

10

STEPS

TO GIVE EVERY VOLUNTEER
WHAT THEY NEED



10 Steps to Give Every Volunteer What They Need

Develop Your Volunteers into Leaders that Won't Quit

Develop Your Volunteers into Leaders that Won't Quit

We recently did an analysis of all of our churches looking for patterns in volunteer involvement. We looked at how many people volunteered in one year and how many were still volunteering the next year. **As it turns out, we found that on average 3 out of every 10 volunteers stop serving every year.**

Since one of our missions is to help churches build great volunteer teams, we took this personally and have added some cool features to our software that simplify the process of scheduling, responding, and signing up to volunteer. But what if you don't use our software? Well, we want all churches to thrive, as people move deeper in their relationships with Jesus. So here are some tips we've seen and used to help churches recruit and retain volunteers...no software necessary!



GET PREPARED TO RECRUIT

Before asking people to volunteer, it's helpful to establish a foundation that sets both you and your volunteers up for success.

Establish a Path

Every leader wants to make and grow disciples, but how that happens varies from church to church. If we are constantly calling our congregation to take the next step of faith, we need to make sure there's a clear discipleship path. This way every task you do will be an intentional, valuable use of your time and energy.



Require every serving environment in your church to have entry-level positions, where anyone can serve no matter their spiritual stage, background or church experience.

Make it extremely easy for people to get connected by making sure each step in the process informs and guides them to the next place to get them involved. Call people to serve from the stage, tell them where to go (sign up to volunteer at the connection table), give them job descriptions of the area they want to volunteer in, and have the contact info for that person on the sheet. Make each step of the process painfully clear. What often feels like communication overkill to a leader is the perfect amount of communication for a church member.

Have Qualifications / Requirements

Attendance, weekly worship, or being a part of a small group could be requirements that you build into your volunteer roles (we'll dig deeper on clarifying roles in the next point). The mark of a good discipleship pathway is that there is a next step available for everyone.



Use *Process Queues* within the Church Community Builder software and know where your people are in their discipleship journey. With *Process Queues*, you can make personal invitations to each person's next step.

That being said, serving is not a *replacement* for spiritual growth. Serving is one step of our growth. Being in authentic community with others, worshiping God alongside other believers, and even giving/tithing are other pieces of our spiritual growth. Be sure that you never allow someone to trade in any other pieces of their growth and community in order to serve. We don't need a bunch of people pouring out without getting filled up first.

Clarify Roles

It's not hard for church leaders to identify the volunteer roles that need filling - some of us lie awake at nights thinking about all of them! - but that's only half the battle. It's important for people to know not just that the church needs more children's ministry volunteers, for instance, but what exactly those roles entail. *Find examples to inspire your next [job descriptions and roles](#)*. For each volunteer role in your church, write out a description that includes the time commitment, characteristics, skills, or passions that are ideal for the role. You can add these into a church management system to create a list of needs. Whether digital or on paper, a full description clarifies expectations. Have your volunteers read and sign the role description to show their commitment and understanding of the expectations.

Be clear and honest about the time each role will require. For instance, a youth group might meet from 7 pm to 9 pm, but that's never the full picture.

What if small group time consistently runs long or maybe the students or other leaders hang-out or play games late? When you clearly let your volunteers know what is optional and what is necessary, staying until 9:30pm will not be an extra burden. However, “surprise” late nights could leave your volunteers feeling overwhelmed and lead to burnout.

Get organized

People need to know their roles and have healthy expectations of what the role will look like. If this is done well, your people will stick around. If there’s a lack of process, they won’t. Have volunteer schedules up to date and active. *Use a simple [scheduling tool](#) that allows volunteers to respond to serving opportunities.* Make sure there’s a clear line of communication. And if you struggle with organization, find someone who doesn't. Assign the organizational responsibility to a volunteer. If using your current software doesn’t work, find a new software OR use something even more simple like a Facebook group or group text.

Know your Strengths and Own Your Weaknesses

We, as the Church, need to own our gifts and our weaknesses. Leaders often feel the pressure to be good at everything, but 1) that’s not biblical and 2) it’s not realistic! Great leaders know what they can do, and empower those who can do what they can’t. If we recruit well and manage expectations, people will be ready to serve. Once they are, make sure to put them in roles where they’re using the gifts God has given them to grow your ministry.

*The **SHAPE Assessment** is a great resource to discover skills and talents. Google ‘Shape assessment’ to discover options - several are free!*

Take an incredible worship leader, for an example. Let’s say he is an insane human being, super Godly, loves helping people worship, extremely selfless, and...like most worship leaders...extremely unorganized. Yet, he was put in charge of running the schedule.

As you can imagine, this created chaos and, even though he tried to implement software, none of his team used it because he wasn’t consistent or organized. The truth is, even if this worship leader spent hours of time and effort trying to be organized, he would never be great at it. It just wasn’t him. If only he’d have recruited a volunteer who could work as an admin, someone who loved organizing chaos and was good at managing a million things at once...how far the team could have gone.

