

**“Research shows what emotional intelligence looks like in highly effective leaders.”**

## The Litmus Test for Hiring



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hen it comes to hiring or promoting a candidate, it's probably not surprising to hear that Jamie Dimon, the tough and outspoken chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase, believes that hard skills count. The financial sector, he says, demands that everyone be disciplined in “facts, analysis, details.” Those are the threshold

abilities that anyone needs to be highly effective in the industry.

But Dimon also suggests that anyone considering a candidate ask themselves a question: “Would you want your kids to work for this person?” As he sees it, being a “real leader” requires a people-skills set over and above being a numbers person. It's not just balance sheets; it's also how you handle yourself and your relationships—that is, emotional intelligence.

This has become the way of the business world, in growing degrees. Mounds of research tell us what emotional intelligence looks like in highly effective leaders. They know themselves well, and see themselves as others do. They can handle stress, stay calm and clear, and remain positive even in the face of setbacks. They keep their eyes on their goals and shrug off distractions, nimble in how they accomplish their targets.

Just as important, they have empathy—the key ability in leading others. They sense how to send a bull's-eye message, get how those in the room feel, and, maybe most important, project genuine concern. Their relationships—the most visible part of leadership—work. They can go beyond influence to inspiring others to give their best. To get back to Jamie Dimon's point, people love working for them.

So how can you tell if candidates come anywhere close to this profile? First, don't ask them.



Candidates for a job or promotion want to look their best. I don't recommend self-report tests either—these can be gamed. Instead, your best source of information will always be people who know that person well, and who will be honest with you. That means confidential conversations with the candidate's current or (even better) former bosses, workmates, and direct reports. Whatever background you can get helps.

Another method: work simulations. This method was used, for instance, by New York City Mayor Eric Adams when he was reviewing candidates for the position of police commissioner, all of whom were veterans of the department. The simulation was a mock press conference where the commissioner had to deal with the death of a man at the hands of the police.

Most candidates simply reviewed the facts of the incident. But one did it differently: Keechant Sewell started by addressing the sad fact that someone had died. In other words, she empathized with the feelings that the circumstances aroused. Adams chose her for commissioner, citing her emotional intelligence.

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And he has hardly stopped there. When he appointed David Banks as chancellor of the nation's largest school system, he suggested that Banks exemplified emotional intelligence, something he felt would prepare the new school chief for the difficult work ahead. And when he turned to someone to run New York City's troubled jail system, he again cited his pick for being emotionally intelligent. It's clear that the mayor has been downplaying the usual requirements—an academic background or government experience—in favor of EI.

Some say emotional intelligence may be the best predictor of success in life. It certainly seems to be a primary forecaster of business success today. //

Goleman is the author of the international best seller *Emotional Intelligence*. See [keystepmedia.com](http://keystepmedia.com) for his series of primers.