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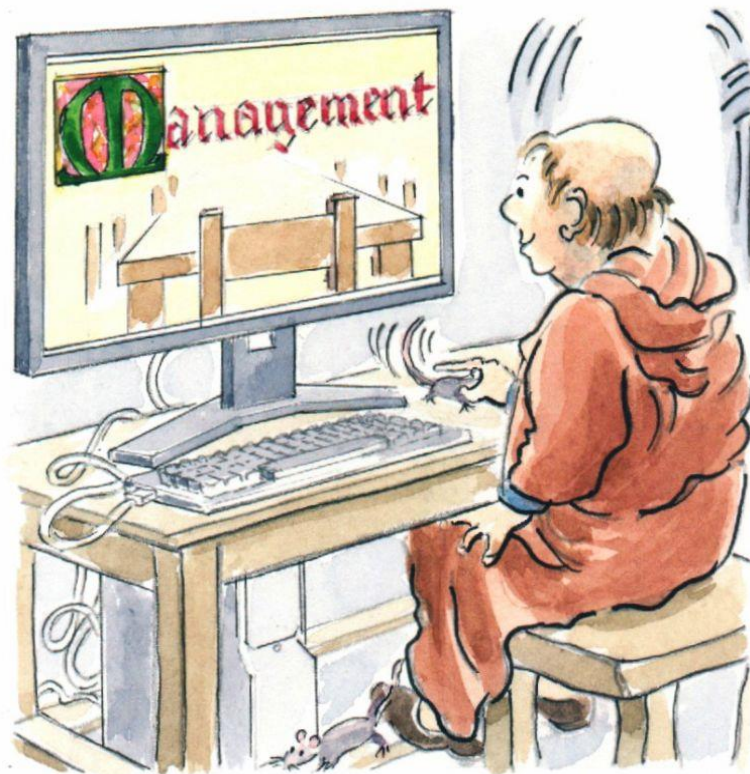
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Working with volunteers

Taking a fresh look at our human resources



Diocese of Portsmouth CMD – 19th November 2019

If you prefer to work from a screen, you may access this set of notes as a pdf today or later at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/News> and then the item for today's date.

Reasons why people offer their time and skills in daily life

Think widely: from formal volunteering (for a school, a sports club, a political society, a neighbourhood group, a charity, etc.) to informal (doing the shopping for a housebound neighbour, looking after someone else’s guinea pig when they are away, etc.).

Factors that prevent people from volunteering (keep off church for now!)

What could be keeping the percentage of volunteers lower than it might be?

Volunteers in our churches

The volunteering surveys distinguish between formal and informal volunteers.

Formal ‘volunteers’

Informal ‘volunteers’

.....

.....

Why church members offer ...

Look again at the first list we drew up above. Which of these apply to churches in general? What others might we add for a Christian context?

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... and why they don't

Back to the second list on page 2. Again, which of these apply to churches in general? What others might we add within a Christian context? Perhaps what people say to us.

Application

We could now look at any difference in emphasis for each of our lists above between the formal and informal roles in churches. And we might then apply all this specifically to any teams of volunteers we are personally responsible for or linked with in some way.

More importantly, we could ask which ones in the second list are excuses and which are genuine, and which ones relate back to the individual and which ones relate back to the church. It is all too easy for clergy and church staff to point the finger of blame in the wrong direction

On the issue of the people in the, perhaps, wrong jobs, see Training Notes TN36, *Square pegs in round holes*, in the Resources section of my website. For a fuller listing of the reasons we have looked at above, see Training Notes TN100, *Why some offer, why some don't*.

Paid staff

Many (especially larger) churches now employ youth workers, community workers, administrators, music directors, pastoral assistants and others. Is this a healthy approach? What are the dangers?

A good case can be made for paying staff in the following situations:

- when the post requires a full working week, or most of one;
- when the post requires set availability times;
- when the post requires a specialist;
- when the post requires a pioneering leader;
- when church members are time-poor;
- when leaders are diverted from their priorities.

But there are dangers;

- a denial of body ministry;
- confusions over roles;
- tensions between staff and volunteers;
- poor staff management;
- the cost;
- tradition.

For more detail on these points, see TN37, *To pay or not to pay*, in the Resources section of the website.

2: Mobilising disciples

PROPOSAL 2: We are too church-centred in our thinking

What are our motives?

