

Volunteer Management by Bob Chism, CAM

This is the second in a series on what you can do to make a difference in achieving the Great Commandment (Matt 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20):

Love your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your mind...Love your neighbor as your self. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.
Matthew 22:37-40

Go and Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commended you.
Matthew 28:19-20

Catalytic leader and volunteer recruitment, development, & placement are strong decade change ideas that requires sustainable volunteer management that starts with having in place the culture, strategy, tactics, attitudes, principles, and procedures. This is not easy given those with discretionary time are a defuse age segment composed of multiple generations.

With intentional cultivation and appropriate adaptive procedures volunteerism holds many economic and spiritual rewards. However there are a few challenges you should be aware.

Marlene Wilson is called the First Lady of Volunteerism. In an article entitled, "Volunteer Management Principles, she lists the following key management principles for success with volunteers:

- People commit to plans they help make...
- Volunteers are... priceless
- The key to wise leadership is effective delegation
- Leaders don't create motivation, they unlock it
- Mission motivates, maintenance does not
- People are as important as programs
- You can't help others if you don't stay well yourself...

Helpful books on volunteer management include **The New Breed: Understanding and Equipping the 21st Century Volunteer** by Jonathan McKee and Thomas W. McKee; **Management Essentials for Christian Ministries** by Michael Anthony; and **Simply Strategic Volunteers: Empowering People for Ministry** by Tony Morgan, and Tim Stevens. Tony and Tim are pastors at Granger Community Church (www.gccwired.com), 630 East University Drive Granger, IN 46530 (574) 243-3500 Visit their website for volunteer management points.

In researching recognized volunteer ministry equipping organizations, Church Volunteer Central (www.churchvolunteercentral.com) heads the list. Church Volunteer Central provides a daily newsletter, annual conference, and selected articles:

- Mission & Vision,

- Recruiting,
- Leading Volunteers,
- Retention, and
- Background Checks.

Volunteer management requires dedication, commitment, and intentional cultivation. Every aspect of the recruitment, development, and placement process requires proper procedures.

The best research indicates volunteers prefer a bottom up, consultative approach; upfront full disclosure; disdain for menial role; and an impatience tendency. This may suggest the need to be more open, receptive to new ideas, willing to let go more, share responsibility, and involve members more in the decision making.

A key element for success is prayer. The next step is to turn your church upside down. Maximize volunteers by creating a 'we serve' attitude and replace the 'serve me' attitude which expects the pastor and staff do it all. This will require gaining an understanding of the foundational biblical imperatives of equipping ministry and understand the unique roles of the leaders and the importance of teams that are required to facilitate equipping ministry.

Probably the biggest myth concerning volunteers is that they are free. Volunteers require capable leadership, spiritual training, and equipment to do the work. According to Joe Boerman, Senior Pastor, Immanuel Church, Gurnee, IL, the Boomer generation requires a one-on-one relationships rather than group oriented. This requires staff and budget.

Procedures need to be based upon the volunteers' perspective. Jeffrey Levin postulated on the bases of his research that religion affiliations benefits health by promoting healthy behavior and lifestyles; buffering the effects of stress and isolation; strengthening the physiological effects of positive emotions; reinforcing health promoting personality styles; nurturing hope, optimism and positive expectations; activating an altered state of consciousness; and invoking paranormal means of healing others. (Levin, 2001, 13-14)

Do not expect volunteers to serve in the same position forever and do not limit volunteers to repetitive tasks. In approaching the degree of difficulty for a volunteer be careful include the full range of challenge and decision making to fit to the volunteers' Christian commitment, giftedness, life experience and stage.

Recruitment requires overcoming criticism and negativism as well as the transition from sitting to serving. Chris Holck, Director of EFCA Encore and Encore Generation Inc which seeks to assist Christian organizations in understanding and reaching the next generation of older adults, recommends the creation of a database, Boomerish events, and initiative.

Building and strengthening an effective church culture for equipping people is the first step in equipping volunteers in sweet spot guidance and high level

ministry training.

Growing people, not filling slots requires placement matching of volunteers' abilities with meaningful project that fit their abilities.

With volunteer management in place, intergenerational synergy, financial planning, mentoring, parental care, grand parenting, grief share, addictive behavior, military family support, plus generosity and wellness ministries are just a few life stage service assessed need opportunities.

In her book, **Baby Boomers and Beyond**, Amy Hanson identifies one of the biggest volunteer recruitment opportunity as six months after retirement. Amy goes on to provide a simple proven approach for the church to communicate the desire to walk with people as they navigate the early stages of retirement.

“First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, California, attempts to do this by talking one on one with people who are approaching retirement or have just retired. The senior adult pastor gives them his blessing to take six months to relax, travel, and do whatever they want. In other words, he tells them it is OK to enjoy the honeymoon or relaxation phase of retirement. After the six months have passed, he again meets with the retirees to talk about their many opportunities for service that exist for them in their retirement years”.

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Volunteerism has arrived. Age 65plus is the fastest growing part of the population for the next 30 years with one-third of their life still to come. By prayer and with God's help, what are you going to do about it?