



The Challenge of Leading Volunteers

7 ways to boost volunteer engagement

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VOLUNTEERS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY, NOT AN AGGRAVATION



- What would happen if there were no volunteers on any given Sunday?
- Volunteers should be the intended focus of the overall ministry of any church. Volunteers are engaged the same way any other person is engaged in church—through relationships.
- Authentic faith produces a life of service. Jesus called people to follow, challenged them to believe, and, as a result, expected them to obey His instructions. Volunteering is just another way of identifying authentic Christ-followers.



5 Reasons Why People might not be Volunteering at your Church



① You're not asking Correctly

- It takes more than blurbs in the bulletin and please from the pulpit to move people into volunteer positions in your church. If you want people to serve, you've got to learn how to ask correctly.



+ ② It's hard to Sign Up

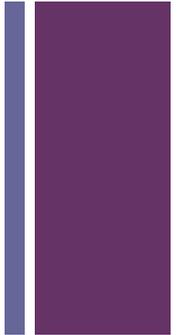
- Signing up has to be simple and immediate. Hidden tables in the lobby don't work. Remembering to email so-and-so isn't a good strategy.





③ It's not Clear

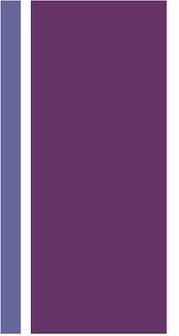
- If you want people to do a job, they need to clearly understand the expectations and requirements. Pull back the veil and show people what's it like before you ask them to get involved.





④ Your not saying Thank You

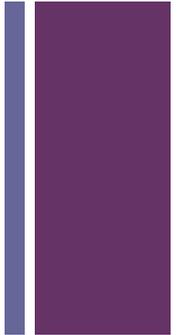
- People don't want to toil away in a thankless role. Just because someone's reward is in heaven doesn't mean they don't need to hear "thank you" on earth.





⑤ It's too Hard

- The super-committed will do whatever it takes, but if you want to mobilize a bunch of people, you need to make it easier. Take care of their kids, provide food, and make sure they have everything they need to succeed. A little planning on the front end goes a long way.



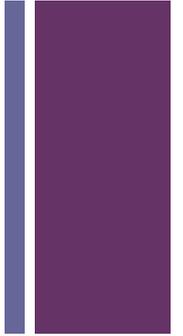


The Challenges of Leading Volunteers



① There Is a Lack of Clarity about the Purpose of the Church

- Clarity is a big deal in the church today. Many churches are operating without a concise understanding of the reason they exist. Some church leaders believe it is their job to attract and keep a crowd. Meanwhile, the effect of the church isn't noticed apart from the church campus.





② There Is a Value Problem



- Churches attract people who share their values or lean toward sharing their values. When those values aren't stated and reinforced, people don't know how their values compare to the church's values.
- Until the values are clear, people will be little more than casual attendees. Once people have been attracted, they need an immediate meaningful experience to solidify the relationship with the church and the congregation.
- Too often, volunteer experiences are focused on “getting things done” rather than building healthy relationships in the process—which may communicate the church values tasks more than people.



③ There Is a Shared Leadership Challenge

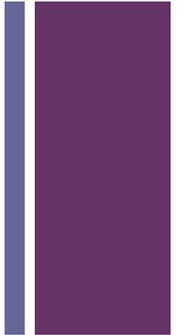


- Many church leaders hold their roles too tightly. This affects how they train leaders.
- Ephesians 4:11 isn't about attracting more volunteers; it's about empowering God's people to do the work of ministry.
- Real leaders look for opportunities to make others better by equipping and training them.
- Insecure leaders act as if they are the only ones who can perform a task and often disregard the need to share the leadership responsibilities.



④ There Isn't a Volunteer-Friendly Environment

- Volunteers naturally encourage others to volunteer. A volunteer-friendly environment makes serving normal and watching uncomfortable.
- People want to get involved where expectations are high. They want to know they play an important role in the work of the church.
- By telling the stories of volunteers frequently and making a big deal out of volunteers, your church can become volunteer-friendly.
- When a church catches the vision for empowering and equipping people for ministry, the outcome will be significant. The process of identifying and connecting new volunteers will be the task of everyone in leadership, not just the job of a ministry coordinator.