Why do we want volunteers to work for the church? The normal approach might be termed **CHURCH** – we want people to serve God to get the church jobs done.

We need a choir member, a home group leader, a caterer, a treasurer – so we look for one to plug the gap. The show must go on. This starts with the job and finds the person.

But a second, less usual approach, might be termed **DISCIPLESHIP** – we want people to grow in their faith through putting it to the test.

Here we have Andrew, or Beryl, or Chris and we want to give them something that will help them grow as a Christian. This starts with the person and finds the job.

Of course, neither approach can work on its own. But what are their respective merits?

Advantages/disadvantages of the **CHURCH** approach

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Advantages/disadvantages of the **DISCIPLESHIP** approach

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So far we have assumed that Christians are to work in the Church. But how can we be salt and light in the world if we are all so busy inside the safety of the Church?

Hence a third idea: the **KINGDOM** approach. This starts with the Great Commission and faces the challenge.

Advantages/disadvantages of the **KINGDOM** approach

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Practical ideas to underline this third idea

Here are some ideas to help make the third, Kingdom, concept work in practice.

- Ensure that for every church member their primary responsibility is to witness to Christ outside the church: be it in their family (for some), their community, their school, their social clubs, their work-place.
- Emphasise that service as a youth leader, home group leader, PCC member etc. is all secondary to people's external witness responsibility.
- Display a large-scale map of your wide-area (not just the church locality) and mark on it where your members live, where they work, the schools/colleges they attend, their clubs and leisure activities. Study the networks you have as a result.
- If you have a missionary display, set up the equivalent for church members, perhaps highlighting different areas of service each month. Add pointers for prayer and issues these people have to face.
- Start a regular newsletter that, among other things, tells people-stories about your church members in their life outside church activity. Let people be known for their real self, not the persona they adopt within your church.
- Encourage your preachers to take the theme of work as worship on a regular basis.

For further thinking see Training Notes TN10, *What do Christians do between Sundays*, on the website. For detailed advice on the idea of a people-stories newsletter see Article A9, *A church members' newsletter*.

Recruitment

If we are following the CHURCH approach, we will start with the vacancy and ask for, literally, 'volunteers'. If this does not work we may select some likely candidates and go and talk to them one-to-one.

Dangers of this approach:

In spite of what is often assumed, busy people will offer today provided they believe in the cause and can see that the terms of service fit their lives (eg. short-term commitment, adequate support, etc.). We come back to this this afternoon.

If we are following the DISCIPLESHIP approach, we will be building up a profile of each member of the congregation and looking for a suitable area of ministry that that person could fulfil. So we may carry out a gift-identification exercise of some kind.

Dangers of this approach:

Dangers of the Kingdom approach:

A better way: How to mobilise your church

1 **Appoint a champion for this – so someone feels the responsibility.**

Article A43 on the website, *Every member on active service – how to mobilise your church*, gives details of the kind of person you might select and a role definition.

2 **Get your thinking straight – as above.**

See what we have covered on the previous pages but, for each, consider the data you will need: for the first, ministries that you carry out; for the second, your members and information about them; for the third a listing of innovative ideas for witness.

3 **Seek good fits – instead of ‘gifts’ you might consider:**

- knowledge base
- skill set
- natural talents
- spiritual gifts
- enthusiasm drive
- human impact
- life experience
- Christian character
- availability
- teamwork.

Two available schemes are *SHAPE*.....

S: Spiritual gifts
 H: Heart's desire
 A: Abilities
 P: Personality
 E: Experience

.....and *Network*

- Personal experience
- Character traits
- Ministry convictions
- Others' observations

4 **Develop training for all**

Induction, apprenticeship, external events/courses, internal events/courses, mentoring, team training

5 **Design an effective plan**

Article A43 suggests a 14-point plan if you are to see results.

The above five points follow the section headings in Article A43, *Every member on active service*, on the Articles page of my website. See also Training Notes TN24, *Church members can burn out too*. Or, for a light-hearted approach, TN55, *So, who should be in the dock?*

FINAL QUESTION TO PARTS 1 & 2: Is ‘volunteer’ the right word? If not, what is?

