

5 Pillars of Every Strong Volunteer Culture

People want to volunteer and be a part of what they love and are passionate about.

There are over 10 million volunteers in only these seven organizations: Special Olympics, Habitat for Humanity, YMCA, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way, and Big Brothers Big Sisters. And there are hundreds of volunteer organizations.

The majority of the people who attend your church love your church. They believe in the vision and want to help expand your reach so that more people can know Jesus.

They may not know exactly what to do or how, or may not be ready today, but it's in them to support what they believe in.

It's up to us as leaders to help them do that.

Leading volunteers isn't always easy, but it's one of the most rewarding and truly enjoyable endeavors imaginable. It creates the best team ever!

This all starts with a clear mission, and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is unmistakable. We are called to make disciples of Jesus.

Further, Ephesians 4:11-16 makes it clear that we (pastors, staff, and leaders) are to equip the people to do the work of ministry that God called them to do.

“. . . so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (vs. 12-13)

As I've written in the past, the local church cannot function without the loyal and dedicated volunteers who carry on the leadership and mission of the church. I'm amazed at how hard volunteers work. Their passion humbles me and their contribution to the Kingdom is a blessing that stirs my soul.

The following is a practical framework to help you build a culture in which both staff and volunteers thrive.

5 foundations to build a strong volunteer culture:

1) Your vision is inspiring.

Vision helps people believe bigger than they can think or imagine possible. A great vision is bold enough to inspire and challenge, but not so “out there” that it's not believable.

A great vision is also big enough to require faith and compelling enough to cause people to move to action. The bottom line is that a great vision is always in the best interest of people, and helps them change their lives for the good.

2) Your relationships are strong.

Your volunteers want to connect in a community where they are loved and appreciated.

Very few things trump the importance of healthy and productive relationships with your volunteer teams. If you are the senior pastor or on staff, think about how much you want to enjoy the people you work with. Your volunteers want that just as much as you do.

The elements of connection, appreciation, and encouragement cannot be overestimated!

3) Your training is practical.

Your volunteers want a sense of personal competence to feel good about what they do.

A great training program includes three elements: Equipping, developing and coaching.

Equipping focuses on the specific skills needed to accomplish a particular ministry. It can be anything from a workshop or two to online video training.

Development is more about investing in a person's overall personal growth, usually in leadership or spiritual life.

Coaching can be for anyone but is usually focused more on the leaders.

4) Your expectations are clear.

It's easy to mix and blur being appreciative and flexible with lowering standards. And high standards inspire!

I'm not suggesting "command and control," far from it, but a simple, brief and clear job description for each ministry is essential. It can be as simple as an overall objective, and 5-7 bullets that take up no more than a half page.

These descriptions of responsibility are written to reflect the cultural values and ministry philosophy of your church.

5) Your organizational systems are helpful.

Your volunteers want structure to prevent chaos and enjoy good teamwork.

You might be tempted to think that "organization" is boring, dull and an administrative hassle.

Well, that *can* be true. But if done correctly, being organized sets your teams *free from the red tape* and helps things run smoothly so they *can do their ministry* with relative ease!

Don't make your volunteers serve the structures and systems, the structures and systems should serve the ministries and volunteers.

Good communication is essential for your church organization to function well. And always follow up and do what you say you will do.

> [Read more from Dan.](#)
