

7 Key Steps of Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Church Volunteers

I've written on burnout ([Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#) & [also this one](#)) and [volunteer issues](#) before, but the key to avoiding those issues is right-fitting volunteers and placing safe boundaries around their workload.

In my experience, there are three parts (*Recruit, Train, Retain*) to this process, so I've included my **7 Steps of Recruiting, Training and Retaining Volunteers**. Feel free to share and comment.

1) Invite someone to learn with you. There's something powerful about being invited and asked to participate in something bigger than ourselves. Most of the best volunteers I've met at hundreds of churches came because someone asked them if they'd like a chance to see what it was like to do what we do! Your pool of current volunteers are the best possible recruiters. Why? Because, chances are, they are friends with people similar to themselves. That means techies know more techies. It also means that your non-techie volunteers (more on that below) know people like them, too. Leveraging the spheres of influence that your volunteers have is the best way to invite new people to your ministry.

Another important recruiting tip is to find college interns, stay-at-home moms and retirees who have the time to give on a Monday thru Friday basis. Unlike your other volunteers with full-time jobs, these folks have more flexible schedules and can help you with a host of necessary areas including volunteer scheduling, administrative support, copywriting, organizing, documenting and encouraging other volunteers with handwritten notes. I have had men and women help me out during the week so that I was freed up to do the work that only I could do instead of work that anyone could do. One of my best volunteers was a brilliant administrator; she just kept me organized and helped me with the myriad of daily tasks that I didn't like or have the time to do.

When you use interns, keep a log of what they do and give them the chance to apply their time and effort towards their high school or college credits. It may mean you need to go and visit with their high school counselor or college professor, but those real world on-the-job training hours can result in applicable hours towards their degree.

2) Guide someone through the process, initiate them slowly through the ropes and give them a lot of freedom to watch and observe. There's a great deal of safety in knowing that an invitation to come into the tech booth has no expectation for them to perform. If possible, have a trained techie with the observer to point out what's happening and to answer their questions. Demystifying the tech is a big part of alleviating their fears.

3) Encourage those who have a giftedness at certain tasks or in certain areas. We all love hearing when we've "got it" and like to know we're doing something well (or have the potential to do so). Your best volunteers will 'own' their role, taking your ministry to new heights because of their joy, passion and talent! Plus, really happy volunteers are also highly motivated volunteers who show up early and stay late.

4) Develop the people who show the most interest, have the best servant attitudes and are teachable. I'd much rather have a person who is inexperienced and teachable than an "expert" who can't be taught. If you've got a soccer mom who doesn't know technology but is highly teachable, pour into her and see where she can serve. I've quite often found that soccer moms make some of the best presentation software volunteers and excellent camera operators. Truly, you don't have to have a techie person to keep up with detail work. They don't have to know the operating system or even how the camera really works. They just operate with confidence and style!

5) Evaluate honestly. Hurting feelings doesn't have to be a part of the job, so be gentle when you have to redirect people out of areas where they can't accomplish the job. Keep written records of evaluation and offer tangible steps for people to either improve or find new ways to serve.

Also, as blog reader [Mark Alves](#) points out, evaluation is easier when done against a set of pre-defined expectations – a job/role description. He's right, too, because it's hard for a volunteer to hear they missed a mark they didn't know they were supposed to hit!

6) Participation has to be consistent. There's not an expert or professional on the planet who simply showed up and started being a genius without any failures or dedication to their role. This is a "team sport" and it takes all of us working together in unison and not flaunting individual talents.

For worship and church tech arts, I'm personally a fan of having a volunteer team serve the entire weekend and then not serve again for at least two more weeks. This means you will have the same team for all rehearsals and services so that you're all very consistent and work fluidly as a unit. By building these teams and operating in a one-week-on, two-weeks-off rotation, they're consistent in their roles while having the time off to recoup from a long weekend.

7) Reproduction should be a natural part of someone becoming seriously qualified and competent in their role. Far too many churches have "the sound guy" (as in ONLY ONE PERSON) or "the worship leader". While there can (and should) be a leader for decision-making and administration, a team of leaders is the only way to obtain consistency, quality and growth. An example of this reproduction came from my own life as a volunteer. One of my roles at a large church was as a volunteer trainer. Sure it was training, but I looked at it as *loving on volunteers*. It was also the first time I viewed myself as a volunteer pastor, by taking the time to connect with these other volunteers outside of weekend services to listen, encourage and share life with them.

How are you recruiting, training and retaining volunteers? Leave your comments below and share your successes, lessons and failures with us!

Read more from Anthony [here](#).