

Church planters are called to be persons of unusual vision and faith, believing that God can and will work through them as they establish new local churches. They are required to perform a wide variety of tasks and duties, often working with limited structure and/or little encouragement. Not every pastor is called or gifted to this kind of ministry. When a person who is not gifted or called to this work finds himself attempting to do the work of a church planter, frustration and a sense of failure are often the result. Some become disillusioned and leave the ministry as a result of a failed church-planting experience. In addition, it often becomes harder to establish a new work in a community where one or more failures have already occurred.

Assessment has been developed to provide an opportunity for in-depth analysis of each candidate's skills, abilities and traits and to match these with the profile of the qualities desirable in church planting. Emphasis is also placed on self-assessment and thorough feedback by the assessment staff regarding each participant's qualifications. Participants often report that the feedback they obtain regarding their gifts and abilities is of great value to them in their ministry.

WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

Assessment is an intensive 3-day process which has the following features:

1. Multiple assessment techniques are used.
2. The assessment simulations and instruments have been selected or tailored to relevant aspects of church planting.
3. Multiple trained observers are used.
4. The data from all assessment exercises and instruments and from all observers is pooled and evaluated.
5. A single, final global evaluation for each participant is arrived at by the assessment staff.

THE OBJECTIVES OF ASSESSMENT

1. Through the use of experiential exercises, simulations and other instrumented activities, assessors will observe the ministry-related behaviors of participants and evaluate the extent to which the participants skills and abilities match those required in church planting.
2. Participants will engage in self-assessment as they participate in experiential exercises, simulations and various other instrumented activities.
3. Participants will acquire new skills and knowledge through the exercises, discussions and lectures in which they participate.

Participants are encouraged to enter into the exercises and instrumented activities with enthusiasm. While assessment is very intense, it also provides an opportunity for the participants and assessors to have fellowship as members of the Body of Christ. In addition, new lifelong associations are often established.

DISCERNING GOD'S GIFTING

There is no selection quota in assessment, nor are participants in competition. Someone performing better than others in a particular activity doesn't necessarily reflect poorly on the rest. Remember, not all have the same gifts. If the body is to function well, all of the gifts are needed. Furthermore, the various gifts are given to the Church, not to individuals. Each of us is merely a steward of our particular gifts through which the Holy Spirit means to edify and build up the Church. As we discover each other's giftedness, it is an opportunity for us to celebrate the unity of the Body.

10 DIMENSIONS AND 34 COMPETENCIES OF A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH PLANTER1

Over a three-year period, extensive doctoral research of the activities of sixty-eight successful church planters was conducted. Careful examination of the findings of this research supports the following skills, abilities and character traits as desirable for church planting:

Dimension 1: Integrity:

1. *Responsible*: tends to be answerable and accountable in work assignments
2. *Ethical*: conforms to moral standards and values
3. *Inspires trust*: demonstrates reliability in word and action

Dimension 2: Personal Spiritual Dynamics:

4. *Prayer*: listens to and converses with God regarding ministry needs
5. *Walk with God*: understands and depends on God's grace for joyful living
6. *Call*: exhibits an inner urging and outward confirmation of gifting for church ministry.

Dimension 3: Missional Engagement:

7. *Evangelism*: joyfully shares the good news of Christ's redemptive work that brings salvation and growth.
8. *Gathers people*: connects positively with diverse people drawing them to one another and to Christ.
9. *Missional culture*: cultivates a growing commitment to an outreach focus
10. *Embraces diversity*: identifies with and serves diverse peoples in the community
11. *Mercy ministry*: activates a caring ministry for the needs of people

Dimension 4: Visioning Capacity:

12. *Motivates others*: awakens inner drive in followers to serve others meaningfully
13. *Values teams*: harnesses people in a coordinated effort toward a common purpose
14. *Manages vision*: skillfully directs people and activities toward an anticipated future

Dimension 5: Gospel Communication:

15. *Redemptive preaching*: communicates God's truth from the biblical text focusing on Christ's work
16. *Effective communication*: able to express gospel truth clearly and winsomely
17. *Enables worship*: effectively draws others to focus on God in reverential praise and adoration

Dimension 6: Learning Agility:

