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Recommended Citation

Kidder, S. Joseph, "Church Volunteers: Finding Them, Training Them, and Keeping Them: Part 2" (2020). *Faculty Publications*. 1244.

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CHURCH VOLUNTEERS: FINDING THEM, TRAINING THEM, AND KEEPING THEM >PART 2

In the preview issue of *Elder's Digest*, I offered ten suggestions on how to find and train volunteers. In this article I offer ten more to help you be more effective in your ministry.

1. Preach on Ministry, Evangelism, and Mission.

Taking a Sabbath morning service to preach on serving is a surefire way to find new volunteers. Not only will people see why they're called to serve, but you can also bring to their attention needs inside and outside of the church where they can help. Share the specific needs and a simple call to action, and you'll have new volunteers in no time. I preached at least four sermons every year on ministry and mission, and noticed that the number of people who volunteered afterward was more than fifty percent higher than during other times of the year.

2. Cast the Vision about the Ministry. Instead of simply stating the need, describe the way your volunteers will make a difference. See the following examples and ask yourself which inspires you to action:

Option 1: "We need two people to help out in our junior room."

Option 2: "Our junior students learn God's Word each and every Sabbath. Join our volunteer team and help our juniors understand God's unique love for them."

The more the emphasis is on the spiritual side, the more likely people are to volunteer.

3. Provide Training for Workers. Too many church members have agreed to serve, only to be left to fend for themselves. Even the most willing servants grow weary when they are ill equipped and unsupported.

Train them—and make a public announcement about the training so potential workers know they won't be alone if they serve. Indeed, invite potential workers to attend the training.

4. Ask Current Volunteers to Recruit for You. The best people to recruit more volunteers are your current volunteers. Encourage them to bring a friend to serve with, or to host an event such as a ministry fair in which leaders of a ministry can ask people to join their ministry team.

5. Build a System of Reproduction. Reproduction should be a natural part of someone who obeys Jesus and strives to become seriously qualified and competent in his or her role of ministry and evangelism. An example of this reproduction comes from my own life as a pastor: one of my responsibilities was to make sure that every disciple of Jesus was engaged in a life-changing ministry and that their ministry was not done until they had trained another disciple to do what they did.

This is what Jesus did and what we should do. Paul, writing to the young pastor Timothy, says, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2). Paul is saying that the chain of discipleship and training should go on from Jesus' time until the second coming. Every believer is not only to be involved in the mission of Jesus but to also inspire others to do the same. This is accomplished by taking the time to connect with them outside of weekend services to listen, encourage, and share life together.

6. Give People a Chance to Try It Out. An easy way to scare off a potential volunteer is to ask for a long commitment. Instead, make sure you give everyone the opportunity to take a trial run at a particular volunteer area. They may be a great fit for that particular role, or you may need to help them find another place where they would fit better. Either way, by encouraging them to just test it out, they'll be more likely to give it a chance.

7. Create a Volunteer Page on Your Website. Having a simple place for people to learn about volunteering and sign up is an easy way to find new volunteers. Create a page on your website that casts vision, gives a look behind the scenes, shares testimonials from current volunteers, mentions current needs, and has a simple call to action with a form to get in touch. This page can also serve as a data page for the church.

8. Explain the Purpose of the Ministry. There are lots of reasons why people volunteer. Most of them

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aren't “I really like to say ‘Hi’ to strangers” or “I love to collect the offering.” Make sure people know *why* the ministry exists and how God will use them. Whether this happens from the pulpit, in personal conversations, or in volunteer-interest meetings, don't miss your opportunity to cast the vision for your volunteers. Share why God needs volunteers, what the job is, and how to do it. Show them the spiritual side of everything we do in the church.

Also, the more defined a role is, the easier it is to get involved. Your volunteer program should have a solid volunteer training strategy, and every volunteer should know these three things: where they need to be, what they're doing, and why they're doing it.

Developing a biblical job description of the ministry will go a long way toward helping people be effective and successful in what they do.

Make it perfectly clear what you want your volunteers to know. This is your chance to cast the vision for what volunteering looks like in your church.

9. Make it Clear What Not to Do. Volunteers are not the same as employees, but they absolutely represent your church, and you're inviting them to be part of your ministry. If someone has a bad experience with one of your volunteers, they're probably going to associate that experience with your ministry and church.

Put together a “code of conduct” for your volunteers. You don't need to scare anyone or preemptively wag your finger; focus on the incredible privilege your team has in serving God, and use this as an opportunity to share why their role matters for now and for eternity.

10. Evaluate Honestly. Hurting feelings do not need to be part of the job, so be gentle when you have to redirect people out of areas where they can't accomplish the job. Keep written records of evaluation and offer tangible steps for people to either improve or find new ways to serve.

Evaluation is easier when done against a set of pre-defined expectations—a job/role description. It is hard for a volunteer to hear they missed a mark they didn't know they were supposed to hit!

As you are faithful in serving God, in building the new leaders for His church, He will bless you and your church richly. He will give you the wisdom to know what to do and the power to do it. ED

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