

Discussion/Activity sheet
Growing Volunteer Ministry Entrepreneurs
by Karen Kogler

Churches are rich in history and tradition, and they often are risk-adverse and skeptical of the 'new,' which adds up to a culture that virtually limits volunteer involvement to the tried and true. But our fast-changing world is ripe for the unchanging Gospel brought to them in new wineskins of service. If the Holy Spirit has gifted and is moving some of our members to new ways to serve, would we notice? How can we wisely encourage volunteer entrepreneurship in an established institution? These discussion topics and activities are tied to the article "Volunteer Ministry Entrepreneurs," available at <http://www.theequipper.org/articles/show.asp?id=54>.

For the church governing board

Discussion: What new ministries were started at our church within the last year? Three years? Five years? Who initiated them--staff or volunteers? What process was involved to get approval? Was it the same in each case? From the answers to these questions, are we encouraging or discouraging new ministry ideas from all our members? What are the advantages/risks of encouraging new ministry ideas?

Activity: Individually, write a few criteria which you would use to evaluate suggestions of new ministries. Share the responses in the group. As a group, write 4-5 broad guidelines that establish boundaries, of theology, resources, etc., within which your church would support a new ministry endeavor. (An example is given in the article referenced above.) How can we still support and encourage individuals when we must turn down their suggested ministry venture?

For groups of leaders - staff and lay people who serve on ministry teams/committees or who head major ministries

Discussion

When was the last time you heard someone suggest a new ministry? What was your response? Why did you respond that way?

Most church staff have over-full schedules and never-ending to-do lists. How does this affect attitudes toward something new? Most volunteers are also overly-busy. How might this affect their ability to listen to the Spirit's guiding? How would we respond if someone wanted to step down from their current volunteer position due to a need for rest? Can we free up staff time to allow them to support new ministry ventures?

Activities

We measure things that matter. Talk about things you as leaders can do to become more aware of how the Holy Spirit is encouraging your people to serve. Select one or two items and then agree on a simple way to count how times these things are done within a period of time. Examples of things you might count:

- times when a leader initiates a conversation with a volunteer about their overall ministry involvement/satisfaction. (The 'conversation starters' available at www.theequipper.org > Resources > under item 6, Making the Match, work with individuals as well as groups.)
- prayers that leaders and people would be open to Spirit-driven moves to new ministry ventures
- times when a volunteer's work load is reduced because a leader noticed signs of burnout
- times when a leader talked with a volunteer about their ideas for new ministry

Imagine someone coming to you with a new ministry venture that's been approved, and they have sufficient volunteers and funds to carry it out. You're the leader they look to for support. List the ways your actions would influence (for better or not) the success of the new venture.

