
Conducting an Employment Interview

In order to prepare well for interviewing potential employees, the following suggestions¹ will be of help.

Keep in mind the kind of interview you want to conduct, whether an informal preliminary conversation or a formal candidating interview. Also, keep in mind the role you are filling and how that may affect the kind of interview you conduct (e.g. support staff vs. pastoral role). Depending on the role, you may choose to conduct the interview over the telephone or by videoconference versus in person, and as an individual or as part of a search team. Whatever format you choose, prepare prayerfully and well for the interview, remembering these important tips:

1. **Prepare a good job description** ahead of time so that it is clear to you and the candidate what you're looking for.
2. **Allow adequate time.** Establish a time and location that will allow the interview to take place with uninterrupted concentration.
3. **Familiarize yourself with the candidate's resume and cover letter** ahead of the interview so the time can be well spent on more important matters and not asking for basic information.
4. **Prepare at least 10-15 questions** you feel will be important to address so time isn't wasted on secondary matters or critical information isn't missed by winging it. At the same time, be alert and sensitive to know when it may be helpful to move away from the script for a few moments.
5. **Incorporate good behavioural questions** as past behaviour can reveal much about candidates and give you an indication of some of the intangibles you may consider important, but that are difficult to measure with a general question (e.g. are they a good team player? how do they respond under pressure? are they initiators or implementers?).
6. **Give careful thought to a salary package and benefits** which can be presented in an offer of employment at the right time. These may not be referred to in initial interviews, but sent with an offer of employment following a final interview.

¹ These are partially adapted from information found on www.go2HR.ca.

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While there are multiple ways to conduct interviews, it will be a more positive and productive experience for the candidate and yourself if you do the following:

1. Introduce yourself and make the experience a positive one. Put them at ease, share a little about yourself, the church, and its context.
2. Describe what will take place in the interview, and remember you are being observed by the candidate as well. The tone you set should reflect not only your own image and values but those of the church.
3. Expand on the job description in detail so both the candidate and you are clear on what would be expected and envisioned, and can sense whether the job role is right for them.
4. Begin with more generalized questions and move to more specific ones. Allow candidates to also ask questions in the course of the interview, which will allow them greater clarification and allow you to assess whether they came well prepared.
5. Use open ended questions which call for more than a yes or no answer and require more detailed information.
6. Summarize the timeline and process for the candidate. Give them an idea how long and by what means a decision will come, and potential next steps.

Behavioural Questions

Use behavioural based questions to look for patterns, strengths, weaknesses and potential fit for the role. Use questions such as:

- Tell me about a time when you...
- Give me an example or two of how you...
- Name three people who have experienced this characteristic or quality in you and tell me the story...
- Describe a situation (or two) where you had to...

Keep in mind that with behavioural questions you are not looking simply for what they believe or feel but how they behaved because behaviour tends to reveal beliefs, attitudes, and strengths or weaknesses.

You will probably find yourself having to press them skillfully at times into revealing behaviours by asking "What did you do in that situation?", or turning their answer from the action of others to their own actions by asking "What did you do?"

As an interviewer, you will only have time to ask a limited number or type of behavioural questions, so based on the role you are filling, questions such as the following may be helpful:

1. Self-motivation, Action-orientation

- Describe two ways you took initiative in your previous role.
- Tell me about a time you went beyond the call of duty to accomplish a job.
- What kind of things motivate you? Give two examples.
- Give an example of when you took ownership over an assignment.
- Describe the most rewarding supervisor you ever worked for and the most difficult one.

2. Adaptability

- Describe an example of when you had to find another way to accomplish something when you experienced opposition or barriers.
- Give an example of when you felt stressed in a previous job role and what you did about it.
- What changes did you experience in your previous job role and how did those affect you?

3. Communication

- How did you communicate values in your last role?
- What was a time when you felt misunderstood and how you dealt with it?
- What was a time when you had to deal with someone who disagreed or was upset with you? What did you do?

4. Conflict

- Describe a situation where you had a disagreement with your supervisor or co-worker and how you handled that.
- Describe a situation where you were in conflict with another person and felt you handled it well. Describe a situation where you did not handle it well.
- Describe a situation where you strongly felt one way but could not convince others of the same viewpoint. How did you handle that?

5. Team building

- Describe two situations where you had to start from scratch and build a team.
- What did you do in your previous role to build bridges to others who you worked with but did not feel a natural affinity toward?
- What was your most successful experience in building a team and what steps did you take to build it?

6. Administration

- Describe how you handled multiple demands and duties in your previous role and what a typical day looked like.
- Give an example of when you set specific goals and how you worked to achieve them.
- Give an example of when you were responsible for a situation that you did not feel especially gifted for, and how you worked at being successful in accomplishing the desired outcomes.
- Give an example of how you developed priorities in your previous role.

7. Influence

- Describe your management or leadership style.
- Give an example of an experience where you needed to create something new in the culture of your previous church and how you went about it.
- Describe a time when you were responsible to carry out a decision that not everyone agreed with and what you did.

8. Problem solving

- Describe a time you encountered a problem that you needed to deal with and how you went about it.
- Describe a difficult situation or project you worked through and what you did first, what challenges you faced, and what adjustments you had to make.
- Describe the steps you took when you proactively worked to solve a small problem before it became a larger problem.

9. Leadership

- Give an example of a time you considered yourself to have provided good leadership to others and describe what you did.
- Describe a time you had to lead others where not everyone agreed with you and what steps you took.
- What has been the greatest lesson you've learned about leading others. What is an example of how you've applied that?

The previous questions are intended to be examples of good behavioural based questions. They may also serve to assist you in forming questions in other areas of concern or responsibilities that would be more applicable to the role and setting for which you are seeking candidates.

As you develop questions and prepare to interview candidates, you may also want to consider questions such as the following:

1. Why would you be interested in this job role?
2. What did you enjoy most about your previous position?
3. What did you enjoy least about your previous position?
4. What strengths and giftings would you bring to this role?
5. What would your references say is your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?
6. What are your long-term goals and plans?

Finally, be aware that the BC [Human Rights Code](#) protects against discriminatory questions and decisions based on:

- race
- colour
- ancestry or place of origin
- political belief
- religion
- marital or family status
- physical or mental disability
- sex
- sexual orientation
- age

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Interview questions should clearly be based on specific criteria for the job, and although certain questions may not be illegal, consider if they are wise if challenged under BC law. Decisions must be defensible on the basis of job criteria and free of discriminatory considerations. If interviewing more than one candidate, questioning should be carried out in a consistent and standard manner, ensuring equal and fair treatment.

It is helpful to keep in mind that certain information such as references, a criminal record check, and agreement with doctrines of the C&MA, among other things, would be revealed through the licensing process if the role under consideration requires that.