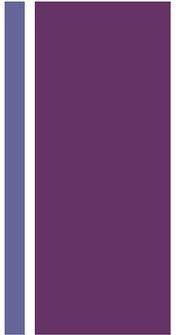




+ 7 ways to Boost Volunteers
Engagement



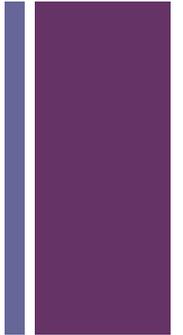
① Invite



- When a ministry leader personally invites an individual to serve, the chances of that person saying yes are greatly increased
- When an announcement is made from the platform or a note placed in the bulletin about volunteer needs, the responses are dismal. Why? Everyone believes someone else is better suited for serving than they are.



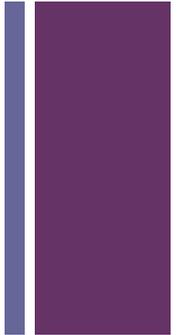
② Train



- The church is responsible for equipping God's people for ministry, not for providing ministry for the people (Eph. 4:11–13).
- Churches should establish an intentional training program that provides ministry-specific training as well as church-wide vision casting and planning. Well-trained volunteers are more likely to stay engaged than people who have to figure out what to do on their own.



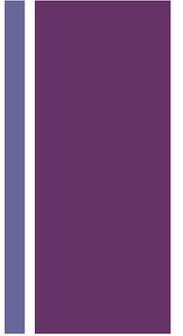
③ Affirm



- Many churches today aren't successful in recruiting, inviting, and retaining volunteers because they make a big deal out of paid staff members while unintentionally downplaying the volunteers.
- Affirmation is more than just a "thank you." It's more about the person's worth and recognition about their service.



④ Give Feedback

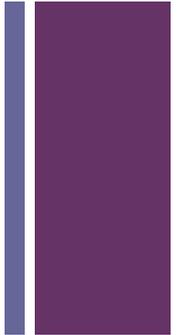


- People want to know their service is valued and is making a contribution toward the organizational goals and vision.
- Feedback opens opportunities for dialog and discussion while creating a clear leadership structure.
- Use feedback to cultivate a leader-follower culture, you will make future changes more palatable.



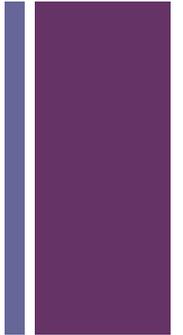
⑤ Evaluate

- Volunteers want to know if they are meeting expectations and making a difference among those they are serving.
- Create an evaluation form that allows you to provide constructive feedback to volunteers based on the feedback from others and your own observations.
- Evaluation is different from feedback. Evaluation is about the processes, procedures, training, and communication
- Provide a way for volunteers to evaluate the staff members overseeing their areas of ministry360- degree evaluation will provide opportunities for communication and interaction that otherwise would be impossible. In subsequent years, refer to previous evaluations and make sure changes are on track.





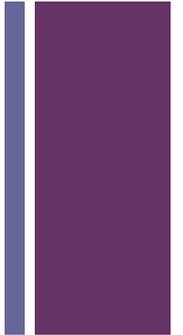
⑥ Recognize



- Celebrating volunteers always pays big dividends, especially when that celebration takes place publicly.
- Celebrate volunteers annually but affirm them monthly by doing something that acknowledges their contribution to the ministry of the church. This can be as simple as a personal note or as complex as a “Let Us Serve You” luncheon where paid staff serve the volunteers.
- Keep in mind some of those serving don’t ever want to be recognized publicly. So, during the interview and placement process, ask the volunteer about how they would like to be recognized, keep a record of what they tell you, and recognize them in the ways they have identified, not the way that is easiest for the leader.



⑦ Reflect



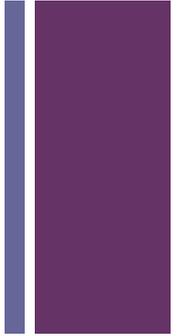
- Most valuable tools in ministry
- Helps us evaluate the journey from the past to the present.
- Highlights the significant contributions of volunteers
- It's important to help those serving answer the “so what?” question following their service, to be able to connect the message of the church with their service.
- Reflection helps those serving focus on the meaning, not evaluate the activity.
- The second reflection question is “now what?” Reflection encourages those serving to set their personal Ebenezers as benchmarks in their spiritual growth.