3: Supporting workers

PROPOSAL 3: We don't help church members offer

The information volunteers need

Before they can make an informed decision as to whether to offer, people need some basic information. Here are five areas churches should consider. Some of the information can be helpful as paperwork. But in these cases, keep it very simple and appropriate for your church.

Consider the following for tasks such as: children's group leader, member of the catering team, organiser of the church weekend away, lesson reader, bereavement visitor, treasurer.

1: What this area of service is all about

This is the equivalent of a job description. Covering no more than one side of A4 (if in print) it should answer these questions:

1	Why does the post exist?	The overall purpose
2	Who does the post-holder relate to?	Working relationships
3	What does he or she do?	Key responsibilities or tasks

This sheet of A4 or A5 should be

- clear – no jargon, no ambiguity, appropriate for Christian ministry
- current – checked regularly and updated as necessary
- agreed and owned – by both post-holder and the church leader

For more detailed advice, try Article A6, *Job descriptions*, in the Resources section of the website.

But it is also helpful to give some idea of direction and achievement within this task. This is an idea that is not normal practice in churches. A simple statement that:

- is usually fixed in time – typically six months or one year
- ties in with some kind of overall church vision or plan to give the big picture
- may list four or five aims to achieve in the given time
- includes aims related to any of task, relationships, personal development

2: What we expect of you

This should:

- show the kind of time commitment and length of service that will be needed – don't forget to include 'hidden extras' such as attendance at team meetings or training events
- list any desired gifting or experience (be careful) – and something of what it means to be part of a team
- list any point about Christian behaviour and/or biblical knowledge that is appropriate
- give an idea of any standard expected

It is helpful if the church can then say what the volunteer can expect of us We look at support in a few minutes.

Article A8 on the website, *Worker agreements*, may be helpful here.

3: The hand-over and information available

A sensible person will want to talk to the present post-holder to find out much more about what is involved, especially for more complicated tasks such as treasurer. This may be an initial talk before taking a decision of whether to volunteer, or a more detailed session later, or a period of co-working.

It may be especially helpful to have an information pack available, added to by each post-holder. Or full files (as with the organisation of a church weekend away). A listing of tasks by month of year may be helpful.

But beware the danger of imagining that the new post-holder has to carry out the task in the same way as his or her predecessor. And remember that someone who has been in post for some time may have turned a relatively straightforward task into a particularly complicated one by adding on extra parts. Clarify what the new post-holder is being asked to take over.

4: Team implications

It's all very well sorting out the task, but if the person is to be part of a team, what about the people-issues involved? If we take 'team' seriously, as this event is assuming, now is the time to consider what team will mean.

Consider the implications of a lone ranger taking over a children's group where the leaders of all the different age ranges work closely together to decide on syllabus, values, joint events, etc.

Or what if a new bereavement visitor fails to understand that the team work together and each needs to respect the particular gifts and experience of the others so that the right person is allocated to each bereaved person.

On the other hand, teams should be fun – and working in a team should be a great experience. This in itself can be a powerful encouragement to volunteer.

See also Training Notes TN41, *What makes a group a team*, in the Resources section of the website. Also TN79, *'One another' teams*, and Article A45, *How to lead a team at church*. But sometimes it is better to have just one person clearly responsible: see TN90, *Put someone in charge*.

5: Freedom and failure

Some churches expect everything to be run exactly as the leadership defines. Others allow each area of ministry considerable leeway in how they are worked out in practice. But somewhere there will be a key element that should hold everything together: the overall church vision and values for example.

So how much can the new post-holder use his or her initiative to devise new ways of doing the task?

A volunteer may well be frightened to offer because of the fear of failure. So what is the church's attitude to failure? Consider someone coming on to the lesson reading rota for the first time. What if the first lesson they read is inaudible? Or they trip up and fall flat on their face while coming to the front? Or they cannot find the page for Zephaniah?

For a light-hearted look at this theme, try TN55, *So, who should be in the dock?* on the website.

PROPOSAL 4: We fail to affirm people in their roles

The affirmation they deserve

Scoring scheme – use the boxes

- 5 Our present performance is excellent
- 4 We're pretty good
- 3 We're OK but need to improve
- 2 We really need to take action here
- 1 We do very little under this heading
- 0 We do virtually nothing

Training Notes TN31 on the website, *Affirming volunteers*, has more on each of the ten points on this page.

