

Seminar: People – Staffing ministry in a post-Covid world

John Truscott: <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/News> for a pdf of these notes

1: What has happened over the past three years?

Financial pressure means that most churches are unable to appoint more staff. But at the same time an army of ‘volunteers’ has disappeared. Many church ministries were run by a group of people in their 60s and 70s. The discontinuity of lockdown gave many of them the moment they had been looking for to step back, quite understandably. But younger church members have pressures from work/income, mortgages, parenting, that an earlier generation did not know. Hence many churches are experiencing a hole in their workforce.

What is the situation in your church? How does this impact your work? How might Julian Mander’s recorded input speak into this setting?

Let’s now go back to some first principles.

2: Paid staff or unpaid workers?

Many (especially larger) churches now employ youth workers, community workers, administrators, music directors, pastoral assistants and others. And they probably employ you! 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. *An issue of TIME*
- when the post requires set availability times. *An issue of DISCIPLINE*
- when the post requires a specialist. *An issue of ABILITY/TRAINING*
- when the post requires a pioneering leader. *An issue of ENERGY*
- when church members are time-poor. *An issue of STRESS*
- when leaders are diverted from their priorities. *An issue of PRIORITY*

But there are dangers;

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

See Training Notes TN37, ‘To pay or not to pay’, in the Resources section of my website for more detail on this.

Which of these reasons apply in your case?

Are your church’s staff employed to ‘do’ ministry or to ‘enable’ it?

3: Three approaches to practical service

We need to move away from our thinking about volunteers who offer to help run the show.

- Start with the roles to fill.
- Start with the people you have.
- Start with the world outside.

Are we attempting more than we have resource for? Or are we missing out on those who can staff ministry? Again, how does Julian Mander's input speak into this setting?

4: Ten characteristics for people to fit their roles

- Knowledge base
- Skill set
- Natural talents
- Spiritual gifts
- Enthusiasm
- Human impact
- Life experience
- Christian character
- Availability
- Teamwork.

See Article A43, 'Every member on active service' in the Resources section of my website for more detail on this.

Which three of these would you see as the most important ones for matching?
How might these work out for your own role?

5: I will serve in a post-Covid work provided there is...

Here now is my belief in what will help people serve. I am expressing it in 'I' format because we need to put ourselves in our church members' shoes. The first three take a church-wide perspective. And, following Julian's input, be ready for surprises and new solutions!

1. A church vision I can own
2. A church leadership I respect
3. A scheme with a champion
4. A ministry purpose I can identify with

5. A gift, enthusiasm or experience I believe I have
6. A team I can be part of
7. A team leader I can serve under
8. A commitment that is limited
9. An achievement that is celebrated
10. A role I can develop within

How closely does your church match this list? Notice that much depends on the appointment of team leaders.

It might be worth looking more closely at the difference between this TEAM culture and a ROTA one. I sense this is the key change of thinking we need at this time. People need to serve together and share the responsibility to give ownership of the ministry in question.

I was working with a church in the West Country a fortnight ago where they said they had a volunteering problem. But their CAP/debt advice ministry had no such problem because the leader carefully selected people to approach to join his team and was always fully staffed.

See Training Notes TN139, 'Church workers in teams', in the Resources section of my website for more detail on the concept of teamwork.

Other website resources on this topic

'A' refers to the Articles page, 'TN' to the Training Notes page.

- A45 How to lead a team at church
- A47 Fifteen principles of volunteering
- TN31 Affirming volunteers
- TN36 Square pegs in round holes
- TN55 So who should be in the dock?
- TN79 'One another' teams
- TN90 Put someone in charge
- TN100 Why some offer, why some don't