

How to Avoid Bad Hiring Decisions

By Todd Rhoades of ChurchStaffing.com

Has your church ever suffered from a bad hiring decision? The truth is hiring the wrong staff member can take its toll both spiritually and financially on your church. In addition to moving costs, salary, and benefits paid out, you'll also suffer from lost time and productivity when you hire the wrong person. According to Dave Travis of Leadership Network (Leadnet.org), the cost of a 'bad hire' for the average church can cost them at least \$100,000. Here are some ways to avoid the costly mistakes of a bad hiring decision:

Start Your Search from Within

Be sure not to overlook people from within your church who might be right for the position. These people already know your church's values, mission and vision. As a matter of fact, they probably love your values, mission and vision because they've chosen to be a part of your church. Check your own leadership pool first to see if there are any 'home-grown' staffing opportunities.

Consider Hiring the Friend of a Friend

It's always a more comfortable hire when the prospective employee is an acquaintance (even a few times removed). When you first start your search, start with your colleagues in ministry that you really trust. Tell them exactly the type of position that you are hoping to fill, and ask them if they know anyone who could fill your vacancy. You might be surprised who you might find by just by asking the people of influence in your circle of friends.

Be Specific In Your Search

When you're searching for a new staff member, be very specific in what you're looking for. One of the most time consuming parts of a staff search is weeding through all the resumes you'll receive. It's a necessity to be upfront about your job needs and requirements in your advertised job description. Remember, it's far better to get a small group of qualified resumes than hundreds of resumes from candidates who won't fit your position profile.

Don't Hire Out of Necessity

One mistake many churches make is that they hire someone just so that they can fill the position. 'No hire' is better than a 'bad hire'. Recruit volunteers or cut some programs temporarily if you have to, but don't hire someone just to eliminate the 'hole' on your staff. This is an important rule to remember, especially if your search takes longer than you expected. A good question to ask is, "Would we have hired this individual when we first started our search, or are we hiring this person just to fill the position and end our search process?"

Conduct a "Managed Search"

There are many options today for churches during the search process. One newer method that is rapidly gaining acceptance is conducting a "managed search". MinisterSearch (MinisterSearch.com) in Dallas, TX is one such managed search option. MinisterSearch President David Lyons comments, "As church leaders, it is critical to utilize all available resources as quickly as possible when filling a pastoral staff position." Managed search companies keep a large database of qualified ministry professionals on file, and will find a match for your specific church based on the criteria you specify. This takes a lot of the pressure and time off your local church search committee. The search company provides the leads for you to interview and eventually hire.

Go National With Your Search

You can no longer count on your denomination or local Bible College to be the primary sources of available individuals for hire. In fact, many denominations and colleges have cut back on their placement services. One easy way to get a good selection of qualified candidates to choose from is to search for individuals nationally using the internet. Websites such as ChurchStaffing.com will allow you to search for individuals locally or across the country. You can both advertise your

current openings and search resumes that have been submitted online. The internet can be a great time-saver and staff recruitment resource.

Conduct a Background Search

Ten years ago, churches would have never thought about conducting a criminal background search on a pastoral candidate. Today, it is a necessity. Every week (literally), I hear horror stories of churches who have hired pastors that either have a hidden past, or are not who they say they are. A quick and inexpensive background check like the ones offered at ChurchWorkerScreening.com can save your church a lot of embarrassment and give a little more peace of mind. And if a candidate refuses to give your permission to run a background check, don't hire them!

Avoid Divisive Search Committees

While Search Committees are a necessity in many church situations, many times these committees are just thrown together when a crisis hits. Here's the scenario: The pastor of your small church resigns unexpectedly. There is no set structure or procedure in your by-laws as to how to proceed, so a group of people are selected from your congregation to serve on the search committee. Most often, people are chosen not because of their interest in being on the committee or because of their practical experience in hiring staff or personnel, but because they represent a distinct group or faction of the church as a whole. While it is good to have a wide variety of opinions and viewpoints on the search committee, having too many people with too many opinions will only stall the search process (and cause many headaches and arguments). When choosing your search committee, be sure to select people that have one goal and purpose in mind: the future of your church. Choose 5-7 people who can see the big picture, not those who will be diverted by a smaller, less-important agenda.

Hiring your next staff member is an important step for your church. If not done well, it can cause your congregation much grief and many dollars. Take these steps to help avoid bad hiring decisions, and you may find yourself blessed with a staff member who best fits your church's vision, values and mission, and one that moves your church to the next level of Kingdom work in your community.