

Volunteers --- finding them, keeping them, caring for them!

This information was quickly compiled from a variety of sources. If you have additional leads and/or best practices that you would like to share, please contact the Rev. Canon Jan Smith Wood: janswood@ix.netcom.com

Did you know? The dollar value of volunteer time is \$16.05 per hour for 2001. Taking the average hourly earnings of all production and non-supervisory workers on private non-farm payrolls (as released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics) and increasing it by 12 percent to estimate fringe benefits calculates the value of volunteer time. (<http://www.fundraising-ideas.org/orgs/nonprofit/volunteerworth.htm>)

Ten Principles of Volunteerism:

1. We can broaden our nation's volunteer force by removing barriers to volunteering (*transportation, child-care, age, gender, time constraints, flexible scheduling...*)
2. Volunteers are not "free" (*there are costs incurred by each volunteer and there are the administrative costs of administering a volunteer program; recognizing volunteers; support and training; spiritual direction... Plan for these expenses and budget them up front!*)
3. Volunteers contribute more than meets the eye (*if we don't see what is being done, we take it for granted and don't honor it; raise them up*)
4. "Volunteer" does not mean "amateur" (*Think of your volunteers as unpaid staff and offer them training opportunities, recognition, "awards"...*)
5. Volunteers and the organizations they serve must meet each other's expectations (*take care in matching needs and abilities; provide job descriptions; have formal evaluations as well as training, use a volunteer coordinator...*)
6. Volunteers must never be exploited. (*publish mutual expectations; provide advance agendas; integrate with a solid strategic plan...*)
7. Volunteer make excellent middle and senior managers (*think outside the box, here...*)
8. When recruiting volunteers it is more important to place the right person in the right job than to attract volunteers at random. (*Another instance where quantity does not trump quality. What is needed? Meaningful? Who has the gifts?*)
9. We can help shape government policies on volunteerism (*do you know how to contact your representative?*)
10. Everyone benefits when non-profit organizations collaborate (*post-modern abundance and synergy abound...*)

From Taking Volunteerism into the 21st Century, by the American Red Cross

A Theology of Volunteerism

"The evidence seems abundantly clear. We have been created, called, and equipped to be god's people and are therefore expected to act accordingly. These and other passages form the cornerstone of our theology relating to Christian involvement:

▪ *A theology of gifts.* We each have been created with unique and valuable gifts meant to be discovered, developed, and used on behalf of others. As Oscar Feucht declares, 'The individual Christian has a mission in the world no one else can perform for him [her]. It is untransferrable.' We each have something of value to give.

▪ *A theology of the priesthood of all believers.* Christ has declared that all believers constitute this royal priesthood. From the earliest tradition of the Old Testament, some of the priests have been called out (ordained) to perform certain special functions such as administering the sacraments and preaching the Word, but 99 percent of the priesthood is unordained laity.

Ministry is the work of the whole priesthood, and it involves being called by the Holy Spirit to do six things: proclaim, teach, worship, love, witness, and serve.”

From How to Mobilize Church Volunteers, by Marlene Wilson – perhaps the best book ever for churches! Out of print, but worth seeking and finding.

Useful websites --- not even the tip of the iceberg!! ...but this will get you started!

<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/volunteer.html> (National Mentoring Center, Portland OR)

<http://www.casenet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/motivation.htm> (good article on why good volunteers do bad things from CASAnet.org “Court Appointed Special Advocates”)

<http://www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/iwork/vol-managment.php?display=3,0,2> (great chart and article on Volunteer Management from Canada’s site for information on volunteering)

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/EBPubs/EB010/volunteermgmt.htm> (great Community Leader guide on volunteer management from the University of Nevada Continuing Education program)

Pointers on Inviting People to Volunteer

- ❖ *Be motivated yourself:* sincerity wins out over technique every time.
- ❖ *Be clear* on what you want people to do. Use written volunteer job descriptions whenever possible.
- ❖ *Use titles.* The word “volunteer” is a pay category, not a function!
- ❖ *Be honest.* Tell prospective volunteers what the work entails, even if you think it may sound like a lot. Avoid minimizing the work.
- ❖ *Share deadlines* up front. When does the work have to be finished?
- ❖ *Remember that it is better* to live with a vacancy a little while longer than to convince the wrong person to become a volunteer.
- ❖ *Define the training and supervision* or support the volunteer will have. This isn’t sink or swim.
- ❖ *Identify and express the benefits* to the volunteer from accomplishing the task. The best volunteering is when the giver benefits as well as the recipient.
- ❖ *Explain why* you decided to ask their particular person to help – what skills or personality traits make him or her a good candidate for the position.
- ❖ *It may be just as important* to discover what a prospective volunteer wants to *learn or try* as a volunteer as it is to know her or his official credentials.
- ❖ *Keep in mind that you can never insult* people by asking them to volunteer. In fact, you are usually flattering them by implying that they have the talent to do the job.
- ❖ *Paint an upbeat picture of the work.* Volunteering should be fun.
- ❖ *Hold the perspective* that you are giving people the marvelous opportunity to participate in an important project.
- ❖ *The best way* to recruit volunteers is to ask people to help.

