

Staff Evaluation

Best Practices



- ◆ Evaluation should measure compliance with a board adopted staff job description and not measure personal attributes of the employee as a person. If there is not a current job description, write one, wait 6-9 months and then begin the evaluation cycle. It is unfair to evaluate job performance when the job is not defined well in concrete terms. Evaluation should be conducted every two years to give time between evaluations for agreed upon changes to mature. If the job description is out of date, adopt and new one before eval.
- ◆ Evaluation should be administered by a personnel committee or adhoc committee for this purpose and not by Elders or other staff members. Generally if the pastor has a pastor/parish relations committee, the evaluation is in contradiction to its mandate as the keeper of the pastoral relationship and as a supportive sounding board for the pastor. It is NOT their job to do the evaluation.
- ◆ Evaluation should be administered by one or two persons. They can use survey instruments calibrated to the job description or personal interviews with questions within the job description. This is not a time to talk about character or grievance. Congregations should have other processes for grievance. This is an exercise about performance.
- ◆ Report of the evaluation should be shared in person with the pastor by the one or two people delegated to lead the evaluation. Results of the evaluation should not be shared with the Elders, board or congregation. The facilitators of the evaluation should report to congregational board that the evaluation was completed and shared with the pastor. If large gaps between performance and the description are found, seek guidance from your regional staff.
- ◆ A signature page should be attached to the evaluation that is signed by the administrators of the evaluation and the pastor and filed in confidential files with the evaluation. The pastor would be well advised to provide a written response and a plan going forward from the results of the evaluation. This would also be filed in the confidential files of the congregation. It is wise to report to the board proactive changes/goals for the future to create accountability following an evaluation cycle.
- ◆ When a survey instrument is used it should go to the people who were in a position in the last two years to witness and evaluate the performance criteria under evaluation. For example you do not send the survey to the entire congregation when you measure work with administrative tasks and committees. Those not in those roles of officers cannot accurately evaluate that work. If you wish to ask global questions to the congregation they must be specific, within the job description and only things that ALL members could observe. Survey instruments should not use numeric scales but should use a scale like; strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree/no basis for judgement. Numeric data is not valid, as there is not absolute value to the numbers and a score of 4.3 on preaching doesn't mean anything.

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- ◆ Generally the congregational board, Elders and officers would be asked to participate and then ask the pastor for an additional 10-15 names of persons with whom they have worked closely on their job description defined tasks. For instance, if pastoral care is a key component, ask families who have recently received care. If you are measuring youth ministry, ask youth and parents for feedback. This is not a “do you like the pastor” exercise. This is a job performance review to measure compliance with tasks. Give people who are evaluating the pastor a copy of the job description to help them understand the mandate of the job. Remind them that this is what the board has asked the pastor to do. People sometime have preconceived notions of what a pastor could/should do and those may not be in the job description. Evaluating without context creates conflict.
- ◆ Survey instruments should be no more than 30 questions. Add an essay section with questions such as: “What more do you want us to know about this pastor’s work within this job description? What part of this job description does the pastor show the most skill in performing? Where would you encourage the pastor to do some more training or reading in an aspect of this job description?” You can also leave a space below each question for comments.
- ◆ Additionally it is helpful if the PRC has been working with annual or biennial work goals with the pastor that jive with the job description. For example, if the job description says “prepares and delivers sermons that are Biblically informed, contextual to our times and give ideas for life application of faith” then a goal might be to listen to sermons, read about preaching and join a group of people who discuss the art of preaching. PRC is a good place to set the goals that maximize the possibility of fulfilling the job description with excellence and enjoy accountability. 3-5 goals in a one to two year period are about right usually.
- ◆ When writing questions for a survey, make sure they are clear, concise the put it in the form of statement that can be agreed/disagreed upon. For example when measuring preaching, “I believe that the pastor arrives in the pulpit prepared and ready to preach.” “I believe the pastor’s messages are relevant to the Biblical text of the day.” “I believe the pastor seeks to bring in material from a wide variety of sources when crafting the sermon.” “I believe the pastor helps relate the scripture to our current time.” “I believe the pastor preaches at a speed that keeps me engaged and does not speak too quickly so that they cannot be understood.” BE SPECIFIC. Not helpful: “I believe the pastor likes to preach.” or “I believe pushes their own agenda .” Too vague! You cannot know what the pastor feels, and you cannot fully know another person’s agenda. Both of these questions are too full of transference. You can receive help on writing surveys that are connected to your job description from your regional staff. Afraid there is not a one size fits all pastoral survey.