

## A Really Big Ask: How to Attract, Assimilate, and Retain Volunteers

*Kids + Ministry programs = VOLUNTEER NEED*

*Inviting volunteers to be part of what God is doing in your ministry requires strategy, asking the right questions, and shifting culture.*

### It Starts With You: Knowing Your Passions, Your Role, and Your Ministry

- What is your calling?
  - Who has God created you to be?
  - What are your heart passions?
- How do you do what you do?
  - Clarity in Job Description
- Have an 'I get to' mentality.

### ATTRACT: Be a ministry they want to serve in

- Attracting volunteers begins with an awareness that your ministry exists and that it is an exciting place.
  - Kids ministry needs visibility.
    - Is your children's ministry spoken of in a high regard and with priority from the stage? I'm talking about kids ministry highlights in how it is living out the mission of the church.
    - Use social media, your kids page or the main church page, to highlight volunteerism.
    - Does your churches communication to its members reference and have representation of the children's ministry?
  - Create an awareness that your ministry exists and give people an initial look into what is happening in your ministry and why people love to serve.
  - Awareness of your ministry leads to interest.
- Begin with how you lead your ministry.
  - Healthy ministries attract healthy leaders.
  - Coaching structure is a necessity for health.
    - This volunteer leadership structure allows my reach of leadership, shepherding, and care to extend further.
  - Know what kind of volunteers, how many volunteers, and the roles they will fulfill so you can be on alert and look for them and pray them onto your team.
  - Start with retaining in mind.
    - "Close the back door" so volunteers won't slip away without you noticing or want to leave.
    - Flip this script and focus on retention and it will aid in the attraction.
- Invite them in; choose to not manipulate or express 'need'.
  - Invite them into the Mission.
  - Connect who they are with the role you desire them to fill.
  - Communicate what will they receive vs. what they will give.

- People want to know what is in it for them.
  - Jessica Bealer says, “When the sacrifice outweighs the benefit to them, they walk away.”
- Provide clarity in the role and time commitment.
  - Yes, have job descriptions for volunteers.
  - Yes, give them an ‘out’.
- Go for the ‘Big Ask’ – ask for an every week commitment for one year!
  - Every human being loves consistency, every human loves being known and being with people that they trust.
  - Kids and the leaders that disciple them can go deeper when they show up consistently, weekly, in each other’s lives.
- Personal ask is best.
  - Ask the Holy Spirit to give you His eyes to see the people that possess qualities and characteristics of the volunteers that you are looking to add to your team.
  - Be bold and courageous and just ask. Invite them in, and never say ‘no’ for someone.
  - We pray, act in obedience, and leave the results up to our good Father.
  - Expand the circle.
    - Invite volunteers into recruiting and growing the team.
    - Bring a friend to serve day.
    - Church-wide Serve Sundays where all ministries are represented, and people can receive information or sign up to serve.

### ASSIMILATE: How to get them started right

- Processes are necessary in providing safety and security in your ministry
  - We are not trying to make it difficult for a volunteer to onboard as complexity defeats effectiveness.
  - Process protects you AND them!
  - Process ensures you get the right people into the right serving roles.
- Our TRBC kids assimilation process:
  - Ministry visit
    - Shadow a veteran leader with no responsibility or commitment
  - Online Next Generation Application, References, Background check
    - Can serve 1 more time as a ‘guest’ as this is being processed
    - Paper app for teens under 18 as we don’t run a background check, but we do contact references
  - Staff Interview – to know them and ensure we are a good fit for each other
    - Done before they arrive on week 3
    - Go over job description, leader handbook, leader code of conduct agreement
  - Serve HQ volunteer training videos
    - Takes about 45 minutes and covers welcome and intro to kids ministry, our church mission, leader expectations, safety and security protocols.
  - Placement on team

- Nametag, leader roster, ministry t-shirt
- Mentorship from a veteran leader and a ministry coach
- 3-month check-in

## RETAIN: Keeping them around

- Healthy ministries don't happen on accident.
  - Don't wipe your brow and get relaxed, thinking that you have a name on a roster and a warm body in a room. If that is your mentality and you put no focus on keeping them, you will find yourself needing to fill that spot pretty quickly.
- Jessica Bealer has this formula for volunteers which I believe in, and is working in my ministry.
  - Clarity + Empowerment + Appreciation = Longevity
  - Clarity = their job description and exactly what a 'win' is for them
  - Empowerment = giving ownership to use their talents and spiritual gifts
- Leadership development
  - Develop and grow them as a leader on your team.
  - On-job training with mentor/veteran leader.
  - Ministry coaches are crucial here.
    - I am not visible to and cannot oversee the growth and development of every volunteer on my team.
    - Even if you are in a smaller church, when you are spending time in the nursery or preschool, who is with your older elementary, children and volunteers?
  - Leader events
    - We host these 2 times a year for intentional investment in their leadership development, spiritual growth, and community building.
  - Lunch-n-Learns
    - We host these unique, topical gatherings after church on a Sunday. We provide lunch and dive a little deeper into just one topic.
    - We have hosted these for our coaches, for storytellers, for next generation leaders, for large group teams. This allows us to hone in on one specific area of our ministry and take our teams deeper or clarify roles.
  - Layered leadership
    - In the elementary ministry, we have middle school teens serving up through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, high school teens serving 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade, college students and young adults, and veteran adults.
    - We partner them with each other because each of those age groups brings something to the serving role that is a benefit to the entire team. Our students bring life and energy and vitality, our college and young adults, bring passion for the Lord in the local church, and our veteran adults, bring experience.
  - Preservice Huddles
    - Yes, you heard me correctly, this is a pre-service gathering, 30 minutes before service begins.

- This pre-service huddle is like a pep rally to get the day started. It is highly relational in nature, it allows us to pray and start our day together, we go over last-minute announcements or changes, and it allows us one solid touchpoint a week when our entire team is together. It's good to know that you are not alone as you serve!
- This does not happen overnight. It is a culture shift that you talk about, clarify the why and the win behind asking them to show up 30 minutes before church service, and you keep it in front of them weekly.
- Shepherding
  - Invest in their spiritual and relational health.
  - They need to know and be known.
  - We need to care about their relationship with God, not just that they are teaching the next generation about God and how to have a relationship with Him.
- Celebration
  - Weekly, monthly, seasonally
    - Weekly wins
    - Celebrate their birthday with a card, balloon, or treat.
    - Text, handwritten note, phone call, email of praise
    - Coffee dates
    - A gift card or small token of appreciation to celebrate commitment and next level service
    - Again, this is where coaches are incredibly beneficial. They are seeing what is happening with their small group of volunteers on a weekly basis. They know best how to celebrate, encourage, and pray for their volunteers.
    - We also host an end of the year celebration. This is a huge pep rally where we celebrate one another, what the Lord has done in us and through us in the lives of kids and families. We eat and play together.

Do the 'Big Ask, and take a cue from Jessica Bealer:

Clarity + Empowerment + Appreciation = Longevity

Resources on this topic I recommend:

*How to Recruit and Retain High Level Volunteers* by Jessica Bealer

- Go to [www.generis.com/team/jessica-bealer](http://www.generis.com/team/jessica-bealer) and scroll down to "Featured Resource" for this free e-book.

*Stop Recruiting, Start Retaining* by Darren Kizer, Christine Kreisher, and Steph Whitacre

- Go to [www.stoprecruiting.com](http://www.stoprecruiting.com) for 'Downloads and Resources'.

*Leading Not Normal Volunteers* by Sue Miller and Adam Duckworth

- Amazon may tell you it's out of print but you can find it at [www.orangebooks.com](http://www.orangebooks.com).