

How to Increase Volunteerism

Most organizations could use an extra hand (or two or three!) to help with everyday tasks, and certainly special events. These strategies will help you encourage more people to volunteer, and more often.

1. Communicate your needs

Don't assume that parishioners understand what you need and when you need it. So be clear about your volunteer needs, and in a variety of ways. Make regular announcements during services, advertise on your website and in your newsletters, put out a call on social media, and ask current volunteers to reach out to others who might help.

You may be surprised to find that parishioners had no idea help was needed. You may be more surprised by how willing and able they are to pitch in.

2. Don't overwhelm new volunteers

It's understandable to get excited when new people volunteer, and for new volunteers to be excited when they start! This can result in new volunteers being given too many tasks and responsibilities right away. Give new volunteers at least a few months to find their niche and discover how much time they really have to give. Then, if they want to take on more responsibility, and you think they can handle it, that's terrific.

3. Show volunteers different paths

One volunteer may be handy; another may be creative or good with technology. One volunteer might help with accounting and set-up for special events, while another is needed to work on the grounds committee and update your Facebook page.

Let parishioners know that there isn't just one type of volunteer you need and encourage them to forge their own paths. The more they see how their skills and time benefit your organization – and if they enjoy the work they do – the more likely they will be to stick around.

4. Provide a friendly environment

Has your organization had a history of volunteers quitting soon after they began? One reason may be the environment that they enter and the reception they receive. Long-term volunteers can become jaded and conclude that it's not worth training or being friendly to new volunteers who are just going to drop out.

It's important to discourage that attitude. Consider appointing a few veteran volunteers to welcome new ones and address any questions or concerns they have. What's most important is for new volunteers to feel welcome and appreciated.

5. Make it easy for everyone to volunteer

Some people may think that they aren't capable of volunteering, or that they can only give a little bit of time so why bother? Those with a disability might assume that they would not be useful, while others may feel too old, or too young. But everyone can volunteer in some way!

Make it clear that there is no one preferred way for volunteers to lend their services and that your organization has volunteer opportunities for everyone.

With the ongoing help of devoted volunteers, your organization can do more good works than you might think possible. Try these suggestions to recruit and retain volunteers and watch how your organization changes and grows.