

Youth Director Resources...

MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS

Adapted from: Children's Ministry Magazine – Jan/Feb 2005

The best way to convince people to do something is to focus on what they need. You must sell in such a way as to enhance people's satisfaction. Tap into what motivates people at each state of their level of satisfaction, and you will help people buy into your ministry's good goals.

Learn as a STUDENT:

You must become a Student to learn all you can about what's important to potential volunteers. Ask questions. Do they have time to serve? Do you know their passion or heart for service? Do they have children? Find out what they love to do and invite them into your Youth program to do it.

Diagnose their need as a DOCTOR:

Once you have all the information you need to understand people, you are ready to diagnose their need to serve in your ministry. A Doctor diagnoses discontent to arrive at a need the patient unknowingly wants. Too often, our potential volunteers don't even know that working in children's ministry is beneficial to them. Your role as a Doctor is to persuade a person as to the benefits of his or her service. A good Doctor shows what healthy patients look like, is passionate about good habits and is gentle in persistence.

Build a picture of the solution as an ARCHITECT:

Once you have convinced people they need what you are offering, design unique solutions by playing the ARCHITECT. An Architect arrives at a simple solution to your volunteer's needs. This is truly where the fun begins. Is one of your volunteer's needs to feel a part of a small accountability group? Your team approach to ministry might just be the solution. Does your training meeting attendance leave you frustrated because the felt need of another meeting just isn't part of your volunteers' equation? Then try calling it something different. Or disguise team-building as a trip to the outlets or meet one-on-one at Caribou Coffee with your favorite potential leader.

COACH your team:

The role of coach is one of the most critical. Your potential or current volunteers are comparing what you are selling with many other alternatives. Time commitments, family priorities, choir rehearsal, work and vacations all compete for the same priority in a volunteer's mind. What you have to coach or compel are the strengths of your "game plan" as opposed to the competition's. Why is ministering to children in some churches a badge of distinction? Why do so many leaders attract stellar performers around their ministry? They have understood what makes THEIR training event, leadership development program or ministry opportunity a priority in terms of prestige and honor in people's minds.

Deal with their fears as a THERAPIST:

Have you ever wondered why an e-mail wasn't returned or a phone call went unanswered or those who had RSVP'd just didn't materialize? It is fear of commitment. The fear stage many of our volunteers arrive at changes what we'd seen as a "sure thing" commitment to a no-show. When fear sets in, your role becomes that of a Therapist. Since fear is an emotional response, you don't want to respond with logic or an argument. When a phone call isn't returned, don't keep pestering the timid with the same form of contact. Email them. If that doesn't get a response, casually contact them on a Sunday. They are avoiding you because of their fear. Help them realize what the fear is and find a solution for it.

Close the deal like a NEGOTIATOR:

In the role of Negotiator, you summarize the benefits and results that come for a “yes.” For your volunteers it is a restatement of what you will do for them and what you expect they will contribute. In negotiations, you restate when the teacher’s assignment will conclude and what resources you will provide for your team. Volunteers are committing, and you are negotiating the terms of that commitment so there is no misunderstanding at all about expectations.

Invest in people as a TEACHER:

Don’t leave the commitment alone; instead, help them value the role they’re playing. Your role changes from them to one of Teacher as you fulfill their expectations. It is a terrible thing for a volunteer to begin a term of service, attend that training, or agree to staff-development only to realize that what was promised wasn’t delivered. In our role of Teacher, we create a climate of learning to highly value service, commitment and the quality of what we have sold them.

Monitor your team as a FARMER:

Once we are convinced people’s expectations are being met or exceeded we then play the role of Farmer to sustain satisfaction. A Farmer works hard to prepare the soil, plant and then harvest. However, in between is a process that appears to be effortless and leisurely but is in fact full of watchfulness and anticipation. You are not “hoping” your team is satisfied; you are making sure that they are. You are celebrating commitment and taking up the results of changed lives in each classroom.

AVOIDING BURNOUT

7 Ways to Get Fired Up Instead of Fizzling Out

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How do we keep from "ministering" to the point of exhaustion- physically, mentally or both – when we sometimes are out there on our own?

Focus on Relationships:

First and foremost, ministry is about relationship with God. When you are feeling a little burned out, ask yourself, "How is my relationship with God?" Are you getting necessary time in Spiritual fulfillment? Are you spending time in prayer, sharing your heart and listening to God?

Are you making church attendance a priority? Too often in children's ministry, we allow our attendance in church service to suffer while we serve the kids. This is understandable sometimes, because serving kids often take place while the service is going on. But you must be renewed with worship, teaching and fellowship. Don't skip too often.

Family relationships are another high priority. We can pour ourselves so thoroughly into our ministry that our home relationships can suffer. Your family is your first area of ministry concern and, while you might ask your family to make adjustments to accommodate your ministry to kids, don't focus on your ministry to kids at the expense of your family.

Finally, remember that ministry to kids is all about relationships with kids. Sometimes a sense of burnout can result from focusing too much on trying to make the kids "do" what we want them to do instead of investing in helping them "be" who God wants them to be.

Identify Your Calling:

Why are you doing what you are doing? Is it because you are called by God to do it, or is it because you felt sorry for someone who was desperate for a preschool teacher? For a season you might step in and assist in an area of great need, but over the long term, you must be doing what God has called you to do or your service will surely lead to burnout.

What is a calling? It is simply "a divine summons." It might be something that lasts a lifetime, or it might be an "assignment" given by God for a shorter time. It is always something you feel compelled to be part of, to accomplish, or to commit to. Not doing it leaves a sense of dissatisfaction and incompleteness. To stay fresh in children's ministry, you must have a sense of calling from God.

Recognize Your Gifts, Abilities and Challenges:

In much the same way as recognizing what God has called you to do, you must also recognize what you are gifted at, what your past training and experiences have prepared you to do and also what you are not good at.

Aligning your strengths with your ministry requirements will not only help you avoid burnout, but it will also energize you to complete the ministry you are called to do.