



REPORT

Hire for Emotional Intelligence

What to measure and how to do it effectively



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About HighMatch

HighMatch offers *modern assessments tailored to your organization's roles, competencies, and culture*. Personalized by workplace psychologists, our solutions can be delivered at any stage of the hiring process, with support for every job level. We provide highly relevant, data-driven insights that boost employee retention and engagement while streamlining your hiring process.

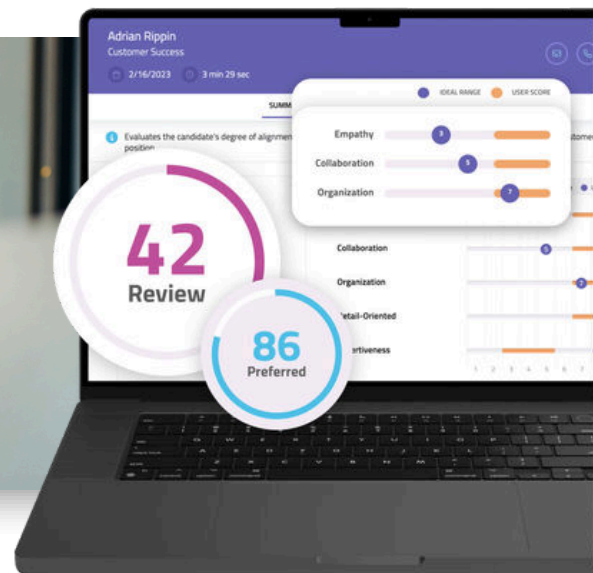
Launched in 2004, HighMatch is trusted by leading enterprise organizations, including Keller Williams, Mercedes Benz, NVR, TSMC, and Comcast, to help solve their most pressing talent challenges.

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What is EQ?

Most people think of **emotional intelligence (EQ)** as being good with people, calm under pressure, and empathetic. That oversimplification is too vague to guide strong hiring decisions. To be an effective hiring metric, talent teams need a more nuanced understanding of EQ and a consistent, thorough way to assess it.

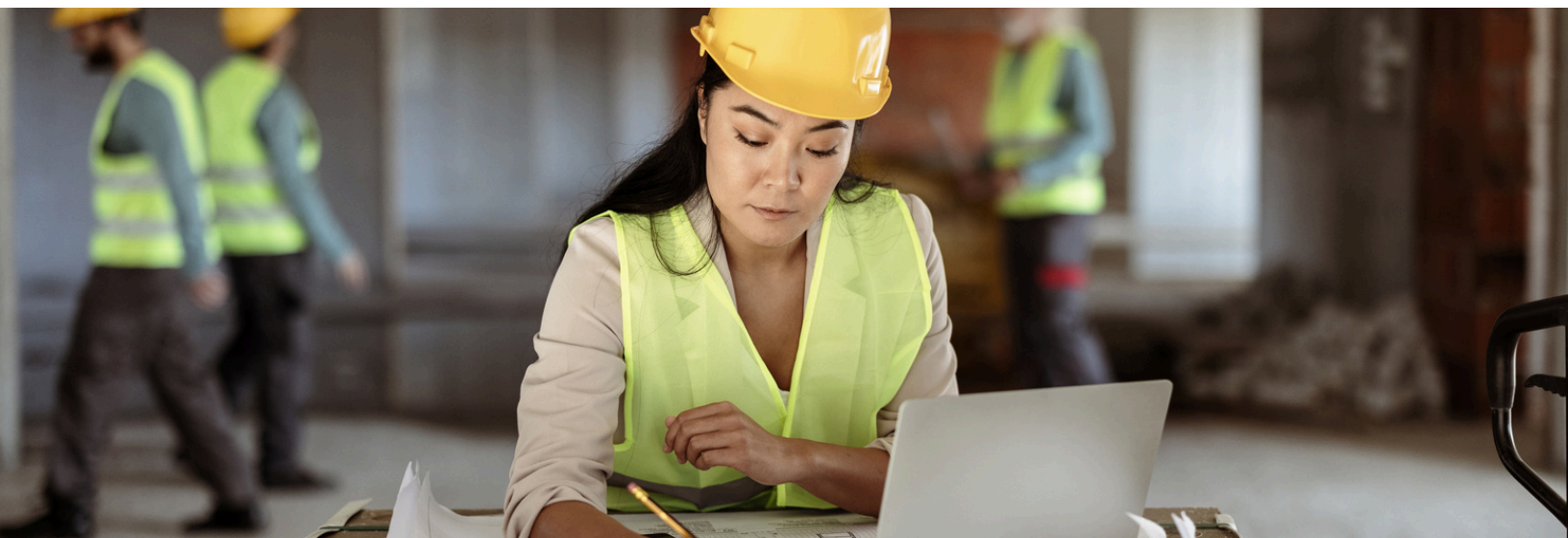
Without a more robust approach, talent teams miss valuable candidates or mistakenly accept poor ones. This report offers a quick guide to better understand EQ and how to measure to support confident hiring decisions.

