

Coordinating Volunteers

If your congregation is like most, you often face challenges in finding volunteers. You are not alone. Countless community organizations and ministries are also looking for volunteers, so you must be deliberate about recruiting. Finding people to serve is not always easy and can require a significant amount of work. Lack of an intentional recruitment strategy can become the barrier that prevents people from serving. As you begin your recruiting process, consider these things:

Volunteers Are Your Greatest Recruiters

One of the best places to start when it comes to finding new volunteers is within your existing disaster response ministry team. By encouraging your current team to recruit from their sphere of influence, you will add strong bonds to your team for each friend who joins.

Be Specific in What You Need

Some people in your congregation may not jump at the opportunity to become a volunteer during disaster. Still, the handy young adult may be more willing to help on a clean-up team, knowing it is a specific need. Sharing the exact roles you are looking for can attract passionate people who may have otherwise passed on the opportunity.

Ask People Directly

If you do not ask people directly, you will be understaffed. In our experience, the best volunteers have been those invited directly to join the team. Build relationships with people outside of your disaster ministry area and then ask them if they would be interested in serving.

Announce It with a Simple Call to Action

Announce that your disaster response ministry is looking for volunteers from the during a worship service. Share the "why" and give people a simple call to action, such as filling out a connection card, online form, texting a number, or signing up in the lobby. The simpler, the better.

Make It Easy to Get Started

No one likes jumping through hoops. If someone has to wait months for the next volunteer training meeting, they are likely to lose interest. Make the process easy, and they will be excited.

Use Social Proof

Communicating how current volunteers feel about serving families affected in disaster is a great way to humanize the need. By focusing on real people being helped by your congregation, people will have a better idea of what it means to serve in your disaster ministry.

Set Volunteers Up for Success

An untrained volunteer is not going to do you any good. They probably will not last very long. By taking the time to equip your volunteers, they'll be much more confident in their ability to do what you ask. Our local coalition will assist in training and resources to equip your volunteers.

Share a Message on Serving

Ask senior leadership about speaking on the topic of serving during a worship service to show people why they are called to serve and show areas of need in the community. Couple this with a simple call to action, and you will have new volunteers in no time.

Publicly Recognize Volunteers

Designating a particular time to recognize volunteers during a worship service will help your volunteers feel appreciated and give everyone a glimpse into who is serving. People who are not serving are more likely to get involved if they know someone else volunteering.

Follow Up with Everyone Interested

Have a plan to follow up with everyone who expresses interest in volunteering. Make it a habit of responding within 2-3 days with the next steps. Without a clear plan, people will fall through the cracks, or their interest will wane. Below is a guide on how to structure your volunteer ask:

1. **Project name:** Sorting Donations for Distribution Site
2. **Date and specific starting and ending time:** Saturday, October 1, from 9 am to 12 pm.
3. **Location:** In the Fellowship Hall. Provide an address if located off your campus.
4. **Description:** Volunteers needed to sort, categorize, label, and repack donations for the distribution site. Drivers are needed to drop boxes at St. Mary's Church when completed.
5. **Share any conveniences being offered:** Childcare provided for volunteers if needed.
6. **How to sign up:** Sign up using the Volunteer Sign-Up sheet in the foyer after service. If you have any questions, call the office at 555.555.3232.

Resolve Team Conflicts Quickly

One of the quickest ways to discourage someone from serving is knowing that there is not a sense of camaraderie. Seek to resolve conflicts quickly among volunteers. This will not only keep your team healthy but will make recruiting easier. A poor team reputation will make recruiting much harder and will lead to high volunteer churn.

Ask Your Current Volunteers How They Think You Can Recruit Better

Chances are your current volunteers have picked up some ways that you can recruit better. Ask them why they started serving and see if they have any ideas for recruiting new volunteers. By doing this, you may even find someone who wants to help lead the recruiting charge.

Create A Volunteer Page on Your Website

Having a simple place for people to learn about volunteering and sign up is an easy way to find new volunteers. Create a page on your website that casts vision, shares volunteer testimonials, mentions current needs, and has a simple call to action with a form to get in touch.

Send Out A Congregation-Wide Email

Send an email through your mass communication system about volunteer needs. Keep it short and simple with a single call to action. By emailing everyone, you will have a better chance of finding people who are interested in serving.

Post on Social Media and Encourage Volunteers to Share

Post a regular social media update about current areas that need volunteers and encourage your current volunteers to share and comment. This is a great place to use a personal video from one of the senior leaders sharing the vision behind why you should serve. You will find new volunteers while also communicating that your congregation is a place to connect.

Highlight Current Volunteer Stories Once Per Month

Highlighting the story of one of your volunteers can encourage new volunteers to get involved. The story can be shared from the stage on Sunday, in a video, blog, or on social media.

Record a Behind-the-Scenes Video

Show people what it is like to serve in your community during disaster. You do not need a bunch of camera gear. You can find a volunteer with a knack for video production that would love to spearhead this project. Use the completed video during service, on your volunteering page, and on social media to recruit new volunteers.

These are not easy shortcuts to double the number of volunteers instantly. However, these strategies can help you double your volunteers in the long run. It will not be easy, and it will take time. So, start now. Take one step forward. This is your opportunity to expand your influence, impact, and ensure you will have volunteers when the next disaster strikes.