? What, if anything, did you learn from the experience?

Consider this example from an interview team for an IT position. When a candidate was asked to describe her work on a project that faltered, she spoke of a systems overhaul that missed key deadlines and required several course corrections. Asked to analyze how she could have made it run more smoothly, the candidate answered that she should have documented expectations at the outset of the project and communicated more precisely and consistently with users. She also cited her tendency to be reserved and acknowledged that in the past she sometimes held back from asking necessary questions. This candidate concluded by saying that she had thought a lot about what went right and wrong in the project and how she could be more effective the next time she was called on to contribute to such a project.

Contrast the self-awareness and openness to learning in her answer with the defensiveness and rigidity in another candidate's response. When asked about conflicts she had experienced, she ticked off several diverse examples: a schedule delay, a customer dispute, a delayed product launch. Asked to reflect on how they started and what part she played in them, she portrayed herself as a victim of incompetent colleagues, unreasonable customers, and unlucky circumstances. Several times in her narration she said, "I knew I was right, the others just refused to see it." Of course, this final example points to how important it is to incorporate EQ within the job interview process.