



ASPEN GROVE
church planting network

What is Church Planter Assessment?

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 because 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 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 four-day process with the following features:

1. Multiple assessment techniques are used.
2. The assessment simulations and instruments are tailored to relevant aspects of church planting.
3. Multiple trained observers are used.
4. The data from all assessment exercises, instruments, and 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. Using experiential exercises, simulations, and other instrumented activities, assessors will observe the ministry-related behaviors of participants and evaluate the extent to which their 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.

Participants are encouraged to enter the exercises and instrumented activities with enthusiasm. While assessment is very intense, it also provides an opportunity for 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 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 edifies and builds 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 people's needs

Dimension 4: Visioning Capacity

12. *Motivates others*: awakens a 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 act 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*: demonstrates 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 despite difficulties

Dimension 10: Managerial Courage

- 31. *Directing*: leads others toward a common goal despite 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 I: 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 spouse*: 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 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

¹ © 2007, J. Allen Thompson, Ph.D., *Church Leader Inventory: A PCA Qualitative and Quantitative Study*, ICPC.
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