

PERFORMANCE ARCHETYPE

The Strategic Empath

You lead with emotional intelligence and back it with narrative precision. Where others sell plans, you sell certainty. Where others pitch data, you surface the fear behind the brief. CMOs trust you not because of your numbers; they trust you because you made them feel understood.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE C-SUITE MULTIPLIER

EQ IDENTITY TYPE

The Labeler

Labelers are rare. You do not just read emotions in a room; you name them out loud. Where most sellers sense discomfort and say nothing, you surface the unspoken tension before it becomes resistance. Buyers experience you as perceptive, safe, and unusually direct, an identity type that predicts strong performance in C-suite and agency relationships where trust is the deal.

NAMES UNSPOKEN TENSION

HIGH TRUST BUILDER

C-SUITE EFFECTIVE

Your results are confidential. This report was prepared exclusively for Sarah Mitchell and will not be shared with any employer or third party without your explicit consent.

74

Performing

Your composite score across all four communication traits. You are operating above the median and approaching the upper performance band.

DNA AUDIT SCORES | FOUR TRAITS. EVERY CONVERSATION DEPENDS ON THEM.

Cognitive Empathy		72	PERFORMING
Emotional Intelligence		88	ELITE
Pressure Composure		58	PRACTISING
Storytelling		79	PERFORMING

TOP STRENGTH

Emotional Intelligence

88 / 100 | Elite

Your ability to read what buyers feel but don't say is a rare Elite-level capability.

PRIMARY GROWTH AREA

Pressure Composure

58 / 100 | Practising

Under rate pressure, the instinct to defend before questioning is the gap to close.

THIS REPORT CONTAINS

- Trait-by-trait diagnostic with behavioural insight
- Strength and gap analysis for each trait
- A four-band performance ladder showing where you sit versus peers
- Real conversation examples and the commercial cost of each gap
- A specific Next Action and your 30-Day Development Roadmap

DEVELOPING

0-49

PRACTISING

50-69

PERFORMING

70-84

ELITE

85-100

TRAIT ANALYSIS

Cognitive Empathy

COGNITIVE
EMPATHY

72

/100

PERFORMANCE BAND

Performing

Your Cognitive Empathy is a genuine competitive advantage. You have moved beyond the instinct to fill every pause with information, and you have learned to listen not just to what a buyer says, but to what they are not saying.

When a CMO goes quiet after your opening question, you resist the urge to talk. When a buyer gives you a one-word answer, you mirror it back rather than rushing to your next point. These are the behaviours that separate reps who are liked from reps who are trusted.

The next level is diagnostic precision. You are skilled at reading that a buyer is hesitant, but the most valuable question is not what they are feeling; it is why. Budget pressure? An internal political dynamic? A personal career risk? Each calls for a different response.

THE PERFORMANCE LADDER

DEVELOPING Talks through the silence. Reads a one-word answer as agreement and moves on, missing the hesitation entirely.

PRACTISING Notices the buyer has gone quiet but isn't sure what to do with it, so fills the gap with another feature or question.

PERFORMING Reads hesitation instinctively and holds the silence. You know something is unsaid; you just don't always name what.

YOU ARE
HERE

ELITE Reads the hesitation, then diagnoses its source out loud: "It sounds like the timeline is sitting uncomfortably." A felt signal becomes a spoken one.

STRENGTH

Reads buyer hesitation instinctively and resists the urge to fill silence, a behaviour most sellers never develop.

GAP

Identifies that a buyer is hesitant but struggles to consistently diagnose the source: fear, politics, or personal risk.

WHAT THE BAND ABOVE DOES THAT YOU DON'T YET

The Elite rep doesn't stop at sensing hesitation; they convert it into a question that names the likely cause. Where you register "something's off" and wait, they register it and immediately test a hypothesis out loud: is this budget, politics, or personal risk? They are comfortable being wrong, because a buyer correcting you, "no, it's that my CMO killed the last one", hands you the real objection in a single sentence. The gap isn't perception. It's the willingness to voice the diagnosis before you're certain.

WHERE YOU SIT

Cognitive Empathy is where the median seller stalls, most never leave Practising, because resisting the urge to fill silence runs against everything traditional sales training rewards. Sitting in Performing already places you ahead of the majority of the field.

THE COMMERCIAL COST

Reading hesitation but not naming its source means you answer the wrong objection, the budget concern the buyer never had, while their real worry quietly kills the deal weeks later. The cost isn't one awkward conversation; it's a pipeline of opportunities that stall for reasons you sensed but never opened.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN A REAL CONVERSATION

A Performing rep notices a buyer go quiet and waits. A Performing-to-Elite rep notices the silence and asks: "It sounds like something about the timeline is sitting uncomfortably, what is it?" One reads the signal. The other names it and opens the door.

