



RE-ENERGIZE

VOLUNTEER

MOMENTUM

Managing and scheduling
volunteers at your church

Whether it's caused by a global pandemic, a long summer, a season of inactivity, or just the monotony of normalcy, churches often find themselves in need of re-energizing volunteers.

Developing a healthy culture of volunteerism requires more than just vision. Although vision is a start. People want to know that the effort they are going to put into serving matters. But next-level leadership requires churches to have a volunteer system that digs deeper. You'll need to understand your volunteers better, organize them into effective groups and teams, ensure everyone is serving when and where they should, and communicate well about serving in your church.



A good volunteer management approach will energize your volunteers to help your church generate momentum and move into the next season of ministry for which you've been waiting.

We created this guide to help you develop a culture and volunteer management system so your entire ministry can flourish.



ESSENTIAL MATTERS

For most Christians, the word “volunteer” evokes the idea of an optional pursuit to help out and feel fulfilled by making a difference in the church they love. It’s kind of a fun thing to do. Or at the very least, a worthwhile expenditure of some of their free time.

For church leaders, volunteers are an indispensable element of expanding ministry and operating the organization. Volunteers enable churches to operate, grow, and thrive. Most churches need 5 to 10 times the volunteers as they have staff. This reality makes the need to recruit, manage, and empower volunteers a key initiative in any successful ministry.

Many would-be volunteers don’t know how essential serving is, not only to their church’s life but also to their spiritual development.

When your church re-energizes the momentum around serving, it will build your people and your church simultaneously.

Volunteers aren’t “nice to have”; they are essential to a fruitful and vibrant church.



SKILLS & INTERESTS

Most churches are trying so hard to fill all the positions they need to make things work that they often overlook finding the right people for the right roles. This leaves the ministry wanting more effective teams and volunteers frustrated with where they are serving.

But it's not just urgency that puts people in positions they can't thrive in. Even if church leaders had more volunteers than they could handle (you can dream, right?), most leaders don't know where their volunteers will serve best because they don't understand their people's skills and interests.

Some might answer that forming relationships and having conversations provides all the insight one might need to determine where someone will best fit into the team. And having discipleship and personal relationships indeed helps leaders know their people. But all too often, conversations revolve around what the leader or church needs or perceives rather than what the volunteer is feeling. And because the volunteer wants to help, they insinuate interest in areas that might not be the right fit because they want to do the "right thing."

Your church needs a way to discern the gifting - the skills and interests - of your people so you can ask them to serve where they'll thrive, not just where they'll fill in.

Knowing your people's skills and interests provides awareness of each individual's spiritual gifts and how they can best serve the church. With that knowledge, staff can note specific skills or interests for each person to ask them where to serve.

A great way to get the understanding you need is to survey your people, asking them what they like to do and are good at, and then provide space in your church directory or volunteer management system where you can record their skills and interests to match them with roles that will be a perfect fit.

Match people with roles they are suited for instead of fitting people where you have the greatest need.



TEAMS & ROLES

Many churches don't have an organized way of knowing who their volunteers are, where they're serving, or how they'll communicate with them.

Different teams have different things they need to know and be aware of. Other roles have varying responsibilities, training requirements, and desired outcomes.

Treating all of your volunteers the same leads to ineffective serving and frustrated team members.

Every volunteer system must define the teams and roles they need. Those definitions need to include answers to question such as:

- When, where, and how does this team serve?
- What is this team responsible for?
- What are the desired outcomes for this role?
- What does it mean to be part of this team?
- How many will it take to accomplish this?
- What special skills or talents are needed for this role?
- What does success look like for this role?

When staff knows who is serving, where, and how effectively, they'll better manage volunteers in an effective and scalable way.

When teams and roles are defined and organized, you'll be able to communicate directly with the people you need about the work that has to be done instead of providing vague general information to your whole volunteer group.

Provide clear descriptions for all your teams and roles so you can mobilize them with what they need to do their specific tasks.



FILLING THE SCHEDULE

It's time to get people on the schedule once you have a better understanding of the individuals who are willing to serve and after you've organized your teams and defined your roles.

Scheduling involves a back and forth. You schedule your volunteers, and some let you know they can't serve at the time you've requested or in the role you've requested, so you adjust and repeat.