18. *Tolerance for ambiguity*: able to take action in unclear situations
19. *Personal learning*: adept at gaining new knowledge, attitudes and skills quickly
20. *Adjusts strategies*: adapts actions to fit context and needs
21. *Self-development*: pursues personal growth toward greater effectiveness
22. *Self-knowledge*: gains insights through evaluation by self and others

Dimension 7: Emotional Stability:

23. *Stress navigation*: able to respond positively to physical and mental strain
24. *Opportunity-minded*: seizes adverse situations to advance Christ's cause
25. *Confidence*: able to move through difficulties with humble boldness

Dimension 8: Family Life:

26. *Healthy family*: maintains supportive relationships through stages of life
27. *Growing marriage*: exhibits sensitive interdependence in love's journey
28. *Spouse partnership*: demonstrate joint interest and commitment to a common vision

Dimension 9: Expectant of Results:

29. *Action-oriented*: strongly inclined to advance the mission
30. *Perseverance*: exhibits steadfastness in purpose in spite of difficulties

Dimension 10: Managerial Courage:

31. *Directing*: leads others toward a common goal in spite of problems
32. *Conflict management*: understands and mitigates sharp disagreements
33. *Staffing*: selects appropriate people to lead segments of ministry
34. *Evaluating people*: estimates the character and ability of persons to meet set requirements

CHARACTER TRAITS THAT WOULD HINDER THE CHURCH PLANTER**Staller/Stopper 1: Self-centered:**

1. *Arrogant*: displays conceited self-sufficiency
2. *Betrays trust*: breaks confidence placed in him by others
3. *Unethical*: lives on the margins of moral standards and values

Staller/Stopper 2: Doesn't relate well to context or others:

4. *Unadaptable*: exhibits rigid and inflexible behavior toward situations and people
5. *Blocked learner*: indisposed to seek learning opportunities

Staller/Stopper 3: Doesn't inspire or build talent:

6. *Fails to build teams*: hesitates to select individuals and delegate appropriate tasks
7. *Fails to staff effectively*: unable to select gifted people suited for a particular ministry

Staller/Stopper 4: Trouble with results:

8. *Non-strategic*: tends to focus on details instead of big picture

6 DIMENSIONS AND 13 COMPETENCIES OF A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH PLANTER SPOUSE**Dimension 1: Spiritual Dynamics:**

1. *Walk with God*: understands and depends on God's grace for joyful living
2. *Humble*: unselfconscious in attitude and behavior

Dimension 2: Family Life:

3. *Growing marriage*: sensitive interdependence in life's journey
4. *Supportive*: giving moral and emotional support
5. *Healthy family*: maintains awareness and support through stages of life

Dimension 3: Integrity:

6. *Honesty*: being open, authentic and truthful
7. *Faithfulness*: loyal, responsible and dependent on Christ

Dimension 4: Learning Agility:

8. *Ambiguity*: growing reliance on Christ in unclear situations
9. *Discerning*: showing good judgment, insight and taste

Dimension 5: Missional Engagement:

10. *Spouse Partnership*: demonstrates joint interest and commitment to common vision
11. *Networker*: communicates and works together with others for Kingdom growth

Dimension 6: Emotional Stability:

12. *Accurate self-view*: resilient through finding strength in Christ
13. *Relational maturity*: being genuinely other-centered without self-absorption

CHARACTER TRAITS THAT WOULD HINDER THE CHURCH PLANTER SPOUSE**Staller/Stopper 1: Doesn't sense a call to church ministry:**

1. *Fails to support her husband*: doesn't sense call to church ministry
2. *Disloyal*: displays lack of devotion to ministry vision
3. *Unadaptable*: unable to adapt to differences

Staller/Stopper 2: Self Centered:

4. *Lacks accurate self-view*: looks to others or success for identity
5. *Irresponsible*: does not take responsibility for self or her commitments
6. *Unethical*: lives on the margins of moral standards and values
7. *Betrays trust*: does not share information appropriately

Staller/Stopper 3: Performance-based Spirituality:

8. *Fails to live by gospel dynamics*: views spirituality as fulfilling a list of duties
9. *Tends towards works-righteousness*: relies on human effort for Christian growth

Staller/Stopper 4: Doesn't relate well to others:

10. *Insensitive*: unable to respond appropriately to people
11. *Unforgiving*: unwilling or unable to forgive