

VOLUNTEERS:

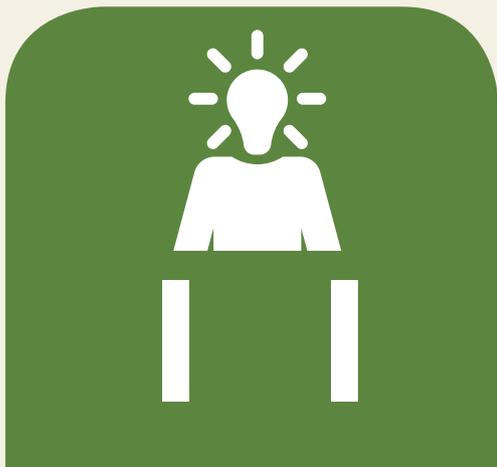
COACHING AND EQUIPPING A VITAL ASPECT OF MINISTRY

By Tiffany Lyons

GET IN THE GAME

Whether you have a church of 200 or 2,000, your ministry's impact can be directly related to your volunteer culture. Maintaining a steady flow of new volunteers is the first step in strengthening your volunteer base. In our church, we invite volunteers to join the team in several ways. Once a month we offer the Starting Point Class for people to learn more about the church and get connected to a small group and a volunteer team. We also occasionally use church-wide invitations through videos or personal appeals that inspire people to be part of something greater than themselves. The tone of these invitations should not be of desperation and need, but rather vision and opportunity. Lastly, and by far the most effective tool in recruiting new volunteers, is a personal invitation. God is already working on people's hearts and He is preparing the way, so ask the Lord to guide you to the right people.

Recently, one of our teenagers was given the task of recruiting and training a media team for a weekly service. One of the young men recruited told me he had asked God for a place to serve the same day his friend called and invited him to serve on the media team. To that teenager, this was more than being recruited to volunteer, it was God answering his prayer.



MAKE IT EASY

If people are intimidated by the process of becoming a volunteer, they may simply choose not to serve. By making volunteering as simple as possible, someone can test drive a volunteer position without feeling they have committed themselves for the next 20 years. One of our jobs as church leaders is to help individuals find their place to serve. This might take several test drives, but when they find that perfect fit, they will serve with enthusiasm and with a sense of satisfaction knowing God made them for this.

There was a man at our church who tried volunteering in several different ministries, but had not found a place where he felt comfortable. Finally, he landed in the sound booth. When he started serving as the sound engineer he came alive. He had a fulltime job and a family, but he gladly came early or stayed late whenever it was needed. He wasn't just filling a spot, he found a place to use his unique gifts and abilities to serve the church.



ORIENTATION

Nothing scares people more than being thrown into a situation and feeling ill-equipped. Taking time to go over the basics and even stating what we think might be obvious gives a new volunteer confidence to fill that position. We have all our new children's ministry volunteers come to an orientation before they can serve. The orientation is offered once a month and volunteers fill out their background checks, we ask them why they want to serve, and we explain our vision and child-protection policy.



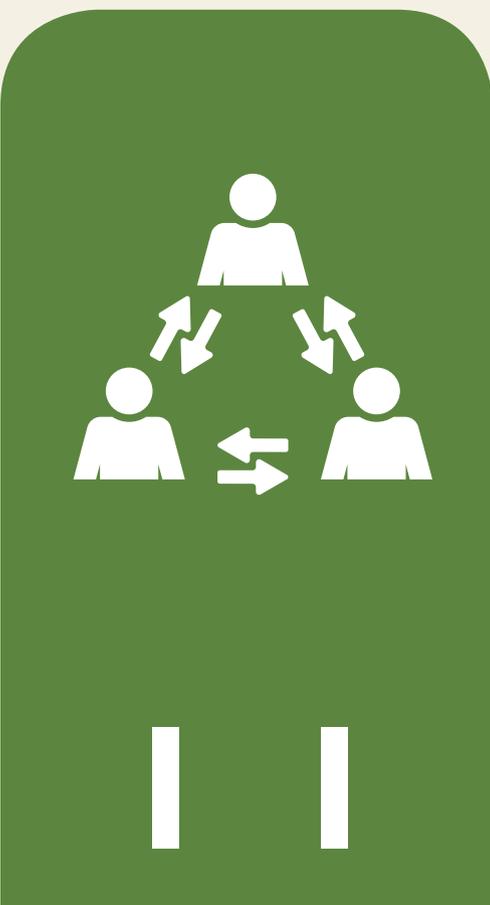
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ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

While in college, I had a job waiting tables. There was an orientation process on how to do the job, but then I spent several shifts waiting tables alongside an experienced server. I got hands-on experience so I would be confident and fully prepared when it was time to go solo.

That same approach can work great for new volunteers. When we have a new greeter, we pair him or her with the friendliest greeter. When we have a new small group leader, we put him or her with one of our best small group leaders to catch a vision of what an effective small group looks like. Taking the time for on-the-job training can help retain happy and equipped volunteers.



HUDDLE UP

Volunteers do more than just hold doors open or play with toddlers, they can reflect God's goodness as they interact with people. Greeters are really telling each person who comes in the door he or she is wanted, and that can make people more receptive to the life-changing message of Jesus. Those volunteers playing with toddlers are showing these kids that church is safe and fun, and that Jesus loves them.

Keeping that vision in front of volunteers is important. Meeting with your volunteer team before they serve is an effective way to accomplish this and is also a good opportunity to relay any timely information for that day. A volunteer huddle might take only a few minutes, but it creates community among your team, provides relevant information, and allows the vision to be cast once again.



INSPIRE AND CHALLENGE

While orientations and on-the-job training are effective throughout the year, having a yearly volunteer conference is a valuable tool for equipping volunteers and casting fresh vision. One goal of a yearly volunteer conference is to inspire your volunteers. It is important to not be so consumed with what you want your volunteers to do that you forget to talk about why they volunteer in the first place. Our Annual KidStreet Volunteer Conference has an entire session dedicated to inspiring volunteers. In the past, we have had our senior pastor, a children's ministry leader from another church, and our children's director speak to inspire our volunteers.

A yearly conference is also a great time to equip volunteers with specific training. To lead these breakouts effectively, you must have leaders who oversee each of these ministries, can talk about specifics, and can answer any questions your volunteers might have.

Casting vision is one of the most important aspects of a yearly volunteer conference. You need a clear vision of where you want your ministry to go and you need to set a course for how to get there. 🤝

