

10 Ways To Find And Keep Volunteers In Children's Ministry

In a recent informal poll, I asked who needed more volunteers during a typical Sunday morning worship service - the worship leader or the children's pastor? The poll indicated children's ministry. Obviously this varies from church to church depending on the structure. But it is true, children's ministry needs a ton of volunteers to be successful. Small group leaders, teachers, tech, music, chaperons, check in, nursery care and the list goes on. How can children's ministry leaders get and keep volunteers in their ministry? Here are some tips in no particular order:

1. Invite them

The single biggest key for getting volunteers in Children's Ministry (or any ministry, really) is to invite people to participate. This is best done on a personal level. Call, email, bring it up in conversations, etc. Invite people to consider it. Invite people to help with a one time event - and give them plenty of notice.

2. Write out volunteer roles

Why do you need volunteers? What would you do if you had an extra 15 volunteers today? Is this all written out? Take time to write out the job descriptions for each person who currently have and each person you are praying to have volunteer. If the volunteer roles aren't clear, cut and dried for you, they certainly won't be for the volunteer team.

3. Delegate ministry roles

One of the most difficult things to teach ministry leaders is how *not* to work in ministry. Your job is to discover, equip, direct, resource and place volunteers in the work of ministry. Of course, this is really difficult work, but the ministry leader should not be the one in the middle of all the programming details, because then no one is watching the over all program.

4. Give them ownership

One of the keys to turning volunteers into leaders is ownership. How will you help your team take on the role of leader? Start by giving your volunteer time to respond to a question a child may ask. Invite your volunteer to lead a portion of something. Turn over a project or event and invite them to take the ownership of planning and preparing for it. Invite their ideas and thoughts to be shared.

5. Communicate with them regularly

How do you continually stay in touch with your volunteer team? Do you have them all in a group text? Are they are on a careful curated email group list? Do you send them reminders? Do you keep them in the loop on dates? Communication with your team is important for their commitment to you and the ministry.

6. Develop systems for score keeping

Every volunteer wants to be noticed. And you - or another key leader needs to be their scorekeeper. Have they had perfect attendance as a leader in children's ministry the last six months? Then celebrate, bring it to their attention. They need to know that you know. Have you received feedback that this person handled a situation really well? Then let them know. They need to know you're watching and thankful for their part in the ministry.

7. Create urgency for children's ministry

Develop a gift for painting a picture of urgency in your writing, in your speaking in your sharing about the vision for children's ministry in your church. It's been well documented that the highest majority of people who accept Christ do so between the ages of 4 and 12. Children are like sponges when it comes to matters of faith. It's an important season that passes quickly. How are you creating urgency for your church? It's one way to help people understand how important being a ministry volunteer can be.

8. Define clear entry points for volunteers

One very practical reason that people don't volunteer is because they are not sure how. Have you developed clear entry points about how to get involved? Is this system laid out, published, printed and known? How do people get connected? What is the process? Where do they go and when? Who do they contact? Create points of entry - such as a children's ministry volunteer inquiry session, a ministry reception, a booth in the lobby or any other way (or combination of ways) for people to know how to become involved.

9. Grow as a leader

Your church needs you to be the leader. Pray for God to make you into the leader you need to be to lead the church children's ministry you have been given. Parents need an organized ministry. They need details. They need dates. They need times and places in advance. Volunteers need resources. They need to be in the loop. They need details about dates and ministry teaching themes. Of course it's all overwhelming - most ministry leaders I know never have enough time to get it all done, but we continue to grow in our skills of organization and leadership. Want to know the first key to becoming more organized? Stop saying that you are not a detail person. Everyone knows that there is a difference between vision and detail. But as a leader, you must develop and create ways for organization to support your vision otherwise it will be lost. Growing as a leader may mean developing people to help take on more of the details in ministry - but even that requires you to be organized and together.

10. Thank your team

Very few things make a quality team like thankfulness. Thank your children's ministry leaders every chance you get - in letters, in emails and in conversations. Thank them for specific things - for the special event they helped host, for the volunteer they invited to join them, for the way they handled something, for the creative idea they gave, for their faithful service in ministry or great attendance record for the season. Send notes. Send cards. I know leaders are thankful for their teams, but it's important to say it out loud.