

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Moving People from Services to Serving - Episode 257

Rethinking Volunteer Engagement (Part 2)

We hear it from just about every pastor we're talking to: people are coming back to church! However, while there is no shortage of new people attending services, churches are still struggling with engaging people in serving opportunities.

In this episode, Tony and Amy continue our series on volunteering by offering some practical strategies for moving more people and leaders from attending services to serving others. (As we'll see, you almost need two different approaches for encouraging serving in general volunteer opportunities and volunteer leadership opportunities).

Two keys for recruiting volunteers

First: a note on what we mean by serving. When we talk about volunteer engagement, we are referring to serving **both inside and outside** the church... because we are on mission both inside and outside the church. If we routinely celebrate and share stories of people who serve in the community and downplay the people who serve on Sunday morning, people in our congregations pick up on that whether we say it out loud or not.

So one of the most important strategies for helping people move from services to serving is to help people see how serving makes a difference whether it's inside or outside the walls of the church. Now that we've established that...

KEY #1: It's easier to get a new person to serve than it is to engage people who have been around for years.

NOW is the time to invite new people to join a team. Strike while the iron is hot. Don't wait for them to settle in and become consumers of ministry—because the longer you wait, the harder it will become to engage them in a serving role. This connection for new people needs to begin on Sunday morning. Here are some specific ideas:

- Most new people want to make new friends, so help them see how serving is a great way to meet new people at the church.

- Avoid promotion competitions between ministries for new volunteers.
- Create one obvious place for people to connect to serving.
- Make the “I’m interested” process simple.
- Help your staff and your congregation learn the art of connection.

KEY #2: Men are more likely to join a team before they join a small group.

Should we continue to encourage men to engage in home groups and Bible studies? Absolutely! However, the research shows that while women tend to develop relationships through talking with each other, men tend to develop relationships by doing things together. (No, not all men and all women develop relationships in this way, but the research shows this is generally how men and women engage with each other.)

Most churches we work with encourage all newcomers to move from services, to groups, to serving. Yet our research has shown that people are more likely to move from a serving team to a group than they are to move from a group to a serving team. Test-drive it; if you don’t see the results, go back to encouraging people to connect into a group first.

Two keys for recruiting volunteer leaders

Engaging leaders requires a slightly different approach. For example, you can’t ask people to lead through a platform announcement, an email message, or a text message—It requires a face-to-face conversation.

In that conversation, you need to prepare ahead of time to explain the role, the win, the time commitment, what your support will look like, etc. Maybe the most important question you have to be prepared to answer is “*Why?*” Why is their leadership needed and how will their leadership impact the overall mission of the church?

KEY #1: Don’t say no for people before you give them a chance to say yes.

You have to ask busy people to engage in the church’s mission. The people we need to serve and lead are already busy people, so our tendency is to say no *for* them before we even ask. But we have the greatest mission in the world! We need those busy people to re-prioritize their time so they’re investing their gifts into the Gospel mission. Make the ask and then let *them* wrestle with God about how to best prioritize their time investment.

KEY #2: Leaders will say yes to helping you tackle a problem before they’ll say yes to helping you fill a position.

People with leadership gifting typically serve in leadership positions already. They are already leading and they aren't looking for another leadership position. However, leaders all share a common attribute: They gravitate to a big challenge. They are attracted to big problems to solve and conquer. So, if you want someone to step up into leadership, you need to offer them a problem to solve before you give them a position to fill.

Leaders also want to make an impact with their leadership. So if you want to get someone to volunteer their leadership capacity, you need to cast the vision for how their leadership will help you overcome that challenge and move the mission forward.

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.