

# BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE WITH TODAY'S TALENT

## IS YOUR ORGANISATION FROZEN, THAWING OR ACCELERATING?

We live in turbulent times – there's no denying that. When we celebrated the start of 2020 whoever would have imagined how events would unfold, and how quickly they would unfold and with such impact.

**The immediate reaction of the majority of organisations was to evaluate what was happening. Many suspended operations or significantly scaled back, and uncertainty impacted recruitment.**

Today we see 3 distinct groups of organisations:

1. Those still in a state of suspension; adopting a **'wait and see' approach**.
2. Those **recruiting for critical and important roles**.
3. and those using this time in the economic cycle to strategically acquire great talent. These 'accelerating' organisations have assessed the landscape, identified competitors who are 'frozen' or 'thawing' and have **chosen to accelerate their plans to gain long-term advantages**.

We are seeing this across a range of organisations, small, medium and large, and in all sectors in which we work - medical devices, pharmaceutical, FMCG, medical practices and hospitals.

**There's no right or wrong approach here.** For some organisations taking a 'wait and see' approach is prudent. For others, focusing on critical roles is the most appropriate strategy given their circumstances. And for organisations who see this period as a time to accelerate their plans are taking the opportunity to identify and hire talent.



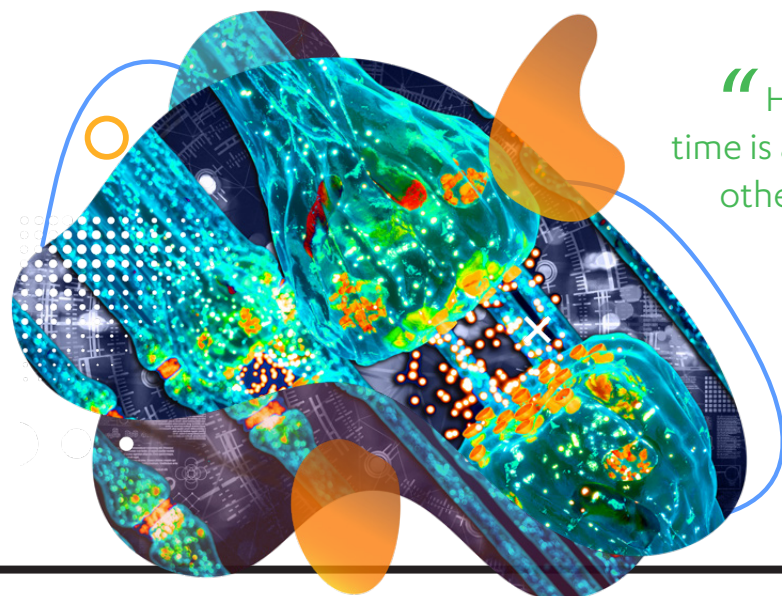
“The economy is rebounding and growth is recommencing. It's all about balancing risk with opportunity and being flexible and agile ”

In this article I'm going to provide specific interviewing tips, **centered around the concepts of Emotional Intelligence**, to use when assessing candidates who are working in a turbulent environment.

Although the methodology is transferable to the interviewing of candidates at all times, **this article focuses on the specific dynamics of today – a time of uncertainty and a time of opportunity.**

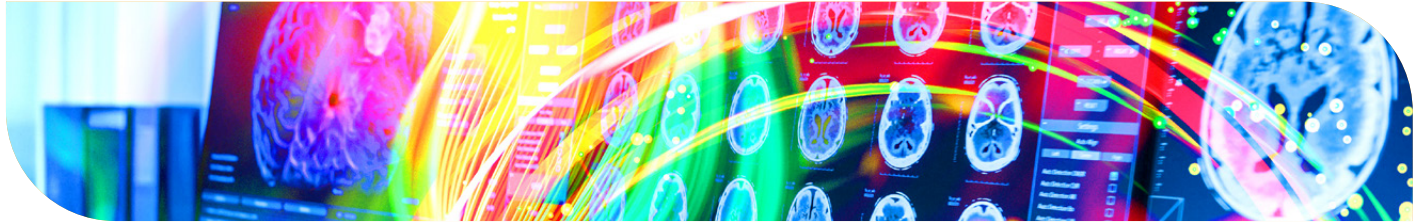
“ How candidates handle their world at this time is a very strong indicator on how they will handle other deeply complex and emotionally charged situations in the future ”

