

Title: How to Build A Healthy Volunteer Team
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Leading volunteers can be hard (especially in this season).
You want to get it right (especially building a healthy volunteer culture).
I want to help (especially today).

“The real job of a leader,” says Simon Sinek, “is not about being in charge, it’s about taking care of the people in our charge.”

So many of our conversations focused on how volunteers are affected by our leadership and how much they effect the experience for us, each other, and the guests. They play a big role. So do you.

Here is what could be true about you:

- You are tired.
- You are excited.
- You are distracted.
- You have recently thought about leaving your role.
- You are called to work hard in a ministry many people don’t see.
- You might need permission to dream and act boldly again or maybe for the first time.
- You could feel pressure from your boss to have more volunteers or create a better guest experience.
- You are shouldering more than one role and this frustrates you because you probably love one element more so than others.
- You are leading in what the U.S. War College calls a VUCA environment (volatile-changeable or fluctuating sharply), uncertain, complex, ambiguous).

Here is what could be true about volunteers and volunteering:

- Volunteers and volunteer teams are tired.
- Volunteers and volunteer teams are excited.
- Volunteer teams are potentially down to a smaller group.
- Volunteers are using their voices more.
- Volunteers could be more easily irritable and/or excitable.
- Volunteers not on your team are waiting to be asked.

One thing I remember reading in the book, *Age of Intent*, was "Once you've chosen the right problem to solve, you'll be in a position to start succeeding."

How can you optimize the volunteer experience where they will feel successful, get something out of it, and make a tangible difference?

Let's remove the pressure to solve everything. Instead, give yourself permission to consider SIX ideas and focus on making ONE idea actionable for now.

1. **Reflect on the value of being a volunteer**
 - What was your first volunteer experience like?
 - Don't assume potential or current volunteers understand volunteering as you do. In fact, assume they don't.
 - Revisit what helped you volunteer that could also help someone else: You noticed someone might need help. People don't attend to everything happening around them. You believed that someone desired help. People are not mind readers. You took responsibility for volunteering. Lots of people could help, so why me? You could provide the help someone needed. Competing commitments can be an issue.
 - Avoid becoming desensitized over time to what is familiar.
 - Motivation to volunteer = (1) how likely you think you are to succeed at doing it, and (2) how much you will get out of it when you do
2. **Boost your invite effort**
 - You only have so much time and energy...choose wisely. (get former back vs new in the crowd)
 - Use words that resonate with potential volunteers.
 - Identify risk-free entry points
 - Create a simple and intentional start (how they start gives them a picture of what future will look like.)
 - Build a simple plan
 - Experience > tasks
3. **Increase face time**
 - Walk slowly through the crowd
 - 1:1
 - Beyond the service
 - Build safe place - amygdala, limbic, pre-frontal cortex
 - Huddles (huddletalks.com)
4. **Create a caring environment**
 - Avoid transferring your stress to the volunteer.
 - You're not the only person with a lot going on.
 - Celebrate collectively and appreciate individually
 - Be fully present
 - Shrink the empathy deficit
 - Prioritize kindness over influence and impact
 - Spiritual growth is a priority
5. **Commit to grow leaders**
 - Identify early
 - Empower generously (Invest in the volunteer beyond the role.)
 - Trust deeply
 - Coach regularly
6. **Identify the right voices**
 - **Clarifier:** Asks helpful and difficult questions
 - **Specialist:** Provides precision focus, moving you toward the intended target
 - **Challenger:** Implores you to act boldly

- **Creator:** Brings an idea into existence by crafting workable action plans from just a few actionable points
- **Connector:** Leads you to other people
- **Wise Elder:** Lends experience and perspective
- **Friend:** Shares life's journey without judgment and loves you
- **Strategist:** Creates step-by-step simplicity from complex data and conversations
- **Dreamer:** Motivates you to dream without fear
- **Coach:** Builds on your strengths, corrects poor performance and encourages when energy fades
- **Pastor:** Provides spiritual guidance

If we were hanging out today and chatting about you, your ministry, and your volunteers, I would ask you this question: if you could describe or build your ideal volunteer ministry, what would it look like? I would then ask...what's in the way, what resources do you need, and what do you already have to get started?

Today you might not feel it. Tomorrow you might not feel it.

Your volunteers could feel the same way. (you may have more in common with them than you know.)

The antidote...keep coming back. (Celebrate Recovery invites people with habits, hangups, and hurts - this is their mantra)

You keep coming back.

Get the volunteer to keep coming back.

Do you know what that takes? Intentionality.

Intentionality is rarely convenient for you, but meaningful for the other person.

Intentionally building something takes time.

Intentionally building something takes effort.

Intentionally building something takes people.

Focus. Intentionally choose a plan. Secure small wins. Celebrate. Bring others with you. Let God build it. After all, the volunteers are His and not yours. He knows what He wants to build. He wants you to lead as you follow His lead.