



Developing Potential Leaders Starts
with You
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In my mad search for directors and teachers for Sunday School, I found a winner and enlisted her right away. Here is a play by play of the year:

Excited and wanting ideas
She needed more teachers
Always on time and prepared
Smiles
Worked in children's events and committees
She gave it her best shot

Middle of the year----enthusiasm begins waning
She began to have a look of defeat
She made less time for meetings
Started dropping hints of quitting
Resigned when the year was completed

She shared some responsibility, but I have full ownership for this teacher's decline in morale. We wrestle with keeping volunteers happy and productive as well as motivated and connected. Leadership Development is about an outcome. Jesus instructed us to develop leaders (insert scripture). So how can we develop potential leaders? People accept tasks or positions rather than aspire for a heart that comes from the journey. Your satisfaction, your journey has come from pouring your life into your ministry. Our volunteers can't see that far down the road.

MAKE IT MEAN SOMETHING

Churches can not hire everyone so we are driven to hunt for volunteers. As a volunteer, I asked myself, "Why am I serving?" There are many reasons- Christian, love kids, fun, I want them to accept Christ. The main reason is, it brings meaning to me. Volunteers want to do something that is meaningful! Like most people, I spend my week in meetings, pleasing my employer, helping churches and other employees. I look forward to being in the classroom with the kids- making a difference in their lives. If you know people like that, then they are potential leaders- ready to serve.

People who are looking for a meaningful experience want you to give a clear and compelling purpose. Happy volunteers are crystal clear on their ministry's purpose. They can tell you not only why their ministry group exists, but also why it is important. For an important cause, leaders will give unselfishly and thank you for it.

INVOLVE ME AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

If you miss this, you will drive your volunteers nuts! On one hand, volunteers are busy and juggling multiple priorities. On the other hand, they desperately want to have input into the direction and development of the ministry. Simply donating funds or following staff-made plans fail to excite long-term motivation. Leadership Teams that start with a blank paper and listen to the heart of the minister and then to each other's hearts will develop a collaborative vision and plan for the future as a team.

DON'T WASTE MY TIME

Our volunteers develop a sensitive nose for the hopelessly under-resourced project. Nothing leads to starving projects than the failure to prune the ministry project list. We can become leaders who are trying to staff and support too many ministry projects. Some of these sub-ministries simply need to be eliminated. Call it good church hygiene. Regularly take a look at each project and decide if it can be resourced or reshaped or discontinued. When all sub-ministries run dangerously close to the bone, volunteers become less motivated. Maybe you need a "Stop Doing" list as much as you need a "To Do" list.

CELEBRATE WITH MEANINGFUL MOMENTS

I have celebrated my volunteers with a meal where I told them how I felt about the ministry and about their sacrifice to make a difference. I have hosted many meetings in my home, never forgetting to appreciate each person and share my heart for the ministry being done. I have recognized people from the pulpit, during deacon's meeting, finance meetings and especially during meetings where children were present and could love on them. It is easy to brag about people to their family and friends. Take the time to do it. Make it positive. Let them shine!

STOP HOGGING THE BALL

Any ball player knows how fun it is to play with a "ball hog" (sarcasm implied). That player is silently communicating he doesn't trust you to do something good with the ball. Eventually, you just want to sit down. How often do you really entrust your volunteers with doing the most important part of ministry? What do you need to entrust to them now?

I can remember asking to take a part of a ministry that I was well equipped to do and had many years of experience to only hear, "No, I would rather you not be responsible for it but you can do most of the work, just clear everything through me before you do anything." I was very disappointed, unmotivated, disliked the project, disliked the leader, felt second rate or not good enough and desperately wanted to quit. All because of a "Ball Hog!" Are you being a "Ball Hog" with anything? Try being the coach and a cheerleader.

What is your motive? Filling a position or helping someone find their God-given potential? Consider these five questions as you reflect on the leader your volunteers are following.