As the employer you want to know that the person you plan to hire has the skills to deliver in a constantly changing environment. **This is where interviewing using Emotional Intelligence questions can give invaluable insight.**



Popularised by **Daniel Goleman**,  
Emotional Intelligence involves the competencies of:

1. **Self-Awareness**
2. **Self-Regulation**
3. **Motivation**
4. **Empathy**
5. **Social Skill**



The formal interview is an opportunity to ask probing questions in each of these five competencies.

**People with high levels of Emotional Intelligence are more effective at working together and through this are more effective at identifying opportunities in today's turbulent environment.**

## 1. SELF-AWARENESS:

“Candidates with a high level of self awareness know their strengths and weaknesses; they take feedback and improve; and they reflect and learn from their experiences ”

During the interview a question such as:

**“Tell me about the feedback you have received during recent performance reviews”** will provide insight into a candidate's level of self-awareness.

Candidates with responses such as:

“During my performance review my manager said that I hadn't reached my goals but that wasn't fair because I wasn't given the support I needed”, are exhibiting blaming behaviours and don't possess high levels of self-awareness.

A stronger response would have been:

“From my performance review I learnt that I needed to increase my connectivity across the organisation and involve others in my projects”.

Further questions centered around a candidate's Self-Awareness could include:

**“What are your strengths and areas for development?”**

**“How do you feel when you receive feedback?”**

**“Tell me how you have contributed to the goals of your previous employer?”**

**“What do you do to further develop your skills?”**

And to the question of:

**“What has been your most valuable learning experience during the last quarter?”**

a response like:

“I'm always learning and the most important lesson learnt was to always be close to customers and not to assume anything. I assumed that my major client was stable, but when they put a hold on a major project and went to a competitor who offered a different solution, I realised that I wasn't as close as I should have been”, shows a higher level of self-awareness than

“My clients will always tell me what's happening, and if they don't it's probably confidential and they can't talk about it. If this means they have to choose another supplier, that's their choice and I can't do anything about it”.



## 2. SELF-REGULATION:

Candidates who are highly self-regulated control their emotions. They can handle change and ambiguity comfortably and stay composed and positive even in trying moments. When under pressure they think clearly and stay focused. They can handle multiple demands and their responses are fluid and adaptable.

During an interview a question like:

**“What did you say or do when you realised that COVID-19 was impacting your work?”** could elicit responses such as: “I was angry, really angry and I still am. It isn’t fair. Some of my projects have been stopped and management isn’t providing enough support” versus **“It’s having significant impact on everyone. It’s changing how everyone works. It’s also providing opportunities to re-think what we do and how we do it”**

Further questions centered around a candidate’s Self-Regulation could include:

**“In tough economic times, when there are increased demands to deliver, how do you handle stress?”**

**“Tell me about a time when you were required to manage change”**

**“When you are under pressure how would your colleagues describe you?” “Why is this?”**

**“Similarly, how would your previous manager describe how you deal with pressure?”**



**“ When interviewing under the Self-Regulation dimension check for certain behaviours to ensure they won’t surface in a new environment ”**

Probe with questions like:

“How did that make you feel?”; “How did you react?”, “Why was that?”, “In what other situations do you react like that?”.

**In today’s fast-moving, ever-changing economy organisations need staff who can work effectively with others and to collectively seek out new opportunities. The world is going to be a rocky place for a long time and organisations need employees who are highly self-regulated and who can manage their emotions during trying and difficult times.**

## 3. MOTIVATION:

**“Why do you work?”**

It’s a great question to ask in the interview and a great opening question to assess underlying motivation.

From the responses given, probe and probe. “I work so that I can contribute to the goals of the organization”.

Follow up with: “What do you mean by contribute? What can you contribute? How will you do this? What results will you deliver? How have you delivered these results previously? When you are doing this how does it make you feel? Why do you feel like this? If you are not contributing how do you feel? Why is this?”....and more.

Similarly ask: “Why do you want this job?” and probe and probe on the responses given.