+ How to make the Volunteer
System Work & Keep People
Engaged



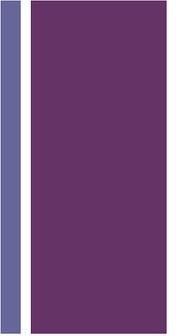
Making a Volunteer System Work in your Church



- Understand Your Existing Volunteer System
- Outline Your Volunteer Engagement Strategy
- Manage through Online Tools
- Measure for Effectiveness

+ Keeping Volunteers Engaged

- Keep Volunteers in the Communication Loop
- Give Volunteers everything they need to be successful
- Be intentional about gaining volunteers.

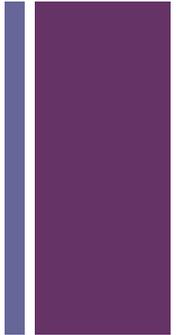




+ 5 Steps to Improve Volunteer
Leader Retention



① Know Them

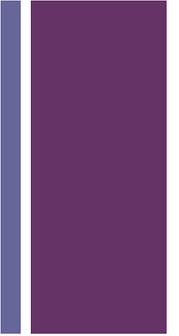


- This is where everything has to start. There are three things we should pay attention to: personality, preferences, and things that irritate them. Thanks to companies like Google and Facebook, knowing our people has never been at the premium it is today. The better we are at this, the more likely we are to have a happy, healthy, and a reproducing leader.



② Position Them

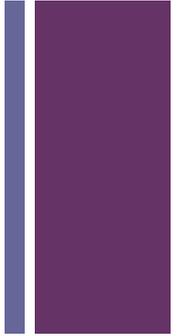
- Once you know them, you need to position them in their area of strength. What are they superb at naturally? Set them free to lead in their area of giftedness, not your desire to check all the boxes and cover your bases.





③ Platform Them

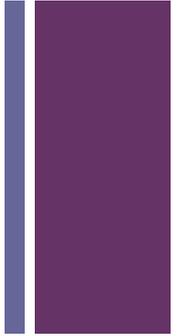
- Once positioned, you should build a platform unique to their gifts and abilities. When you know someone and have positioned them well, success will follow. With their success, give them more and more opportunity to multiply and grow new leaders; which adds leverage to your ministry.





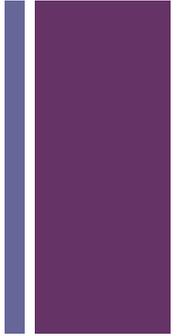
④ Pay Them

- Monetary compensation is one of the most over-rated types of pay. The simplest and most universal is appreciation, that is a personalized “thank you.” My wife still has a personal note from a pastor from more than twenty years ago thanking her specifically for what she did and the impact it had. The note means the world to her. Appreciation dinners are predictable and impersonal. Find ways to pay your volunteer leaders, or you could find yourself with a negative relational bank account very quickly.





⑤ Promote Them



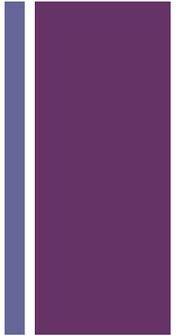
- I'm not talking about a new title and a big corner office. I'm talking about the type of promotion where you praise your leaders in public to others. Tell others both inside the church and outside the church about the great work a leader is doing for you. Compliments always seem to find their way back to the volunteer leader and comes back to you in the form of commitment, creativity, and loyalty.



+ Healthy Volunteers = Healthy
Ministry



Discipleship or Volunteerism?



- So which comes first, discipleship or volunteerism? Both.
- Healthy volunteers are growing in their relationship with God. People who are growing in their relationship with God naturally desire to serve.
- In the biblical description of authentic followers of Christ, the two go hand in hand.
- Church leaders must create a culture in which new volunteers are identified and equipped, existing volunteers are continually trained and engaged, and ministry is expanded and improved without hiring additional staff members.
- Volunteerism and discipleship will work together to produce a healthy ministry that functions for the benefit of the Body and to God's glory.



Credits

Don Simmons & Steve Caton. Church
Community Builder.

Tony Morgan. Tonymorganlive.com





Thank You