YOUR NEXT ACTION

Begin mapping the source of emotion in every discovery conversation, not just the surface signal. When a buyer expresses hesitation, ask one internal question before you respond: is this fear of their leadership team, fear for their own reputation, or fear of the unknown? Track one insight per call this week.

TRAIT ANALYSIS

Emotional Intelligence

EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE

88

/100

PERFORMANCE BAND

Elite

Your emotional intelligence is operating at the highest level we measure. This is not simply a matter of being perceptive or personable. It is a strategic capability that shapes the outcome of every conversation you enter.

You understand that buyers make decisions emotionally and justify them logically. You can distinguish between what a buyer says they need and what they personally fear will happen if this does not deliver.

The development opportunity at this level is not about improving your own EQ further. It is about becoming a multiplier for the people around you.

THE PERFORMANCE LADDER

DEVELOPING Manages their own nerves, but the buyer's emotional state is largely invisible to them.

PRACTISING Picks up the obvious signals, frustration, enthusiasm, but only the loud ones.

PERFORMING Reads the room accurately and adjusts their own approach in response.

ELITE Doesn't just read the room; you change its temperature. You name the unspoken tension early and shift what happens next.

YOU ARE
HERE

STRENGTH

Reads the emotional subtext of a room, distinguishing between what a buyer says and what they actually fear, a rare Elite-level capability.

GAP

The ceiling at this level is not personal improvement but replication, building this capability in the people around you rather than carrying it alone.

WHERE THE GAP IS AT THIS LEVEL

There is no higher band to climb to on this trait, you are already at the ceiling we measure, which makes the development question a different one. At Elite, the constraint is no longer your own capability; it's that you are the only person in the room who has it. The rare Elite EQ rep stops being the team's best reader of buyers and becomes the reason the whole team reads buyers better. That is the shift: from carrying the capability to replicating it.

WHERE YOU SIT

Elite EQ is genuinely rare. The overwhelming majority of sellers never reach this band, and many of the most senior never do either, because seniority rewards confidence, not perception. You are in a small minority.

THE COMMERCIAL COST

The cost at this level isn't in the deals you run, those are your strongest. It's in the deals you don't. Every pitch where you're not in the room runs without the one capability that wins the hard ones, and your ceiling becomes a scheduling problem: revenue capped by how many meetings you can physically attend.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN A REAL CONVERSATION

An Elite EQ rep does not just manage their own state; they shift the emotional climate of a room. When a meeting starts with tension, they name it early: "I get the sense there are a few competing priorities here, is it worth naming them before we start?" That one move changes everything that follows.

YOUR NEXT ACTION

After your next team pitch, run a structured debrief with whoever was in the room. Ask three questions: what emotional signals did the room send, who noticed them, and what would have changed if the tension had been named earlier? Do this consistently and you will build a team that reads buyers the way you do.

TRAIT ANALYSIS

Pressure Composure

PRESSURE
COMPOSURE

58

/100

PERFORMANCE BAND

Practising

You are in the middle of a significant development curve with this trait, and the progress you have made is real. You are asking more questions before you respond, and you are starting to understand that the moment a buyer applies pressure is not an attack to survive but a signal to explore.

The gap between where you are now and the Performing band is largely a consistency problem. In low-stakes conversations, you demonstrate genuine composure. But when the stakes rise, the old reflexes still surface; you move to justify your rate card before understanding what the buyer is actually optimising for.

Every time you drop your price before asking a single question, you train that buyer to apply pressure again. The buyer who applies pressure is almost always testing whether you believe in your own value.

THE PERFORMANCE LADDER

DEVELOPING Drops the rate the moment it's questioned. Reads pressure as rejection and moves to make the discomfort stop.

PRACTISING Holds composure in low-stakes calls and is starting to pause. But when the stakes rise, the old reflex returns: justify first, question later.

YOU ARE
HERE

PERFORMING Meets every challenge with a question before an answer, consistently, not because they're calmer, but because they've decided in advance what they'll say.

ELITE Reframes the pressure itself, handing it back: "What is it about how they've priced it that works for what you're trying to achieve?" The challenge becomes discovery.

STRENGTH

Demonstrates composure in low-stakes conversations and is beginning to pause before responding, the foundation of Performing-level pressure management.

GAP

Under real rate or competitive pressure, defaults to justifying rather than questioning, effectively rewarding the buyer's pressure tactic.

WHAT THE BAND ABOVE DOES THAT YOU DON'T YET

The Performing rep doesn't improvise composure under fire; they've removed the need to. They walk into every rate conversation with one rehearsed question pre-loaded, so when the pressure lands there's no decision to make in the moment. Your composure is currently reactive, you summon it when you remember to. Theirs is structural, built into how they prepare, which is why it holds when the temperature rises. The gap isn't temperament. It's a decision you haven't yet made in advance.