SO WHAT DOES EQ REALLY MEAN?

There are a lot of debates about what EQ actually is. According to Dr. Craig Ellis, a HighMatch Industrial-Organizational (I/O) psychologist, the question is whether EQ is “an ability like intelligence, a combination of different behavioral styles, or somewhere in the middle of that spectrum.”

The truth is that EQ is both an ability and a behavioral style. “That’s what a lot of research supports as well... And when we hear it from clients, too, that’s really what they’re describing,” says I/O Psychologist, Dr. Robert Loy. EQ is scalable, learnable, and developable.

Most importantly, emotional intelligence is not a single trait, but made up of multiple competencies that influence performance in different ways. People may be stronger in certain areas than others. Someone could be calm under pressure but struggle with empathy, while another person could connect easily with others but lack the ability to influence others effectively.



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“I KNOW IT WHEN I SEE IT”

When it comes to identifying emotional intelligence in candidates, Dr. Ellis often hears leaders say, “I know it when I see it. It’s people who are good at controlling an emotionally charged situation and getting to a positive outcome.” That definition only captures part of the picture. **In reality, EQ also includes:**

- ▶ **Recognizing** when a colleague or client is upset
- ▶ **Managing** an emotionally tense or charged situation
- ▶ **Persuading** others of a certain viewpoint or action, such as in sales
- ▶ **Influencing** team members to follow your lead
- ▶ **Reflecting** on mistakes to improve for the future
- ▶ **Mediating** conflict between peers or a client and the company
- ▶ **Negotiating** business deals and project plans
- ▶ **Reassuring** stressed patients, clients, or colleagues

EQ is context-dependent. Knowing how EQ applies to your role is essential.

Angeles Astorga, I/O psychologist, recommends talent teams evaluate EQ based on what candidates will regularly handle on the job. She explains that “For every role, certain facets of emotional intelligence may be more or less important.”

Dr. Ellis agrees adding,

“**Emotional intelligence does and should look different in a CFO compared to how it should look in a bedside nurse. If your bedside nurse was walking around and acting like a CFO, that may be a problem.**”

Each of the following roles relies on emotional intelligence, but they draw on different aspects of it depending on the demands of the job:

- Sales representatives have client-facing roles that require them to manage emotionally charged situations
- Electrical engineers need to manage their frustration when working long hours or traveling to different plants to troubleshoot machines
- Nurses need self-management and relationship skills for proper bedside manner with patients and their families
- Chief financial officers need social presence to go into board meetings and demonstrate confidence and conviction



Where Do Most EQ Assessments Fall Short?

Many EQ tools currently on the market are personality or behavior tests that are retrofitted to be an EQ assessment rather than being built for EQ from the ground up. These assessments often ask a candidate to rank themselves as 'definitely not me' to 'absolutely me' on certain traits or fall into an even more limited yes/no response system.

That assessment structure creates a major pitfall. When given questions like *"Do you consider yourself to be a team player?"* many candidates are motivated to score themselves highly on all traits that seem positive, even when that isn't accurate to their skills. These false answers result in inconsistent candidate data, misalignment between assessment scores and interview results, and mis-hiring.

An accurate EQ assessment must be designed to avoid candidates choosing answers based on perceived desirability.

What Does an Accurate EQ Assessment Look Like?

EQ is made of clusters of different competencies drawn from areas in personality science, including emotional stability, social style, empathy, and self-awareness. Rather than treating EQ as a vague concept, this approach defines and measures it in clear, role-relevant ways.

