

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

The Unexpected Benefits of a Healthy Volunteer Culture - Episode 256

Rethinking Volunteer Engagement (Part 1)

There are two primary challenges we're hearing from pastors on this side of the pandemic: First, every pastor wants to see their Sunday services as full as they were before Covid. Second, almost every pastor is talking about the challenge of getting people to serve. As people are coming back and still more new people are showing up, **finding volunteers to support our mission has become more important than ever.**

In this series on Rethinking Volunteer Engagement, we're exploring new data insights and giving practical wisdom around building a healthy volunteer culture. In this episode, Tony and Amy explore the connections between volunteer engagement and unity and generosity in the church.

Exploring the data

We recently collected and analyzed data from almost 300 churches and found some interesting differences between the top 25% of churches for volunteer engagement and the churches in the bottom 25%. **Here are the most interesting findings:**

- The churches with higher volunteer engagement are reaching 4 times more new people.
- Churches with more volunteers are also reaching more people for Jesus. They have 40% more decisions to follow Jesus.
- Churches with low volunteer engagement have bigger boards (34% bigger) and almost twice as many committees. The data clearly indicates that more people in meetings means fewer people are serving.
- The churches with low volunteer engagement have more people in attendance, but the churches with high volunteer engagement are experiencing higher attendance growth. Churches with high volunteer engagement also have about 3 times as many volunteer leaders. Their span of care is much smaller.
- Finally, churches with high volunteer engagement are more likely to offer online services than the churches that are struggling with volunteer engagement. In fact, 100% of the churches in the top 25% for volunteer engagement offer online options for watching their services. (So if there was something in the back of your mind that was wondering, "Should we stop showing our services online to encourage more people to serve?" — the data would indicate otherwise.)

The connection between volunteer engagement and unity

People who serve other people complain a lot less. It's probably because they're more invested in helping other people. They're probably also more invested in the mission of the church. Whatever the case, if you are frustrated by the volume of the complainers in your church, you probably need to encourage them to serve. If they're unwilling to do that, you may need to encourage them to leave.

If people are constantly complaining, they are creating division in the church. Paul's instructions on this are clear: *"If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them. For people like that have turned away from the truth, and their own sins condemn them"* (Titus 3:10-11, NLT). We need to encourage people to serve other people rather than complaining about other people.

The connection between volunteer engagement and generosity

Church attenders tend to contribute financially at the lowest level, while church members give a little bit more. People who are connected to a small group tend to contribute more than people who become members, but aren't engaged in a group or serving. But people who volunteer contribute financially at the highest levels.

We're familiar with this principle as it relates to Jesus teaching on money. He said, "Wherever your treasure is there, the desires of your heart will be also." The same principle applies with our time and talents. People who give their time by serving others, tend to become more generous people.

Final thoughts

You actually don't want 100% volunteer engagement in your church or 100% group participation in your church. **That's actually a sign that the church is declining because you aren't reaching any new people.**

If everyone is serving, that's an indication that your church has a "front door" problem. **When volunteer engagement is too high, it's an indication that people are doing ministry but the church isn't really accomplishing its mission.**

Free Training: How to Engage More Volunteers & Leaders This Fall

Every staff person should share in the responsibility of equipping God's people to do the work of God. We invite you and your staff team to **join us on September 1** for a free one-hour training event, where we're equipping your team to attract and retain more high-level volunteers and volunteer leaders this fall. [Register now.](#)

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Every church leader knows that having trained and engaged volunteers is essential to successfully accomplishing your mission. But if you're like most leaders, you also know how tricky it can be to onboard and equip people for your team.

What if there were a resource that made it easier? ServeHQ is simple video training courses that help you equip volunteers and develop leaders. You can create your own training or use their video library. You can even automate next steps to onboard new people. Check it out at ServeHQ.church.

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