

Candidating Process

In the candidating process, there will usually be several qualified individuals interviewing for the same position. The task a search committee faces is not finding a qualified candidate but finding a qualified candidate that “fits” their situation. Likewise, there may be many good ministries that interest candidates. They need to find a place they “fit.”

The Process

1. Start early. The process takes a long time and churches move slowly.
2. Prepare a good résumé. The Western placement website has résumé tips and templates. The Placement Office will also be glad to review your résumé. Get a few friends to look it over and give their impression.
3. Keep good records. Answers to questionnaires are often duplicated between ministries. Churches will often ask questions in interviews based on the answers you’ve given them. Make sure you know what you’ve told them. As your résumé gets sent to more ministries, you will need to keep track of which ministries have responded, sent questionnaires, etc. and which have not. It’s helpful to take notes on each ministry to help you differentiate between them and remember them.
4. Get a video of several good messages you’ve given. If your church posts sermons on their website, be aware that search committees may view them.
5. The usual search process flows along these lines:
 - a. Your résumé is received and reviewed. Then a questionnaire is sent.
 - b. You answer and return the questionnaire.
 - c. The committee asks for a video and/or more information.
 - d. Possible phone calls, conference calls, etc.
 - e. Some of the committee may visit you for an interview or to hear you preach (if this is a senior pastor search).
 - f. You visit them and possibly candidate.

The Interview

The interview process can be likened in a metaphorical sense to premarital counseling. Is your “future spouse,” the ministry where you are interviewing, bringing any unresolved issues into your new relationship? Your goal is to eliminate any surprises and to bring to light any false expectations that may exist.

1. Pray. Turn the whole interview and candidating process over to God.
2. First impressions are lasting. Be very conscious of your initial moments with the committee.
3. Your attitude is crucial. Be confident, comfortable, and assured. Look people in the eye and offer a firm handshake. Be confident, but don't come across as an authoritative know-it-all.
4. Concentrate and pay attention to what is going on. Be interested in them.
5. Before you go for an interview, have a good idea of who you are and what you're able to do. If they are looking to build a mega-church, you need to know whether you're the right person to build it. Are you even interested in building one? Do you have the right stuff to build one? How would you go about building one? What is your style of operation? Consider taking a personality inventory to give some insight into your relational preference.
6. Be honest. Do not promise more than you know you can deliver. Know your strengths and your weaknesses.
7. Set up a mock interview with a friend to make sure you are clearly presenting yourself. This will also build confidence.
8. During the interview, don't assume you're talking about the same subject. For example, they may say, “We're interested in evangelism.” What does that mean?
9. The following items are important to sort out. Don't underestimate any differences between you and the ministry.
 - a. Philosophy of ministry. Are you going in the same direction?
 - b. Budget. Be aware that during a leadership transition, contributions to the ministry may decrease. Is that understood by both you and the committee?
 - c. Leadership. Who is responsible to whom? How are decisions made? Are there areas of authority in disagreement or direction?
10. The Placement Office's “Interview Questions” pdf resource includes questions you may be asked by a committee as well as questions you may want to ask.
(<https://www.westernseminary.edu/alumni/experience/placement>).

Be alert and remember your manners

1. Watch how they treat you from the very beginning. If they are considerate now, they will probably continue the same patterns.
2. Watch how they respond to your spouse and children (if applicable).
3. What types of questions are they asking? And what questions are they not asking?
4. Be a gracious, Christian person in your dealings with people. Be pastoral, not a candidate. Courtesy and appreciation send a strong message as to who you are and what your core values are.
5. Respond to every written and personal contact whether they respond or not. Always send thank you notes or cards, or a small gift, if appropriate, especially if you're candidating.
6. Don't become discouraged with the lack of response from the large number of résumés you have sent out. This is not the normal corporate type of search process. Search committees take a long time to identify candidates, interview them, and present individuals to the congregation.
7. Although you do need to make a living, ultimately, this is not about money, but about ministry.
8. If you stay at someone's home, make the bed and pick up after yourself.
9. Don't be late for appointments.
10. During face-to-face interviews, turn off your cell phone.

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