

# LIFT

## Ministry Group April Resource

### What makes for a good volunteer?

**Discuss:** Are volunteers discovered or developed?

I have said it and heard it said a thousand times:

**“We are looking for some volunteers.”**

Which begs the question, are volunteers discovered or developed? Is it possible that a lack of volunteer support in our churches is partly due to the fact that we are doing little to develop a base of volunteers to assist us in accomplishing the church’s mission?

Perhaps, you are wondering what type of qualities should I be looking for and looking to develop in a volunteer:

**Passion:** Look for people who love the church, share its values, and are bought into the overall mission.

**Reliability:** Look for people who are punctual and show up when asked.

(Cont. on back)



### Shop Talk:

One dynamic that effects every church regardless of size is the need for volunteers. Without the help of a volunteer team it is impossible for a church to fully accomplish its mission.

**Discuss:** What does the volunteer base look like at your church? Non-existent? Thriving? Lacking training?

We want to spend some time discussing some key factors necessary for building a strong volunteer team at your church. A strong team can comprise of 3 people or 300 people depending on the size of your congregation.

For far too long we, myself included, have operated by the “If you build it they will come” mentality. We start programs prior to recruiting and preparing the people needed to facilitate those ministries. This forces us to look for warm bodies to serve in those ministry roles while we wait on the “right” people to come along.

(Cont. on back)

## What makes for a good volunteer? (Cont.)

**Teamwork:** Look for people who can work well with others.

**Positive attitude:** Look for people who project positivity.

**Compassionate:** Look for those who demonstrate an interest in caring for others.

**Motivated:** Look for people who are driven and do not have to be micromanaged.

**Selfless/Humble:** Look for people who are not looking to make a name for themselves.

**Learners:** Look for those who don't act like they've got everything figured out. Life-long learners make great leaders.

**Energetic:** Optimism and enthusiasm are contagious assets.

**Creative:** Look for those with imagination and can think outside the box.<sup>(1)</sup>

Once you identify these individuals, next you have to begin the hard work of equipping them for their assignments. Training volunteers communicates that you are committed to the long term health of your church. It is an investment, not a disruption.

(1) <https://www.volgistics.com/blog/what-are-the-20-best-volunteer-traits-to-look-for/#:~:text=Working well with others and,the team experiences some setbacks.>

How do we develop a volunteer team versus continually recruiting warm bodies to fill needs? Let's look at three key components:

### 1. Recruitment

**Discuss:** What is your current method for recruiting volunteers?

The most common way that church leaders recruit volunteers is to stand up in front of the people, tell them about the need, and then challenge them to help.

Perhaps, however, there is a more impactful way of communicating the opportunities available at your church. Rather than simply project the need, how about taking time to paint a picture of how meaningful that role is to the overall mission of your church. This can be done by empowering current volunteers to tell stories of the impact and value volunteering has had on them and those they serve. <sup>(2)</sup>

### 2. Retention

I love this quote by Aaron Buer, "When our current volunteers find meaning, purpose and joy in their role, they not only serve more effectively, for a longer time, they also become missionaries for the ministry."

If we truly believe in the mission and vision of our church, we will not populate our ministries with warm bodies that have no passion or vision for that particular ministry. Those folks usually burn out quickly and we will struggle with perpetual turnover. Good retention requires three components:

- Recognition-Celebrate and honor your volunteers regularly
- Provide a job description-Retention is enhanced when volunteers understand what is expected of them up front.
- Screening-Plug people in where they are passionate, not just where you need them. They may be willing to serve there temporarily, but you need to provide an exit strategy for them.

### 3. Training

Be clear and specific about their role. This includes what the responsibilities are and how it fits in with the broader mission.

Provide a range of resources and tools to empower them with the information they need to learn and succeed.

Where possible, walk them through the specific tasks related to their role. Giving them space to practice builds confidence, and helps you troubleshoot any issues or questions on the spot.

Maintain an open line of communication. Knowing who to go to with questions will reduce confusion and help them feel supported.

Think about what information you would need to succeed in the same role. Put yourself in your volunteers' shoes—what helped you most in your first ministry assignment?<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) <https://www.breezechms.com/blog/how-to-build-a-volunteering-culture-at-your-church>

(2) <https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/volunteer-retention>

(3) <https://www.wildapricot.com/blog/volunteer-training>

