

Five Things That Kill Successful Recruiting

Jesus knew how to recruit.

When He said to Peter and Andrew; “Come, follow me,” He wanted, even anticipated a yes. (Matthew 4:18-19) Jesus had a purpose, showed passion, and focused on the person.

We all desire a yes, but how you go about it makes all the difference. The process of recruiting can either give something to the person or take something from them. It’s not always that black and white, but here’s what I mean.

When recruiting gives something to the person, you’re inviting them to be part of something bigger than they could achieve on their own. Something that God Himself ordained and has eternal value.

When recruiting takes something from the person, you are asking them to solve a problem you have by helping you get something done at the church.

See how different they are? You’d never describe recruiting like that or as taking something, and it’s never intentional, but it’s a common experience especially when you are under pressure.

Recruiting in a volunteer faith-based organization is not for the faint of heart. Not because it’s difficult, but because it never ends. You have to love what you do! If you get the basics right, recruiting becomes second nature and you gain a momentum that helps you keep going.

Leaders who are great recruiters:

1. Love people
2. Are passionate about the vision
3. Possess a servant’s heart
4. Are positive by nature
5. Are more secure than insecure
6. Cast vision and encourage well
7. Have a strategic mind and a shepherd’s heart

However, no matter how good you may be at recruiting volunteers, there are some things that if they’re true about your church, will make recruiting significantly (and unnecessarily) more difficult.

3 hinderances that make recruiting unnecessarily difficult:

1) Too many ministries

This may seem obvious, but when a church has too many ministries, it’s impossible to keep up

with recruiting demands. You risk wearing people out by asking them to serve in several ministries. No one church can do every ministry possible, so be strategic, pray much and select the few ministries your church can do best.

2) Ministries that aren't effective

This one is relatively easy to fix. If the ministry is not working and lives are not being changed, there's more effort than results and little passion, and it's not a core or non-negotiable ministry, then shut it down. I say "relatively" easy because there is usually someone still passionate about it, but it's necessary to make difficult decisions for your core and priority ministries to thrive.

3) Ministries that don't capture the heart

Sometimes this is about poorly cast vision, and I'll cover some thoughts about that under point 5 coming up. But any ministry that does not capture people's hearts is going to be difficult to lead forward.

5 Recruiting Mistakes To Avoid:

1) Allowing desperation to influence the selection

What's the better choice? A ministry position left unfilled or a ministry position filled with the wrong person? Seems easy, right? It's better to leave the position unfilled. Always. But in the moment, when the pressure is on, it's easy to cave and choose someone not right for that particular ministry.

Desperate is never the right disposition when recruiting a volunteer leader or team member. It's always much more difficult to undo a hasty decision than to wait for the right person. The "right" person doesn't mean the perfect person, but someone who can do the job with proper training, who has a passion for it and is not serving in two-three other ministries.

2) Missing the critical 90-day window

The first three months are vital to welcoming a new volunteer and establishing expectations.

Both sides of the relationship are important.

As the leader, make sure you provide great training, communicate regularly and clearly, and encourage often. For the volunteer, don't be shy to communicate expectations of the ministry, even things like showing up on time and being spiritually prepared. They want to know these things! Volunteers want to serve well, therefore letting them know what's expected is helpful.

3) Practicing "catch and abandon"

Volunteers who quit nearly always express some version of,

“Once I was recruited and got started, that was the last I heard from anyone unless they wanted something else from me.”

That comment may sound harsh, but keep in mind, if that’s how some volunteers feel, we need to understand why. It doesn’t matter if it may be exaggerated; it’s up to us as the leaders to lead well.

Of course, you’re not “catching” anyone. When you recruit someone, you’re inviting and including them onto your ministry team. They become part of your serving community and very often become new friends. Ongoing communication, encouragement, resourcing, training as needed, and lots of appreciation are part of a great serving team and meaningful relationships.

4) Valuing skill over character

Overall capability is important, and for some ministries, specific skills are necessary to build a great volunteer team for effective ministry. But competence over character never ends well in the long-run. It’s much easier to train for competence than to solve problems from character issues.

Start with discerning of character and spiritual maturity. Here are five good questions to consider that will help you discern.

- Will they follow their leader? This reveals how they view those in authority.
- Will they be a team player? This helps you know their heart to serve.
- Will they learn and improve? This helps you know their desire to grow.
- Will they sacrifice? This gives some insight into their perspective in life.
- Will they be honest and authentic? This helps you know their level of maturity and security.

5) Under-emphasizing the “heart and why” of vision

When you’re recruiting, don’t rush to the tasks of a ministry too quickly. It’s good that you want to be clear and I hope you have it in written form, but always start with vision.

The heart behind your vision is compelling and why you do it is inspiring. Candidly, it’s about 90% of why people volunteer and 98% of why they continue to serve.

Each ministry is specific, but overall, heart says that you care and the why is to see lives changed.

So, for example, if you are recruiting for student ministry, tell why you care about teens and describe how you show it. Also, tell stories about changed lives among the students you serve.

The heart behind it and why you do it is where effective recruiting starts.

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