Many candidates will respond with what ‘sounds good’. Only with deep questioning will the underlying motivators be revealed. And **understanding these motivators is necessary to determine alignment and fit.**

**A challenging economic environment can affect a candidate’s motivation in several ways. They can become withdrawn, despondent and depressed; or they can be energized, optimistic and positive.**

Clients in the 'accelerating' phase of growth want candidates in the second group. **They want to know that when their future employees face adversity they will seek out and act on opportunities; they will get the job done through collaborative, enterprising efforts; and they will operate from a belief in success rather than a fear of failure.**

Further interview questions could include:

**"Today's economic environment is very volatile – how do you overcome obstacles and setbacks?"**

**"How has the current environment affected your motivation?" "What are you doing about it?"**

**"Tell me about a time when you have acted on opportunities".**

**"What drives you?" "Tell me why this is important for you".**



**“ A candidate’s underlying motivators will guide them to reach goals; and in today’s turbulent economic environment available headcount needs to go to upbeat, positive, optimistic contributors ”**

#### **4. EMPATHY:**

**Candidates with a high Empathy score understand others and take an active interest in others’ development needs. They are great team players because they are attentive to emotional cues and listen well. Showing sensitivity they understand others’ perspectives, their needs and feelings; and relate well to people from different and varied backgrounds. During times of change they will draw upon their skills and can bolster employee morale and engagement.**

“Tell me about the people around you” (and probing deeply on the responses given) is a good interview question to assess a candidate’s Empathy competency.

A further question: “What advice would you give others in this COVID-19 era?” shows the candidate’s ability to relate to others.

**“ Employees with empathy understand customers and through this will uncover opportunities. They anticipate and meet customer’s needs, they can solve customer’s problems, and see new opportunities faster than competitors, ”**

Further interview questions could include:

**“Working effectively with others requires an understanding of what others are experiencing. What do you do to get to know your colleagues?”**

**“How do you anticipate the needs of others – internally and externally?”**

**“Tell me about a time when you helped others”.**



## 5. SOCIAL SKILL

**The fifth Emotional Intelligence competency is Social Skill. Interview questions around this can be used to assess how candidates get on with others and leading on from this how they contribute to team dynamics and organisational cohesiveness.**

**Tough times require everyone to pull together, to work as one unit, and through this to achieve superior results. Solo players hold organisations back because ideas are not being shared.**

Further questions to assess Social Skill include:

**“How do you persuade others to collaborate towards collective goals?”**

**“Tell me how others would describe your communication style?”**

**“Give me examples where you had to resolve disagreements”**

**“How do you inspire your group during recent times of change?”**

**“Give me examples on how you have built consensus across different groups”.**

And a further relevant question would be:

**“Since the beginning of this COVID-19 era what have you done to re-establish and build your professional networks?”**

It's therefore important to assess a candidate's preferred working style - "Talk me through your ideal working environment", and then to listen for references to interaction with others eg "I work best in a quiet environment where I can think" versus "My ideas come from working with others and sharing thoughts".



**“Challenging times are times to reach out, so during the interview assess whether the candidate is proactive or just sitting back and waiting for something to happen for them. This behaviour will translate into future successes.”**

## SUMMARY

We live in turbulent times. And these turbulent times are likely to continue.

Organisations are responding in 1 of 3 ways:

1. adopting a 'wait and see' approach.
2. recruiting for critical and important roles.
3. and then there are those organisations who are using this time in the economic cycle to strategically acquire great talent. These organisations have assessed the landscape, identified competitors who are 'frozen' or 'thawing' and have chosen to accelerate their plans to gain long-term advantages.

When headcounts are limited and hiring justifications more complex it's important to ensure that new employees get on with others; can take feedback and improve immediately; can handle stressful situations; don't get angry and mad when the going gets tough; can work under pressure with multiple demands; and can consistently achieve outputs despite obstacles and setbacks; and that's where Emotional Intelligence comes in.

Today, organisations are strategically hiring for the future with top-talent, talent with highly specialised, in-demand skills. They are hiring "Emotionally Intelligent" talent.

**“The economy is rebounding. Growth is recommencing. Organisations are positioning themselves for this through the identification and employment today of tomorrow's workforce.”**



**DR GLENN  
CARTER**