WHERE YOU SIT

Pressure Composure is the trait where sellers score lowest, and the median sits squarely in Practising, the moment of pressure is the moment most reps revert to instinct. Crossing into Performing would put you ahead of roughly two-thirds of the field, and it is the single trait most likely to move your overall band.

THE COMMERCIAL COST

Every time you justify a rate before asking a question, you leave margin on the table on that deal, and you train the buyer to push again, because the pressure worked. Across a year of negotiations, a defend-first reflex doesn't cost one discount; it compounds into a pattern the buyer learns to exploit.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN A REAL CONVERSATION

Buyer: "Your competitor is \$15k cheaper." Practising rep: "Well, if you look at our reach figures..."
Performing rep: "That's worth understanding, what is it about the way they've priced it that makes sense for what you're trying to achieve?" One defends. The other diagnoses.

YOUR NEXT ACTION

Set one personal rule for your next rate challenge: one question before one answer. Write it somewhere visible before your next high-stakes call. When the pressure lands, breathe, pause, and ask something genuinely curious. Track one outcome per week: how many times did you ask a question before giving an answer when a buyer pushed back?

TRAIT ANALYSIS

Storytelling

STORYTELLING

79

/100

PERFORMANCE BAND

Performing

Storytelling is a genuine weapon in your commercial toolkit. You understand that a buyer sitting across from you does not primarily need more data. They need to be transported into a situation that feels like their problem being solved.

What elevates you above the average storyteller is your instinct to make the client the hero. Your stories are framed around what the client achieved, what they feared before, and what the outcome meant for them personally.

The gap between your current Performing score and Elite is a matter of engineering your standout moments rather than relying on them to emerge naturally.

THE PERFORMANCE LADDER

DEVELOPING Recites features and figures. The "story" is a list of what the product does.

PRACTISING Tells a case study, but the product is the hero: "we delivered X, we achieved Y."

PERFORMING Makes the client the hero. Your stories are built around what they feared, what they achieved, and what it meant for them.

YOU ARE
HERE

ELITE Engineers one unforgettable line per story, the sentence the buyer repeats the next day. Nothing is left to emerge on its own.

STRENGTH

Makes the client the hero of every story, a structural instinct that most sellers have to be taught explicitly and never fully internalise.

GAP

Relies on strong stories emerging naturally rather than engineering them deliberately, leaving quality inconsistent across pitches.

WHAT THE BAND ABOVE DOES THAT YOU DON'T YET

The Elite storyteller designs for the retell. They know a story's job isn't to land in the room, it's to survive the room and get repeated in the boardroom afterwards, by someone who wasn't even there. So they build one portable line into every story: a specific image, a number made vivid, a direct quote. "We reached 450,000 people" becomes "we filled a stadium nine times over in a single breakfast shift." You already make the client the hero. What you don't yet do is engineer the one line that travels. Your best moments arrive by luck. Theirs arrive by design.

WHERE YOU SIT

Storytelling separates cleanly. Most sellers sit in Practising, where the product is the hero and the pitch is a feature tour. Making the client the hero, which you do instinctively, already places you in the minority that buyers remember. What's left is craft, not instinct.

THE COMMERCIAL COST

A good story that isn't built to travel dies in the room. You win the meeting you're in, but the decision often gets made later, in a room you're not in, by people you never pitched to. If your story can't be repeated accurately by the one champion who was there, your best work never reaches that second room.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN A REAL CONVERSATION

Performing rep: "We reached 450,000 people." Elite rep: "We filled a major stadium nine times over in a single breakfast shift. The CMO called it the most talked-about campaign in their category that year." Same data. Completely different impact.

YOUR NEXT ACTION

Audit your top three client stories this week. For each one, ask: what is the one line a buyer would repeat to someone else the next day? If you cannot identify that line, the story is not finished. Then rebuild your strongest case study around a repeatable structure. Find a framework that works for you and apply it the same way every time, so your standout moments are engineered, not left to chance.

DEVELOPMENT ROADMAP

30-Day Action Plan

Personalised for Sarah Mitchell | The Strategic Empath

TOP STRENGTH

Emotional Intelligence

88 / 100 | Elite

Your ability to read buyers emotionally, even when they are calm on the surface but stalled internally, is rare. Use it as your lead differentiator in every senior conversation.

PRIMARY GROWTH AREA

Pressure Composure

58 / 100 | Practising

When buyers push hard on rates or name competitors, the instinct is still to defend. The discipline of pausing before responding is your most important growth opportunity right now.