- 1 **Christian teaching and discipleship**
public preaching, one-to-one, reading ...
- 2 **Prayer**
from leaders, the team, prayer partners
- 3 **Due recognition**
not to pander to pride, but: commissioning, intercessions, certificates
- 4 **Re-envisioning and ongoing communication**
big picture context, updated information, efficient organisation
- 5 **Training**
induction, in-service, external – a church budget to show commitment
- 6 **Practical help and resources**
equipment, funds, baby-sitting, sabbaticals
- 7 **Encouragement by saying thank you**
regular recognition (not just at the annual meeting!), real interest, team parties
- 8 **Feedback and correction**
quick reviews through to appropriate appraisals – see next page
- 9 **Team support**
team get-togethers, sharing experiences, having fun doing the job together
- 10 **Short-term contracts**
move people on to new challenges to stretch faith and test gifting (but say goodbye)

Total out of 50 Points with low scores

Note 1: The idea of an overall co-ordinator

Such support does not come cheaply. But if we believe in building disciples, is that strange? What is clear is that the Vicar can only give such support to a small number of key lay leaders. Which means in turn that a church will need to find someone else to co-ordinate this 'body-building' concept throughout the church. In a large church, this may need to be a full-time member of staff. In a medium-sized one, it will need to be part of one staff member's role. In a small church, it could be done by ... a volunteer!

Here is the wording from a job ad for a large church's 'Director of Ministry'. "The aim is to encourage spectators to become players and help players find their correct place on the pitch."

What might it mean in your church?

Note 2: Feedback and correction *(see No. 8 on previous page)*

The word 'appraisal' has negative connotations in many people's minds, usually because it has been handled badly at work or used as a means of inappropriate discipline. The concept, however, is thoroughly Christian. The less emotive word 'review' is used here. Two key points need to be kept in mind.

- Review is about **building a person up**, not **pulling them down**
- Review should be centred on the **future**, not on the **past**

The word 'review' can cover different scenarios. Not all are appropriate for each possible task.

The one-off event

The 9-11s group bowling outing, the catering at the Alpha party, the presentation of the annual accounts

A month (or whatever) in the life of

Intercessions led by the team over the past few weeks, this term's home group meetings

An annual review

Planned in advance, given adequate time, two-way listening, check against the paperwork already listed (especially aims), plan the coming year, set new aims, agree the outcome

Training Notes TN17 on the website suggests possible questions for such a review.

When things go wrong

- Sort them out as soon as possible
- Keep to whatever guidelines exist
- Check your facts
- Be specific
- Let them know how you feel
- Affirm your belief in them
- Make it clear that it is now over
- Be honest about your own failings

What can we learn from the training of the twelve?

Try this for homework if we don't have time to cover it today!

In what sense did Jesus operate a 'church'-centred approach?

In what sense did Jesus operate a discipleship-centred approach?

What skills did Jesus show in dealing with his 'volunteers' (and should these relate to us too)?

What was his attitude to them?

Resources on my website you might find helpful on today's overall theme (especially those in bold italic) <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources>

Articles

- A6 Job descriptions – *advice and examples for staff and volunteers*
- A10 An introduction to the art of training – *Help people learn*
- A43** ***Every member on active service – How to mobilise your church***
- A45** ***How to lead a team at church – Practical help for beginners***

Training Notes

- TN14 Setting up a Newcomers Team
- TN15 How not to delegate
- TN24 Church members can burn out too
- TN31** ***Affirming volunteers***
- TN36 Square pegs in round holes
- TN37 To pay or not to pay?
- TN49 What's going on under the water
- TN55 So, who should be in the dock?
- TN79 'One another' teams
- TN90** ***Put someone in charge***
- TN95 Exit interviews for everyone
- TN100** ***Why some offer, why some don't***
- TN112 Set my leaders free

You might also like to follow me on Twitter @johnvtruscott.

Action plan

To help you turn today into practice. Consider:

- 1 Might it be better for churches to do less but do it better?
- 2 Do we need to invest more people-resources in managing church members?
- 3 How can we adopt more of a Kingdom approach to service?
- 4 How do we change the culture if people are not used to this approach?

As a result of today's event, the main areas I/we wish to develop further are

And some specific ideas I/we would like to put into operation are

My/our plan for action to be completed by the end of next week is

My/our aim for where I/we shall have got to by Easter 2020 is