The more you can eliminate scheduling people who will reject the requests, the easier it will be to schedule, and the less frustrated your volunteers will become with being requested to serve when they can't or don't want to.

It helps to have a way to know when each person wants to serve and a defined cadence of what roles need to be filled and how often. From there, you can match the people who want to serve in any particular timeframe with the slots you have available.

Getting ahead of the curve by knowing your people's serving preferences and defining the role requirements will go a long way in creating a solid schedule.

Communicating with the people you've requested to serve will help you identify areas where you need to make adjustments. The earlier and more directly you communicate, the less likely you will find yourself on a Sunday morning with a no-show on your roster.

Create your serving schedule around the teams you have instead of the teams you wish you had.



BACKGROUND CHECKS

In this day and age, it should go without saying that you need to get background checks for most of your volunteers, especially those working with kids and youth. But we'll repeat it anyway. You need regular background checks for volunteers.

Background checks provide reliable information about your volunteers you couldn't get any other way. They will alert you to potential problems and ready your volunteers to take their work seriously.

When communicating about the need for background checks, remind your volunteers that you care about the people you serve, as well as the health of your teams. You want every volunteer serving with people they know don't have any skeletons in their closets. What's more, you want to make sure there are no unknown threats to the health of your church.

It's important that background checks are not only completed for volunteers, but also updated so you always have the latest information. Many insurance providers require that checks are done regularly - usually every one to two years. That means you'll need a way to know who has them, who needs them, and who needs to have theirs renewed.

Overlook background checks at your peril.

Remember, background checks don't have to be an awkward, intrusive function of serving. If you let everyone in your church know that it's just part of the process for whole-church health and safety, performing checks will be an easy obligation that volunteers are more than happy to take part in. And remember, background checks contain personal information on individuals, so it's important to keep that information private and secure.



PRESENT HISTORY

Have you ever had someone commit to serving and then not show up? Maybe they sent you a text to let you know, and it wasn't a big deal. But then you forgot to record their absence, and you keep depending on people who keep letting you down.

Being let down by no-show volunteers is a great way to burn out the leaders and staff who are trying to mobilize teams.

What can be even worse is when burnt-out leaders become cynical and start assuming that all your volunteers - or specific ones they have mismarked - are going to let them down.

A great way to mitigate no-shows is to connect your volunteers and plan to find a replacement if someone isn't able to make their scheduled volunteer time. For example, instead of the volunteer having to contact the team leader or a staff member if they're unable to serve, have a call-tree or list available for volunteers to get in touch with each other to find substitutes. This pulls the pressure of finding replacements off of your leaders and helps hold your volunteers accountable.

Having a way to check-in volunteers and record their attendance will help you reposition flakey people to less important roles and put your dependable people in key positions.

Even better, when you see the fidelity of volunteers over the history of their serving at your church, you'll be able to reward and celebrate their faithfulness, helping to develop an even stronger serving culture at your church.

Tracking the attendance and follow-through of volunteers is an often-overlooked opportunity to strengthen teams and celebrate wins.



VOLUNTEER LEADERS

Who's leading your volunteer teams? Do they have what they need to do it well? How are they recruiting? How are they training?

Sometimes we focus so much on managing our volunteers that we forget to empower and encourage our volunteer leaders and coordinators.

Volunteer coordinators serve essential functions, such as:

Recruiting and helping team leads recruit volunteers

Onboarding volunteers, so they know what they are getting into

Training people to do well and adapt to ministry changes

Communicating with regularity about when, where, how, and why to serve

Developing a culture of serving that's fun, healthy, and inviting

We suggest identifying one or more people who can focus their attention not on individual volunteers but on developing and deploying volunteer support systems to keep the gears well oiled and moving right along.

Empower volunteer leaders to become the floodgate - rather than the bottleneck - of all your service teams.



SHARING OPPORTUNITIES

As it relates to leadership and discipleship, you'll most often want to identify and select your teams' key roles. But as your church grows and the need for volunteers multiplies, there will be many positions you need to fill. Various people can supply that.

Many people in your church might not be serving because they don't know what volunteer opportunities are available.

To get the word out about what opportunities are available, here are some ideas:

- Create a message board on your website or social media that lists all the current (monthly) roles that need to be filled.
- Highlight a volunteer of the month, then let people know the team they serve has openings for people to join.
- Empower and encourage your leaders to share the volunteer opportunities list regularly.
- Have your group leaders share the list as well.

