



Don't Ask for Help

This may sound counterintuitive, but we don't ask for help at Granger. You won't see a bulletin ad indicating a *need* for volunteers. You won't hear one of the pastors talk about the shortage of workers in the children's area. You won't see "help wanted" signs posted on church bulletin boards.

Now, to set your mind at ease, this isn't because we've found the magic formula for recruiting volunteers to fill every single role that could ever exist in our ministry. We can always use more volunteers.

We don't *need* volunteers and we don't ask for *help* because we've learned that most people will not jump onto a sinking ship. When you beg for volunteer help, you might be admitting, "I have no compelling vision for this area of our ministry, and, therefore, no one willingly serves. So I'm going to try to guilt you into helping out."

Of course there are some people in your church who *will* respond to your plea for volunteers. Understanding that ministry sometimes involves sacrifice, they'll serve in order to keep the ship from sinking. But when people end up serving in a ministry that isn't in line with their gifts and passions, they will likely become frustrated and burned out. Then you will have created a vicious cycle: a ministry with no compelling vision and a bunch of people who'd rather not be serving in it. Oh, boy! Where can I sign up for *that* ministry team?

Instead of telling people what you need, tell them how you can help them use their gifts and experiences. Explain how they can find purpose and fulfillment. Communicate the mission and vision of the ministry, and then tell them how they could influence the lives of others by filling a particular role. Share stories about people who are

already serving, and let them explain why they love to give their time and talents to the cause. Better yet, share stories about people who have benefited directly from the ministry.

We still post volunteer openings in our bulletins. Instead of asking for help, however, we offer opportunities for people to contribute to the lives of others. The focus isn't on the ministry role; it's on the person who's interested in finding a ministry. The emphasis isn't on the service that needs to be performed; it's on the people whose lives are affected by the servant.

—Tony

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If You Don't Need a Volunteer, You're in Trouble

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"

(LUKE 10:2).

Can you imagine the U.S. Army turning away prospective recruits? Can you imagine walking into a post office and seeing posters of Uncle Sam saying, "We don't need you"? Imagine another army around Christmastime. What if the Salvation Army started turning people away? "No, we don't need your help. We have enough people to ring the bells this year." What if Jimmy Carter started turning people away from Habitat for Humanity projects? What if he said, "No, we have enough volunteers to construct this house. Please find another way to use your time and resources"?

We can't imagine these scenarios. All of these organizations constantly communicate the vision that anyone can help, anytime. The church needs to operate with the same vision. We can't afford to ever tell someone we aren't accepting new volunteers. A particular person may not be gifted to serve in a certain role, but there will always be some way for him or her to serve. There should always be opportunities in every ministry area for qualified volunteers to step in and serve. If you close the door on all volunteers, people will begin to assume they're not needed. In the long run, that will jeopardize your ability to recruit when you really need the support.

With that in mind, here are some questions to consider when you think you have enough volunteers:

Am I doing too much? You may have too much on your plate.

Consider the tasks you could give away to volunteers, and keep the three or four roles that allow you to add the most value to the ministry. As a ministry leader, you should be focusing most of your time on leadership. By releasing some of your responsibilities to others, you will have more time to concentrate on what you do best.

Could this become a team effort? One person may be filling a role that would be better filled by a team. In our creative-arts ministry, for example, there are roles for people who can't sing or play an instrument but have a passion for the arts. They help out in the office with administrative tasks. They serve on our stage crew. They serve other church leaders who come to learn about our arts ministry at workshops and conferences. In other words, there are ways to divide up ministry roles so more people can serve and feel connected to a team (see Chapter 3, "Just Chunk It").

Do I have enough leaders? Sometimes you can't imagine adding another volunteer to your team because you already have too many for whom you provide care. You're already dropping too many balls because there are too many people seeking direction from you. If this is the case, you should be focusing on finding volunteers who can

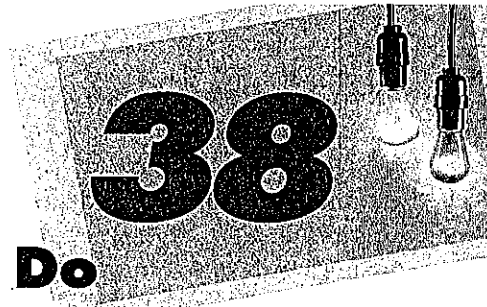
take on leadership responsibilities. These are the volunteers who multiply your time. While leading and caring for other volunteers, they remove tasks from your plate.

Is my vision too small? Maybe you haven't stepped back in a while to consider what God could do if more gifted people were on the team. How could your ministry increase

its impact? How could you reach more people in the community? How could you more effectively help people take faith steps? This doesn't necessarily require the creation of more ministry programming. It may simply involve looking for opportunities to improve what you're already doing to reach people for Jesus.

When people serve in ministry, they're more likely to focus on their walk with Christ. They're more likely to invite others. They're more likely to give financially. They're more likely to stay connected to the mission and vision. The church can't afford to have "Not Hiring" signs posted on the front door. You need to continuously create ways to connect more and more people into meaningful ministry.

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Never Do Ministry Alone

I began attending Granger in 1993, about a year before I joined the staff. I remember noticing a strange phenomenon on Sunday mornings. A bunch of us would arrive early to set up all the equipment for the services. The first few weeks that I participated, I remember thinking that it seemed rather inefficient. I thought the setup could be done a lot more quickly with fewer people. Sometimes too many people can get in the way.

That's when I first heard one of Granger's values: Never do ministry alone. Always do ministry in teams. Even when it doesn't make sense, do ministry in teams.

It took me a while to buy into that philosophy. I thought of a bunch of reasons it was better to do it by myself:

1. It's easier.
2. It's faster.
3. It takes more work to include others.
4. If there is someone with me, I'm obligated to talk to that person, find out about him or her. If I'm by myself, I can just get the job done.
5. I feel more needed if I'm the only one who knows how to do it. And who doesn't like to feel needed? It's kind of nice when I can stand out because no one else is trained to do my job (even if it is just setting up the coffeepots).

You recognize the fallacy in my thinking, don't you? This chapter isn't new information to anyone. We all know the principle of doing ministry in teams, but how many of us really practice it? I want to challenge you to scrutinize your leadership. Do you do ministry alone? Consider your team. Do people on your team believe it's part of their jobs to find someone to do their tasks with them?

Our job isn't only about performing tasks. It's not only about getting things done. It is to equip people for ministry and to teach and mentor them to become balanced followers of Christ.

When you always have someone with you in ministry, you accomplish so much! You give someone else an opportunity to serve. You build a relationship with an individual, and you make room for real ministry to happen "life-on-life." You make sure that the ministry doesn't rely only on you. You model true mentoring. You communicate that you are secure in your leadership and don't need a role to define you.

So let me challenge you with these questions:

- Do you answer the phones? Don't do it alone.
- Do you copy coloring sheets for the kids? Don't do it alone.
- Do you empty the trash or clean the bathrooms? Take someone with you.
- Do you run a sound board, camera, or video equipment? Show others how they can do it.
- Are you a teacher? Start working with someone as a team-teacher.
- Do you hand out bulletins or greet guests at the front door? Invite someone to join you.
- Do you lead a team? Find an apprentice leader who can take your place.
- Do you serve on the hospital visitation team? Take someone with you.

I think you get the point. Never do ministry alone.

—Tim