

Treasure Hunt:

Finding the Right Volunteer



What people think about recruiting volunteers:

"Recruiting doesn't work. I put a notice in the newsletter, and no one answered. And why bother? I'll end up with some unqualified Schmoe who'll make things twice as difficult as they already are!"

The truth about recruiting volunteers:

There's no magic bullet. It does take time and effort. But you don't need to (and shouldn't) accept the unqualified. And when you recruit well, and invite someone to make an impact by doing what they love, they often jump at the opportunity! As a bonus, the right volunteer enhances your own ministry, too.

How to Recruit Well

1. Pray. Recruitment is inviting God's people to consider what God is calling them to do.
2. It takes time and effort. Don't wait until the last minute. When you're desperate, you'll take anyone with a pulse and that may be all you get.
3. Write a job description or at least jot down some notes about what you want them to do and how long it might take. Where do they need to do things your way and where can they improvise? What qualifications will be helpful (comfortable learning new software; good listening skills). Include both the benefits to the volunteer (first dibs on donuts!; smiles from 3-year-olds; "my undying gratitude!") and the impact they'll make (listening to kids read helps them succeed in life; "helping me organize this mess makes me a calmer teacher!")
4. Who might enjoy doing this, based on their gifts, abilities, interests, circumstances, etc.
 - a. Take some time to think of who you know
 - b. Share the job description with two or three others and ask, "Who do you know who might enjoy this?"
 - c. Search the Volunteer Impact database, our treasure chest of gifts and interests. See "Dig Into Data: Searching for Volunteers' Gifts in our Database"
5. Personal Invites are the most effective recruitment tool.
 - a. You might start with an email (with job description attached), but be sure to talk by phone or in person soon.
 - b. Effective invitations (written or oral; general or personal) include the need, how you can help, and the benefits. Example: "Want to make St. Peter a better place to volunteer? Ask about joining the Service Enterprise lead team, where your impact will be multiplied in the experiences of hundreds of volunteers."
 - c. Make sure it's a good fit for both them and you.

6. General invites (Fully Alive) are not bad and sometimes bring in someone we never would have thought of. But don't hold your breath.
7. Follow up
 - a. When someone expresses interest, follow up promptly and personally.
 - b. If someone says no, listen to their concerns. Perhaps the task could be adapted to fit their circumstances. If they express eagerness to serve but your opportunity doesn't fit them, suggest another or let Karen know.
 - c. When someone tells you something about their giftedness, serving preferences, or availability, share it! Pass it along to Karen or Isabel and we'll put it in the record so others are aware of it, too.

What's your next step?

- If you don't already have a place in mind where a volunteer could expand your ministry, see "Powerful Partnerships: What Could a Volunteer Do for You?"
- Start early the next time you recruit a volunteer!
- If recruiting volunteers is new to you, talk to an experienced friend or Karen.
- Thank God for the gifts He's given you and others. Ask Him to connect you with the right volunteer for the ministry you lead and for His kingdom!

A recruitment story:

Chris Dickinson heads St. Peter's Big Days of Serving. In the summer of 2023, she needed coordinators for several single-day serving projects. She searched our database for people with gifts of leadership or organization and sent them an email describing this opportunity to serve. Three responded and became enthusiastic, capable project coordinators. Two were people neither Chris nor I had ever met and, to our knowledge, had not volunteered at church before.

Also in this series:

1. Powerful Partnership: What Could the Right Volunteer Do for You?
2. Winsome Words: Crafting Effective Recruitment Messages
3. Dig into Data: How to search for Volunteer's Gifts in the Volunteer Impact Database
4. The Care and Feeding of Volunteers
5. Shared Knowledge: Filling our Treasure Chest

Volunteer Engagement: We're on the move!

From ...

- Volunteering
- "Same old" volunteer roles
- Generalized recruitment
- Isolated knowledge of peoples' gifts

To ...

- Serving everywhere
- Creative, flexible, customized roles
- Personalized recruitment
- Shared knowledge of peoples' gifts

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