

3 Interview Guidelines for Finding the Best Next Hire for Your Church

Mistakes are most often made when hiring is based on surface characteristics like stage ability, resume experience or fashion sense, rather than on the foundation of church culture. Your values define your church's culture. Therefore, values should form the basis of your staffing logic, whether the prospective leader is paid or unpaid. **Well thought-through interview questions, based on values, could be the difference between a perfect match and the perfect storm.**

The best values-based interview questions are those that do three things: 1) Hide the "right" response, 2) Reveal practice not thinking and 3) Mine for specifics. Let's take a look at each technique and provide a simple illustration for each one.

#1 Hide the "Right" Response

Let's imagine one of your church values is "Risk-Taking Faith."

- Ask... **If you knew that God would meet or exceed one goal you have right now, what would you ask for?**
- Not... **What was the last faith risk you took?**

Why? Because the natural tendency when being interviewed for a position you want is to frame the answer to what you think the interviewer wants to hear. Questions that state the value up front, don't allow the candidate to reveal how the value is present – or not present – in their life and ministry.

#2 Reveal Culture in Practice, Not Thinking

Let's imagine one of your church values is "Evangelistic Ethos."

- Ask... **What do you know about your 5 closest neighbors (geographically) ?**
- Not... **How important is evangelism to you?**

Why? Because it is easy to talk about how things should be, and avoid talking about how things are. Questions that allow the potential staff member to speak to a value from experience not ideas, separate mere affinity from life application.

#3 Mine for Specifics, Not Answers

Let's imagine one of your church values is "Doing Life Together."

- Ask... **What was the last tough conversation a close friend had with you?**
- Not... **Who are you doing life with?**

Why? Because simple answers that are easily given leave little room for follow-up and become fairly useless in determining cultural alignment. Questions that generate responses with multiple follow-up possibilities (why don't you have close friends? how did you respond to their criticism?) can produce a multi-dimensional understanding of the person in context of the church value at hand.

So remember, experience is important, but programs will change. Stage skills are huge, but presentation can be developed. Fashion is fleeting, but skinny jeans will eventually go out of style... we pray. When you hire by values, culture becomes the glue that holds your staff together.

Read more from Bryan [here](#).