From The Volunteer Recruitment (and Membership Development) Book, by Susan J. Ellis, Energize Books; 3rd edition (January 1, 2002), ISBN: 0940576252

The Value of a Job Description

1. What could it include?

What: Position Title

When: Does the work need to be done at a specific time and day or is there flexibility? What is the duration of the work? Once for an hour or until Jesus comes again?

Where: Is this a job that takes place on-site or can one do it off-campus?

Who: What support structure is built in? Is the volunteer joining an ongoing work force, or working alone? How does this worker interact with other workers? Who will train and supervise? Who will be managed and supervised? Are there meetings with others on occasion? Required or mandatory?

How: What resources and supports are in place to make this work possible?

Why: How does this work fit in with the strategic plan? What is the deeper significance of this work?
What are the intended consequences of this work?

Requirements: What kinds of skills and expertise are needed (or will be taught)?

Specifics: Itemize the actual duties (to the degree that they are known) Include estimated time required for this work, including preparation and training time.

Resources: What kinds of resources (written, oral, seminar, co-workers, mentors, prior position-holders, etc.) are available

Evaluation: How will one know whether they have accomplished the goals? How will one give feedback to their community about the ways in which this worked or not; was valued or not; supported or not?

2. A clear job description helps

- a. Put the right person in the right job at the right time;
- b. Match up native gifts and learned expertise (or make arrangements to support gifts with training and/or mentoring);
- c. Avoid conflict that comes from hidden agendas, unmet expectations, misunderstandings;
- d. Provide a springboard for mutual ministry review;
- e. Bring to community consciousness all the hidden and under-appreciated work that is done by people who volunteer;
- f. Gives a way to measure the financial value and community importance of the unpaid work that is accomplished (see “The Value of a Volunteer”!);
- g. People decide how to give out of their abundance (in terms of sharing their natural gifts with the faith community as a volunteer)
- h. Find meaningful work for those who would like to volunteer but don’t know where.

3. How to create a job description:

- a. Use a discernment team;
- b. If the organization is hierarchical, recruit hierarchical participation in concept, process and implementation;
- c. Peers recruit peers – those who would be working with the volunteers need to develop the JD
- d. Talk about this in terms of ministry and gifts
- e. Think about the various tasks/jobs and their descriptions in terms of mobilizing God’s people for God’s mission; (and any other methodology that you can use to get out of cheap labor mode and into creativity, imagination, and inspiration)

Why Do People Volunteer?

Wilson (How to Mobilize Church Volunteers) has identified three principal motivators: achievement, affiliation, power.

“Any healthy organization needs all three kinds of people, for they each do different things well.

Achievers are best at organizing new programs and solving problems. They lose interest when all the kinks have been worked out. They are then ready for a new challenge. They are more goal-oriented than task-oriented. If you delegate major organizational goals and problems to them, they will happily spend their spare time thinking about them for you and coming up with solutions that work (remember, they do not like to fail.)

Affiliators are the nurturers and careers I your midst. They tend to be more task- than goal-oriented and will enjoy most those tasks that they can do with other people. They are excellent callers (by phone or in person), hosts and hostesses, counselors, greeters, and listeners. They make your church a good place to be.

Power people are the movers and shakers every organization must have to stay in existence. They make the policies, raise the money, negotiate with city hall (and the church hierarchy), and generally hold the body accountable for its actions. In the church, we must realize how much of our mission is related to influencing others: preaching, teaching, stewardship, evangelism. It is important to understand the difference between personal power people (who want positions of influence for their own personal aggrandizement and status and often diminish others in the process) and social power people (who use their power on behalf of others and in the process build the confidence and self-worth of those they lead.)

Why do you think people volunteer?

Try this process to think creatively about volunteerism, build job descriptions that work, and match people to ministry in the proper time and place. **Step One:** Gather a group of congregation leaders (the ideal is a blend of both designated leaders and actual leaders). Be sure you tell them the scope of your project and the time/talent required of them (job description!). Give each group member an information packet in advance (charts, graphs, lists

that help them understand volunteerism and job descriptions). Begin with “why do people volunteer?” In addition to Wilson’s identified reasons, what else might you discern? Identify the broad categories.

Step Two: Brainstorm all the ministry that beckons your congregation. Identify the tasks that are necessary for mission and ministry to take place (i.e. maintaining the tract rack is an important aspect of evangelism). Brainstorm all the possibilities. Take time and be expansive (how often is Idea #20 the really great idea? You only get there by imagining Ideas 1 through 19 first!). Don’t worry (yet) about who will do what? Definitely, do not begin to “solve” anything now!

Step Three: Get into working groups of three or four. Assign a motivation-category to each group. Let them work together to figure out which ministry tasks would be fulfilling to those so motivated. Report back to the large group. Make adjustments, additions, adaptations as you are given to see them.

Step Four: Once you have tasks and categories paired up – you might think up others in the process – then begin to “dial it in”.

- What is already being done?
- Can the people filling those positions write the job descriptions (if none exist)?
- If job descriptions do exist, are they available, clear, and adequate?
- What are the most pressing tasks (refer to your strategic plan and/or mission statement here to help prioritize)?
- What will yield the most fruit for the least labor at this time? (You may discover that many things are “kind of” being done now and would get into really good shape with a little attention.)

Identify together **Step Five** and who will do what by when with whom? How will you know when you’ve completed your project? Who else should be included now?