SELF MANAGEMENT: COMPOSURE AND RESILIENCE

- ▶ A candidate's stability
- ▶ Important in most roles, including customer service roles

SOCIAL AWARENESS: EMPATHY AND TRUSTING OF OTHERS

- ▶ A candidate's perspective of others
- ▶ Important in client-focused and teamwork roles like teaching and nursing

SOCIAL PRESENCE: INFLUENCE AND ASSERTIVENESS

- ▶ A candidate's ability to inspire confidence and lead
- ▶ Important in leadership and negotiation roles

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT: SOCIALITY AND WARMTH

- ▶ A candidate's ability to build and maintain connections
- ▶ Important in most leadership and client-facing roles



EQ FACETS

HighMatch's I/O Psychologist team organized EQ into four core areas: self-management, social presence, social awareness, and relationship management. This model makes evaluating candidates' EQ a more logical and accurate process.

As Dr. Craig Ellis explains,

“Every emotional intelligence assessment is going to include some form of emotional stability and self-awareness.”

What makes HighMatch's approach more nuanced are “the inclusion of three sub-facets of emotional intelligence: social presence, social awareness, and relationship management.”

There is no universal priority order to these facets, the importance of each one depends on the demands of the role.

▶ SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is foundational to EQ because it is a candidate's understanding of their impact on others. A candidate with strong self-awareness has greater strength at leveraging their EQ in the workplace.

To evaluate self-awareness, talent teams need to draw on a candidate's real experience through structured interview questions that deep-dive into a candidate's perspective of themselves. While assessments can provide helpful indicators, self-awareness is most accurately evaluated through structure interviews that explore reflection and willingness to grow.

Example:

A candidate has scored well on the EQ assessment, but the hiring manager wants to see if they can truly think through and act on their self management and social awareness. So, the hiring manager asks the following questions:

- **What are the things you've learned about your approach to work that sometimes leads to negative outcomes?**
- **What have been some of the examples of negative outcomes you've seen?**
- **How have you learned and grown?**

Candidates who can admit to and reflect on past mistakes and how they have grown from them demonstrate greater EQ. Candidates who deflect responsibility or struggle to identify personal growth may show weaker self-awareness.

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▶ ALIGN INTERVIEWS WITH ASSESSMENTS

Interviews must align with other assessment tools so all data is consistent, trustworthy, and leads to more confident hiring decisions.

For interviews to be aligned, they must be:

- **Personalized** to the specific role and interview purpose
- **Scored** consistently across all interviewers and candidates
- **Structured** with a guide and tools to ensure consistent delivery

A well-defined and validated interview playbook keeps all interviews consistent.

How can you make interviews on EQ more robust?

- **Score candidates on a scale** (i.e. 1-5) on traits instead of in a binary way (i.e. good/bad, pass/fail, have/don't have)
- **Collect data from every candidate** interviewed to continue refining your team's understanding of how to spot different types and levels of EQ
- **Train interviewers** to be comfortable with the interview goals and compliant with the exact questions necessary to achieve those goals





How Can You be Intelligent About Evaluating EQ?

Accurately identifying candidates with the best EQ skills for you means adjusting your hiring process to more effectively net the best-fit individuals. Make your hiring decisions with greater confidence and fewer headaches by taking these five steps towards success.

- 1. Shift your thinking from trend to trait.** Hiring candidates with the right EQ aspects starts with educating your whole talent team on what EQ really is and how to spot it.
- 2. Observe and interview rockstar employees to assess the EQ they have.** Build a list of in-house examples of the EQ that excels in your roles to better align new candidates.
- 3. Leverage the most accurate assessment.** Utilize the most updated and specialized EQ assessments to gain the most insightful and useful data.
- 4. Align interviews with assessments to refine accuracy.**
Tailor your interviews to fill in the gaps that other assessments can't.
- 5. Collect role-specific EQ data to keep building your understanding.**
Develop an ongoing set of data to improve your identification of the EQ you need.

EQ is more than a corporate buzz word. By educating yourself, using tailored tools, and creating a validated assessment playbook, you establish a consistent evaluation process that turns a complex construct into comprehensible insights that help you find best fit candidates.

HighMatch and our team of I/O psychologists help talent teams strengthen how they evaluate emotional intelligence. We collaborate with you to tailor our assessment solution to your competencies, culture, and roles. **Explore our [EQ Assessment](#) to hire with greater clarity and confidence.**



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