**Defining Reasonable Pastoral Characteristics, Traits and Attributes**

Most Pastor Search Committee disagreements center around a lack of clarity and agreement on exactly what they are looking for in a pastor. They have 20 characteristics, traits and attributes, all are priority one and none are negotiable. This sets the committee for unrealistic expectations and disagreements.

No candidate is Jesus and all have unique strengths, weaknesses, traits and abilities. The question you have to ask is: *Which characteristics are required and which are preferred?*

**Innate Traits**

Innate traits cannot be taught. They are hardwiring that influences every decision a person makes. The question you must ask is: *What are the innate characteristics, traits and attributes of the ideal candidate that cannot be compromised because they cannot be taught?*

This might include personality, character, integrity, faithfulness, people skills, compassion, creative thinking, ability to lead, ability to cultivate leaders, prayer, and intelligence.

**Desirable Characteristics**

Desirables are the characteristics that, if the candidate fits the profile in every other way, we would consider letting go or consider teaching the candidate once they are onboard. Examples include:

* How large or small the church background
* How many years of education
* How many years of transferable experience
* Must the candidate agree with the church on every theological point?
* The expectation for sermon delivery. Style? Length?
* Should the pastor address political and social issues?
* Should the pastor address SBC politics from the pulpit?

The key question to ask is: *Does it matter?*

Create two categories, Innate Traits and Desirable Characteristics, and make a list under each using the examples above and below. Then ask the question: *Is this trait or characteristic absolutely necessary to be successful as our Pastor?* Use your non-negotiable list to help craft your position profile.

**40 Character Traits To Consider In The Hiring Interview**

Over 4,000 character traits have been identified by psychologists, social scientists and researchers. These can be simplified by being lumped into as few as three or four broad categories. But still, from this extensive list how do you select the most important ones to consider when hiring for church staff? Different churches may value certain traits over other traits based on good or bad experiences with staff. Others may esteem traits based upon the biblical or work place values the church espouses. Regardless of the basis, before interviewing it is important to identify the traits you most value in a person who holds that position. Below are some of the most frequently desired character traits for church staff.

Character traits are words used to describe a person through observed actions or responses during life and work situations. Character traits are often referred to as “soft skills” or the “soft side” of interview measures. Typically, character traits are in born but may be further developed over time and through experience. They are seen as more difficult to measure than hard skills, so are often avoided in the interview process. Before we learn how to interview for character we need to determine those traits most important to our church or organization. Below, in alphabetical order, are 40 character traits typically seen as desirable for someone in a position of ministry leadership. Select from the list the ones that are most important for the position you are hiring for.

1. **Approachable:** Easy to approach and talk to. Puts others at ease. Is conversational. Builds rapport well. Is a good listener. Is not defensive.
2. **Assertive:** Not afraid to voice ideas and opinions in a direct, clear and positive manner. Has the ability to express needs and feelings clearly and firmly without disrespecting or undermining others.
3. **Authentic**: Honestly shares their personal strengths and weaknesses. Readily admits and owns mistakes. Is open and transparent about personal beliefs and feelings.
4. **Big Picture:** Understands the micro and macro of a situation. Understands how the organization functions. Sees and understands their job in light of broader organizational goals.
5. **Collaborative:** Works well in teams. A team player.
6. **Confident:** Self-assured but not to the point of arrogance.
7. **Communication:** Openly, honestly, and effectively imparts and exchanges information that people need to know verbally and in writing.
8. **Compassionate:** Ability to empathize and sympathize with the joys and pains of others. Genuinely cares about people.
9. **Composure:** Is cool, calm and in control under pressure and in crisis. Can hold things together during tough times. Is a settling influence.
10. **Confronter:** Willing to have difficult conversation and to challenge people respectfully. Can deliver truth with love. Deals effectively with sub-standard performance and problem people. Is courageous, candid and willing to make unpopular decisions.
11. **Conscientious:** Is diligent andprofessional. Takes obligations and responsibilities seriously. Does work well. Meets deadlines. Is thorough and sensitive to details.
12. **Delegator:** Able to entrust a task or responsibility to others and to monitor and hold them accountable appropriately. Trusts people to perform. Does not micro-manage.
13. **Developer:** Develops, trains, and coaches people effectively. Is a people builder.
14. **Emotional Intelligence:** Knows and understands themselves and others. Picks up on social cues. Understands how they are being perceived. Are self-aware. Knows how to adjust interpersonal behavior.
15. **Flexible:** Adaptable, able to respond appropriately to changing circumstances or conditions.
16. **Humble:** Does not brag or draw unnecessary attention to themselves. Shares credit. Is self-effacing. Does not elevate their importance.
17. **Humor:** Has a positive and constructive sense of humor. Can laugh at themselves and with others. Is appropriately funny and can use humor to ease tension.
18. **Innovative:** Thinks outside the box. Is imaginative and innovative. Comes up with new ideas and solutions.
19. **Integrity:** Is seen as trustworthy, reliable and truthful. Does the right thing. Is ethical. Practices what they preach.
20. **Leadership:** Is looked to for direction. Has the ability to direct the actions of an individual or groups behavior towards a specific purpose or goal.
21. **Listener:** Has the patience to hear people out. Is an active and attentive listener. Seeks feedback.
22. **Observant:** Quick to notice things. An eye for detail and subtleties.
23. **Organizer:** Can effectively marshal human, financial, physical and spiritual resources to accomplish a task. Can arrange information and resources in a useful and organized manner.
24. **Patience:** Is not short or curt with others. Allows time for people to respond and time to catch up. Is tolerant of people, processes, policies and systems. Waits before making judgments or taking action.
25. **Peacemaker:** Settles disputes equitably. Is a bridge builder. Helps find common ground and encourage cooperation.
26. **Perseverance:** Has the energy and drive to overcome resistance and setbacks and finish an assignment.
27. **Problem Solving:** Has the ability to analyze difficult problems and come up with effective solutions.
28. **Problem Avoidance:** Has the ability to anticipate problems.
29. **Planning:** Breaks down tasks and assignments into steps. Schedules tasks and people accordingly. Measures progress and success against goals and objectives.
30. **Processes and Systems:** Good at figuring out and organizing the people, processes, systems and procedures necessary to get things done.
31. **Relational:** Has good interpersonal skills. Builds relationships easily.
32. **Respectful:** Values other people's perspectives, time, and space. Shows kindness, courtesy and consideration of other people's feelings.
33. **Responsible:** Is trustworthy. Can be trusted with information, confidences, and assignments.
34. **Resourceful:** Has the ability to overcome problems and obstacles by making do with what is available to create a solution.
35. **Self-development:** Is committed to personal self-development and growth. Works intentionally and continuously on improving themselves.
36. **Self-knowledge:** Knows their personal gifts, strengths and weaknesses. Understands their limits. Plays to their strengths. Is reflective and introspective.
37. **Strategic:** Can anticipate future consequences and trends and establish effective strategies. Is intentional and purposeful in everything they do.
38. **Takes Initiative:** Doesn’t wait around for instructions. Is pro-active. Is a self-starter. Always looking for solutions. Loves to initiate and implement.
39. **Team Building:** Selects the right mix of people for teams and makes appropriate assignments. Defines success in terms of the whole team. Builds morale, team spirit and sense of belonging.
40. **Wisdom/Discernment:** Sought out by others for advice and solutions. Makes sound decisions. Exercises good judgement. Is perceptive.