



NEWCHURCHES

MULTIPLY THE MISSION.

3 KEYS TO BUILDING YOUR VOLUNTEER TEAM

By: Danny Franks

By now most of y'all know that I use this blog to think out loud. Well, "out loud" if you have a fancy way of making your computer device read to you. Or if you have a butler so you don't have to be bothered by things like reading. (In that case, I hope he's British because I'll bet that would make this content sound 23% smarter.)

I digress.

Here's my thinking out loud post for the day. Fall is coming. And with Fall usually comes a big need for new volunteers. Every summer, pastors across the land are scouring the church roll and beating the bushes to get someone...anyone...to work with eighth grade boys. (News flash: no one is ever going to work with eighth grade boys. Give it up.)

I believe that we typically go about the volunteer search all wrong. I think that there are three ways that we can invite and retain more volunteers:

1. Soft Sell

We can scare off volunteers by releasing too much information too soon. Americans are typically afraid of commitment; ask any guy who's ever tried to muster the courage to buy a diamond. That's why I think we should give potential volunteers an easy on ramp. Explain the

opportunity. Invite them to get more information. And promise there will be no obligation.

We should provide potential vols the chance to ask questions before signing a contract. If they're pressured into a decision, that decision usually won't last.

Our model: we'll frequently invite potential volunteers to attend a training – say, First Impressions – with no expectation required beyond that. Almost every month we'll have people show up who “just want information.”

2. Deep Vision

Once a potential vol shows up for training, we bring out the big guns and unload on 'em with both barrels. The strongest vision you ever give for any volunteer ministry should be at their initial orientation. That's your first opportunity to enlarge their heart towards what you want for them. If your orientation is boring as C-Span and dry as toast, then you deserve to have a lack of volunteers. Tell stories, share wins, feed them, for crying out loud, and bring them into the inner circle so they feel like owners in the ministry.

Our model: we offer a once-per-month First Impressions training that's designed to share the “why” behind the “what.” It's a 75 minute, high-energy vision session that focuses on touch, not task.

3. Big ask

By the end of your training / orientation / whatever, you should have sold your vision so strongly that a volunteer is itching to join the team. True, you've said there's no obligation, and you should stick to your word. But that doesn't mean that you don't end with a big ask. Lay out the expectations for a volunteer, explain the commitment level required, and give them an opportunity to sign on to be a part of perpetuating the vision.

Our model: there are a lot of “big asks” at the end of a training: [attend one](#), [serve one](#). Commit to a weekly schedule. Serve outside of your comfort zone. We set the bar high so the team's quality will continue to increase.

Soft sell. Deep vision. Big ask. Is there one of those that is off base? Anything you'd add?