

34 Questions to Ask Before You Hire

Help for Ensuring That a Prospective Pastor or Staff Member Is a Good Fit

GUIDELINES FOR USING THESE QUESTIONS

- The 34 questions listed below have been used and proven effective in many hiring situations. But because each applicant, and each interviewer, is unique, feel free to add, change, or skip questions as needed.
- What you're looking for is a good fit between the person and the position. Thus, you can't interview effectively until you have a crystal-clear description of the position: which skills it takes, which spiritual gifts are essential, and so on. Is your ministry job description clear and understandable?
- You'll need at least 1 hour, and possibly 2 hours, to complete the interview. Yes, that takes time, but it's much better to spend the time now than to suffer with a person who's a bad fit for the position, or to have to ask someone to leave. "The best time to fire is before you hire!"
- The most-reliable indicator of future performance is past performance. So usually the most-revealing questions in this list are the ones that begin, "Tell us about a time when ...". We encourage you not to skip too many of these questions. Also, after you've asked such a question, the applicant may be silent for some time before answering. That's normal and good, so don't try to fill the silence or move to another question.

ABOUT YOUR CURRENT OR RECENT MINISTRY

What do you like best about your current ministry?

In your work, what causes 80 percent of your frustration, tension, and pressure? Why?

What do you like least about it?

What brings you 80 percent of your pleasure, joy, and fun? Why?

Tell me about an average "good day" in your ministry ... an average "bad day"?

Describe the best person who worked with you or for you, or for whom you worked.

What improvement would you have made, if you could have, to your ministry position?

ABOUT WHY YOU WANT TO WORK HERE

Tell us about your spiritual journey. How does this position fit with God's working in your life?

What makes you interested in working in this church?

What do you hope to get out of this ministry?

What do you hope to contribute?

What are your expectations of a board? What do you hope they will be and do for you?

ABOUT YOUR GIFTS

What would make a ministry an ideal fit for you?

What do you see as your main strengths and weaknesses (Note: you can't say for weaknesses: "I work too hard" or "I try to make things perfect")?

What would your most recent ministry colleagues say are your main strengths and weaknesses?

What is one area you would like to grow in professionally? One area you'd like to grow in personally?

If you could divide your time between people and tasks, what would be a good split for you?

What are your unique qualifications for this position? What sets you apart from other applicants?

Tell us about a time when you felt you reached your peak performance.

If anything were possible, what would you like to be doing in 5 years?

Missionary Eric Liddell says in the screenplay for the movie *Chariots of Fire*, “When I run, I feel His pleasure.” How would you fill in the sentence, “When I _____, I feel God’s pleasure”?

Tell us about a meeting you were in. What role did you play in the meeting, and what happened?

ABOUT TIMES YOU WERE CHALLENGED

Tell us about a time when you had a conflict.

Tell us about a time when your work was criticized.

Tell us about a time you broke the rules.

Tell us about a time your sense of humor helped you.

ABOUT YOUR DREAMS & IDEALS

Who are 2 or 3 people you admire?

Who has been a role model for you?

What do you have “an unscratchable itch” for?

What have you been reading the past 6 months?

What principles are most responsible for your success?

What's your personal motto?

ABOUT YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THIS POSITION

What questions do you have about this position?

What concerns or fears do you have as you consider this position?