The main thing is to let people know all the ways they can get involved. When you provide ways for individuals to discover new volunteer opportunities, you're creating a stronger volunteer culture where everyone feels inclusive.

Bonus tip:

Don't talk about "needs." Talk about "opportunities." It's not that you don't want to sound desperate. You want to remind people that serving is an opportunity to fulfill their purpose in Christ, not just help a brother out. This slight shift in communication will help develop a culture where everyone knows and loves the importance of volunteering.



GROWTH THROUGH SERVING

Nobody is going to promote your church like the people who are working to build it. Nobody is going to stay connected and involved like the people who join teams.

Too many churches look at building volunteer teams as a way to meet the needs of the church. In doing so, they limit recruitment to only the positions they need to fill. But if serving in the church strengthens relationships and builds greater commitment, wouldn't you want that for everyone in your church?

When you have a dedicated and fulfilled team, they will promote your church to their friends like no one else.

You could even consider recruiting people and creating opportunities to serve people outside your church. It's a great way to get the "doers" involved. Who knows, they might even start coming to services and growing in their faith. A word of caution, though: only invite those outside your church to serve in non-discipleship roles (such as greeting or feeding the hungry). For all those roles that represent your church's faith aspects, such as serving with kids, leading groups, or joining the band, you'll want to ensure the fidelity of volunteer commitment and understanding of what it means to be part of your team.

There are few better ways to grow and strengthen your church than by asking people to serve.



VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Managing volunteers sometimes feel like herding cats. Everyone has a different schedule, different abilities, different preferences. Some volunteers need more hand-holding while others are independent. Some prefer to sign up for and set their schedules, while others are willing to be scheduled where you see fit.

Without a robust volunteer management system, you'll never be able to fully support your volunteers or the life and operations of your church.

If you're serious about re-energizing your church through volunteer momentum, you'll want to use an online system designed for volunteer management. There is simply too much nuance and too many considerations to try and map everything out on a task manager, spreadsheet, or document.

A sound system will allow you to manage volunteers - their history, their skills and interests, their preferences - and create schedules that fill the defined roles and teams you have established.

Once you have it set up, it will save a great deal of time and energy for the leaders you rely on to manage your teams and make sure ministry is getting done.

Finding and using a great volunteer management system is a decision you won't regret.



You need your volunteers to be operating at total capacity in roles that fulfill them. With a bit of effort and some good planning, there is no reason why your church can't thrive in this. It's time to put the excuses aside and call your people into the eternal reward and temporal satisfaction that comes with a job well done, a role well filled, and a purpose that goes beyond our efforts. It's time to re-energize your volunteer momentum.

Choosing the Right Ministry Partner

The know-how you need from experts you trust.

ACS Technologies is the original pioneer of Church Management Software (ChMS). We are firmly dedicated to serving local churches all over North America by providing the best-in-class ministry software and service solutions that help you fulfill Christ's mission for your Church.

Tools and support to strengthen churches.

We build great software, but we don't stop there. We have a "service-first" approach that truly sets us apart. With hundreds of dedicated support and consulting personnel, your staff can reach our team 24/7. We're in your corner to help you with the ministry challenges you face every day.

Ideas and solutions powered by integrity.

Integrity is real for us, and it means consistently being faithful stewards by doing the right thing for church success. We have earned the trust of pastors, church staff, congregants, our employees, and colleagues for over 40 years.

A plan to meet your needs and move your ministry.

We're not just interested in satisfied customers. We see ourselves as your real ministry partner and will work with you to make disciples that will last for an eternity. We're excited to talk about your goals, create a plan together, and set you up with the software, service, and resources you need.

We believe in YOU!

ACS Technologies believes in the local church. Over 75% of our team has experience serving in their local churches. We know firsthand that serving the Church means serving people, and we take seriously our commitment to helping ministries like yours achieve their God-given mandate - to make disciples in their communities, states, and across the world.

Let's Talk

We know the challenges of switching or implementing new technology and how that can be intimidating. But we also know the unbelievable changes that have happened within churches that have partnered with us for their ministry needs. Let's connect and see how we can assist you in the greatest thing you do - grow God's Kingdom.

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