

GETTING THE LEADER YOU NEED

By Al Eills, M.C.



When a large church lost their pastor they asked me to assist them in selecting a replacement. The first question I asked was, “What kind of leader do you need?” This caught their attention. We began the task by assessing where the church's growth life-cycle, current culture, direction and vision, and the kind of leader needed to get it. It was a great discussion. Days later the selection committee met again and quickly came up with a lengthy list of characteristics and criteria. Then began the task of squeezing them down to a workable profile. When that was decided, the church was ready to recruit and select the kind of leader they needed.

These steps have become best practices for many churches, not only for senior pastor positions but also for other leadership positions within the church. Having a workable framework for rating finalists became the next task. The committee came up with three candidates that met many of the criteria and characteristics set forth. But only one would be recommended to the Board of Elders. Someone asked, “How do we choose a finalist?” I suggested the following categories for consideration. If you’re in a similar situation you may find them helpful.

COMPETENCY

The candidate should have a proven prior ability to lead, manage and develop a healthy, growing and vital church that: attracts people, offers sound Biblical insight and knowledge, enables people to experience God, transforms people, makes people feel cared for, and empowers and helps people help others. For other positions, determine what significant competencies are required.

CHEMISTRY

It is important to identify someone who is likely to establish a rapport with the existing Board of Elders or Directors (or supervisor. Which candidate would meld best with existing staff or be able to change staffing to ensure more effective ministry? It doesn't stop there. How would the candidate gel with the congregation? What about the surrounding community?

CULTURE

The ideal candidate should agree with and sustain most if not all desired tenets of faith, practices and worship style of the church while garnering the buy-in of the congregation to create newly desired ones. It is also valuable if a candidate appears capable of ridding the church of negative cultural behaviors and beliefs.

CALLING

Ministry is not for everyone. It is essential to find a candidate that appears to be best suited to a life of healthy leadership and calling in this venue. What do his or her assessments and references say? Which candidate appears to have the right motives and urging of Spirit for the people and the position at this time?

CHARACTER

Personal actions and references will reveal much about a candidate's character. Keep an eye out for the following Biblical markers:

- ⤴ Truthful, non-manipulative, non-selective , honoring and forthright communication (James 1:26, 3:17; Eph. 4:15, 25)
- ⤴ Personally pure (1 Thess. 4:1-8)
- ⤴ Humble and submissive to leadership (1Peter 5:5, 2:17-18, James 4:6-10; 1 Timothy 3)
- ⤴ An appropriate steward of money and resources; sober-minded, above reproach, etc. (Titus 1, 2 & 3)

STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

Which candidate has the right gift mix of strengths for this season of the church's life-cycle? For example, for the next three to five years, does the church need someone to maintain what exists (more efficient), or change some fundamental characteristics of the church (more effective)? Which candidate is better equipped to do that? What are each candidate's weaknesses, and are those weaknesses fatal?

COST

What will you gain by choosing one candidate over the other? What will it cost you?

When a church does its due diligence in selecting a candidate, God responds in amazing ways. The selection committee and Board of Elders from the church I mentioned earlier ultimately reviewed finalist candidates based on each of these characteristics as they aligned with their mission, and unanimously chose one candidate. Amazing results come from being mindful and prayerful when it comes to selecting church leadership.