Delegate and Replace Yourself

As ministries grow, so will your leadership responsibilities, which is why a great leader learns to replace themselves. As you gain new responsibilities, be sure to hand off old ones.

PRO TIP

Schedule a coffee, lunch, or review session 90 days after a volunteer begins. Be sure to ask these questions – they’ll give you another view into your ministry and will also give you an opportunity to encourage those volunteers to take another step:

- What have you loved?**
- What has been your biggest challenge?**
- What areas do you see we could improve?**
- How would you like to move forward?**

Consider this: What are you doing that someone else can do, that's keeping you from doing what only you can do?

Great leaders model delegating and replacing themselves, encouraging their volunteers to do the same. Leave being the hero to Jesus and call your volunteers into serving through healthy delegation. We're called to be the body of Christ as a team, not in isolation.





PERSONAL CONVERSATION BEFORE ASSIGNMENT

Once you have established your needs and have willing volunteers, make sure to have one-on-one conversations with your team. Resist the urge to accept willing bodies and throw them into their roles. Take time to have a personal conversation, set expectations, and establish a positive line of communication.

Set expectations

You'd be surprised how many people show up to volunteer thinking they're going to be the hero and then they leave as soon as it gets hard. A pastor once told me, everyone wants to serve until they're treated like a servant. Especially in today's 'me first' mentality, it's important to set a solid foundation for volunteers before they get their first assignment. Making sure to say things like:

- This has to be about Jesus or you're going to burn out.
- God doesn't need you to be talented, just obedient. This is about serving Him!
- No one is above anything. Every contribution matters, regardless if it's acknowledged.
- And maybe most important, "let me know if you ever need anything."

Obviously put those phrases into terms that feel natural for you, but it's important to make sure people know the "why" behind volunteering. It's an honor to be used in the bigger story - we all can use a reminder from time to time. *A well-written role description goes a long way to volunteer satisfaction. Your [coordinator role description](#) is a great document to begin writing now.*



STRUCTURE FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Once your volunteers are recruited and trained well, they will be fired up and ready to go. Without some timely, personal communication and continued leadership, even the most excited volunteers can find themselves getting burned out and frustrated.

Get Small and Establish Communication Paths

The best churches, no matter the size, stay small. As your church grows, you will have volunteer leaders leading volunteers. You might even add leaders that lead leaders that lead volunteers. Do your best to make sure there are as few volunteers under a volunteer leader as possible.

Create a clear line of communication. Where and to whom do volunteers check-in and report issues? Who is checking in with volunteers on a consistent basis? *By utilizing groups in Church Community Builder's [LEAD app](#), communication is a breeze! As you set up leaders within ministry teams, add their team members as a group!* Serving together is a great opportunity to establish another sense of community. Break up your large groups into smaller pods to help enforce accountability, and bring things to light that might go unnoticed. One of your volunteers could share with you how someone has been struggling because they're not plugged into a small group even though they've volunteered for 3 months. Information comes to light when you have actual accountability instead of one coordinator trying to organize AND care for 50 people. Know your limits, use your resources.

Allow and Encourage Your Volunteers to Improve Your Ministry

Give your volunteers a voice, have a way for them to give feedback, and make suggestions! Doing this can make it feel like they're a part of the team, not just a cog in a wheel. Empower your volunteers to help

solve the problems they bring up! Give them a voice in the problem and delegate and empower them to help improve your ministry by giving them responsibilities. This makes people feel accountable for the ministry ... which is a leader's dream!

Create a communication rhythm. On a weekly basis, communicate updates, special announcements, or changes to the weekend plan and to celebrate wins. Church Community Builder allows you to text your groups or teams or send an email through [MailChimp](#).

PRO TIP

Put meetings in your calendar to set aside time to encourage on-going communication. There are some great free services, like [Trello](#), to track people and their needs.

Be sure you empower others to do the same. Check in with a few who check in with a few.

Don't Be Afraid to Make the First Move

Always be watching for people naturally using their abilities and make direct asks. "Hey, I've seen you talking with first time guests who come in the door and think you'd be a great fit for one of our greeters!" (Notice how this calls them to a role based on something they've already done ... it shows you are paying attention).

PRO TIP

Challenge your small group leaders on this. Give them the assignment. They should know their people AND be able to suggest good places for them to serve based on their gifts, skills and personalities.

It's also a great practice to lead your volunteers to find their own replacements. Instead of one volunteer coordinator, have your volunteers be recruiters. You can start by having them serve with their friends for a few Sundays and then you can split them up! We've seen volunteers eventually be placed in charge of an entire preschool ministry, and it started because a friend invited her to serve. You never know!

With these few simple steps, you will soon be a volunteer management rocket scientist. People are the greatest assets in every church. Steward them wisely and your impact will be multiplied!

Church Community Builder's new [scheduling feature](#) will cut your scheduling time in half. The software can also support clear communication with automated reminders and easy-to-respond volunteer assignments. In the time you save, you can make more personal connections with your volunteers. Discover more about our [scheduling feature](#).