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Sunday, June 14, 2009

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A weekly resource for those who lead Worship Ministries

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June 15, 2009

Professional Tools

Doug Lawrence

Quote

"A prudent question is one-half of wisdom." —Francis Bacon

Scripture

"Jesus replied, 'I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.'" —Matthew 21:23-25

Prayer

Lord, give us a greater desire to seek the truth. We know that You are the one source of all things that are honest. We know that our character depends on staying in touch with your will for our lives. Therefore, focus our attention on the things that are real. Cleanse us of deceit and willfulness so that we may follow you with joy and hope. Amen

Leadership

Ours is a culture in which we do two opposing things with great regularity—questioning almost everything vs. just accepting everything. What's up? We don't seem to be able to make up our minds about whether we want to know "the truth" or blindly accept false impressions. The reality is that asking more questions will usually help us to achieve a more balanced and informed decision. It is not a bad thing to be disillusioned. That is to say, we should rid ourselves of illusions. We need to know as much truth as possible in order to have real fulfillment in our lives. This is particularly desirable when we are seeking employment.

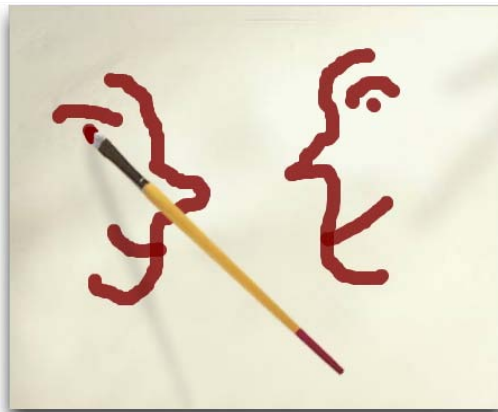
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Creating... The 7

Question Conversation

This month I want to focus on The 7 Question Conversation. It has been my custom to ask 7 questions when I move toward a new opportunity—whether it is employment or an affiliation of some sort. The reason I follow this regimen is to gain as much real information as possible before aligning myself with other's values and expectations. Let's look at this process for establishing the questions as a starting place for you to create your own if you should decide this is a valuable tool.

—For the candidate, when asked by the interviewer, "Do you have any questions for me?"

Question 1

(This is a way of determining whether your values are aligned with the institution.)

What do you see as the primary mission of your church/organization?

Question 2

(This question is a means of directing the conversation to your specific qualifications. This one question allows you to determine if there is really an interest in your gifts.)

Assuming you've had a chance to look over my resume, I wonder what items in my experience base might be of greatest value to you?

Question 3

(This question is not for sissies! It will help you formulate ways to overcome hidden objections to your candidacy.)

Are there things in my resume that give you any concern?

Question 4

(This question is a way of subtly asking what life will be like after the honeymoon.)

I have observed many organizations/churches in my lifetime and, being made up of human beings, they usually have some imperfections. What are yours, in your estimation?

Question 5

(This question helps you establish a modicum of independence within the organization while letting your interviewer know that you are committed to being accountable to your responsibilities.)

I actually enjoy doing my job with a strong dedication to reliability, while at the same time innovating and working toward solutions to our mutually perceived obstacles. Do you generally support that kind of creative thinking?

Question 6

(This question is a deal-breaker for me. If the response is not in line with what I regard as "best practices"—I back away from the interview.)

Do you have in place a written policy for employees/members with regard to dismissal or admonishment, and the procedures and policies regarding that action?

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Question 7

(This is the question that will establish your working relationship within the organization.)

Do you have an evaluative (e.g. Myers-Briggs) process for determining what kind of personality traits your members/employees might bring to the table, and does your management methodology take those traits into consideration?

Now, this is a pretty good list, but certainly not comprehensive. It's just a list that I use because it seems to open up the areas that I most want to discuss. You might well have a completely different set of queries.

Many of you have been in the opposite position of interviewing potential employees or members of an organization. You should also have ready a specific list of conversation stimulating questions.

—For the employer or head of an organization (e.g. committee head, choir director, etc)...

Question 1

(This is the most direct way of asking whether someone is qualified or not.)

So, I've read all your stuff, but I want to know directly from you, what is it you think you bring to the table?

Question 2

(When I was in leadership in one church we always asked candidates the question (with a twinkle in our eyes), "Why did Jesus die for you?" It usually broke the tension, but also afforded the interviewer an opportunity to vet a candidate's weaknesses. It only had a shocking result one time when a somewhat startled young woman confessed that she had embezzled funds at her last position! ...good grief!)

Where are the central areas where you feel you should grow or, alternatively, "Why did Jesus die for you?" :-)?

Question 3

(This is a test of the inventiveness and creativity of your potential member/employee.)

You've read a description of the job we're offering, what, in your opinion, have we left out?

Question 4

(Always ask this question even if you don't think you'll get an answer. It's important to know this information.)

Why did you leave your last position/or pull yourself out of a volunteer situation?

Question 5

(This is a question that will save you tons of time. It will help you decide how to effectively give job performance information on a regular basis. Most people want to know what they are doing well. Generally, people don't want to hear about their failures, even if they say they would welcome such information. This will help you tailor your input to this candidate.)

When you receive information about how you're performing your job, how do you receive it best (e.g. face to face-in a note-by email-in an annual review, etc)?

Question 6

(This is a question that gives you a better idea of the potential longevity of this candidate. Remember a good hire can save you tens of thousands of dollars!)

Five years from now, what would you ideally like to be doing professionally?

Question 7

(This is a question that allows you to give your candidate a chance to be vulnerable and perhaps re-do some aspect of the interview. You'll be

surprised by some of the answers to this invitation.)

Just for the sake of recapping, if you were in my role as the interviewer, what would you most likely be thinking about how this conversation succeeded or failed?

Here's what I want you to do...

Shoot me an email (click on my name below) with your own questions (because you're probably itching to anyway) and I will put them in next month's MME. You can be helpful to all of us in this critical area of job interviewing.



Doug Lawrence

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Doug has been a consultant to church leaders for 35 years and is anxious to be helpful to you in leadership, musical, and staffing considerations. Please click on his name above and email him. He's available to consult on the phone as well.

Take a look...

This is a great way for singers to connect. There's a lot to see *and* hear!



To download a PDF of this week's MME, please [click here](#).



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