FOUR-WEEK FOCUS PLAN

WEEK

1

FOCUS: PRESSURE COMPOSURE

The Composure Pause

Before every rate negotiation or competitive challenge, set one internal rule: one question before one answer. Write it somewhere visible. Track how many times you held the line when a buyer pushed back.

WEEK

2

FOCUS: COGNITIVE EMPATHY

Source Mapping

In every discovery call, map the source of hesitation, not just that it exists. Before responding, ask internally: is this fear of their leadership, their reputation, or the unknown? Log one insight per call.

WEEK

3

FOCUS: STORYTELLING

Build Your Signature Story

Rewrite your strongest case study around a repeatable structure that works for you. Test it in one live pitch. The goal: one story so vivid the client retells it in the boardroom after you have left.

WEEK

4

FOCUS: INTEGRATION

Run All Three Simultaneously

Apply the composure pause, source mapping and your signature story in the same call. Note where the gaps still surface. This is the week you find out what has stuck.

3 IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

1

The Composure Pause

PRESSURE COMPOSURE

Before your next rate negotiation, set one internal rule: one question before one answer. When the pressure lands, breathe, pause, and ask: "Help me understand what success looks like for you in this decision." Track the outcome.

2

Activate Your EQ Identity

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In your next three client calls, name one emotion per call that has not been said out loud. "It sounds like the previous campaign left you needing more certainty before committing again." Notice how the conversation shifts when you name what they have not said.

3

Build Your Signature Story

STORYTELLING

Take your strongest case study and rebuild it around a clear, repeatable structure. Find a framework that works for you and use it the same way every time. Use it in your next pitch. The goal: one story so vivid they retell it in the boardroom after you have left.

The gap between Performing and Elite is not talent. *It is repetition under real conditions. This report tells you exactly where to focus. What happens next is up to you.*

Glossary of Terms

The key terms used throughout your DNA Audit report, defined.

Every score, band and trait in this report maps back to one of the definitions below.

DNA Audit

Decipher's diagnostic assessment. A 31-question instrument that measures the four communication traits shaping every sales conversation, and places you within four performance bands.

Overall DNA Score

Your composite score across all four traits, out of 100. It reflects your all-round communication effectiveness rather than any single skill, and sets your overall performance band.

Cognitive Empathy

The ability to read what a buyer is thinking and feeling, including what they leave unsaid, and to diagnose the source of their hesitation rather than only sensing it.

Emotional Intelligence

The ability to read the emotional climate of a room and shape it, distinguishing what a buyer says they need from what they privately fear, and adjusting in response.

Pressure Composure

How you respond when a buyer applies pressure on price, timing or competitors: whether you pause and question, or default to defending and discounting.

Storytelling

The ability to turn information into a narrative a buyer remembers and repeats, framed around the client as the hero rather than the product.

Performance Bands

The four levels each trait is scored against: Developing (0–49), Practising (50–69), Performing (70–84) and Elite (85–100). They describe current behaviour, not potential.

Performance Ladder

The four-band progression shown for each trait. It marks where you currently sit and describes, in concrete behaviour, what the bands below and above look like.

Performance Archetype

A summary of your overall communication style, drawn from the pattern across your four trait scores. It captures how buyers tend to experience you.

EQ Identity Type

A description of your most natural emotional-intelligence move in live conversations: the instinct you reach for most when reading a room.

The Regulator

Stays composed under pressure by maintaining logic and emotional distance. In difficult moments, your strength is staying calm and not reacting emotionally. You keep feelings from clouding your judgment and prefer to debrief by reviewing the logic and data you used. Under pressure, you stay logical and don't let feelings impact your decisions. You are reliable, steady, and grounded.

The Observer

Notices signals early by watching and holding space before acting. Your strength is perceiving emotion and body language before it's spoken aloud. You watch and wait, reading the room carefully before you respond. When debriefing, you replay what you noticed—the body language, silence, energy, and unspoken signals. You are thoughtful, attuned, and intentional.

The Edge Builder

Reads emotion as information and deploys it strategically. Your strength is using the buyer's emotional state as a signal to guide your next move. You look for the emotional leverage points in a conversation and aren't afraid to use them intentionally. When debriefing, you think about what emotional leverage you did or didn't use. You are dynamic, perceptive, and strategically responsive.

The Labeler

Names unspoken tension directly, even when it's uncomfortable. Your strength is calling out what's really happening—naming the emotion or conflict rather than avoiding it. You surface tension before it becomes resistance. When debriefing, you think about whether you named the hard thing or avoided it. You are direct, perceptive, and courageous.

Strength & Gap

For each trait, the behaviour you already do well (Strength) and the single most valuable behaviour to develop next (Gap).

Development Roadmap

Your personalised 30-day plan: a week-by-week focus and a set of immediate actions, sequenced to close your primary gap first.