

Building Relationships while Serving
Evaluation and Suggestions

When things are going well in our ministries, we're not just getting tasks done. We're also building relationships, with the people we're serving, and also with those serving alongside us. Relationship building is important, because we build each other up spiritually through relationships. In addition, ministries in which people have strong relationships have better volunteer retention. And, when volunteer opportunities attract people from the community, relationships connect people to your church and to their Lord.

1. Evaluation. Questions for those who lead specific ministries to consider and discuss:

In this ministry, do people work on the task alone? with one other person? with more than one person?

If they work with someone, is it the same person/people each time?

If it is the same, would they like to work with someone different?
(not due to problems, but just for variety or for getting to know more people).
If my answer is "No, they wouldn't," is that my opinion or have I asked them?

In addition to working on our task: do we pray together? How often? Are personal prayer concerns included?

Do we have fun together in this ministry?

For each volunteer who serves in this ministry, do I know . . .

- Where they grew up?
- Their favorite leisure activity?
- What they do at work (not just where they work)?
- A challenge they've faced in the past year?

When was the last time someone new joined this ministry?

When was the last time someone who was new to our church joined this ministry?

If someone new has joined the ministry in the past 3 years, are they still in the group?
If not, why did they leave? Did I ask them about their experience in our ministry?

Talk to the person who most recently joined your ministry. And talk to someone who recently left your ministry. Ask them how many new friends they made since they joined (or while they were there).



2. Suggestions

a) For church leaders:

Do some math. How many of your ministries bring volunteers into contact with unchurched people?
How many of your ministries would attract unchurched people to participate as volunteers?
Create a plan for increasing these numbers.

Provide leadership training on relationship building -- its importance, its relationship to the church mission

See if someone in your church has experience leading diversity training. Some diversity exercises are excellent at building relationships.

b) For those who lead team-type ministries (committees, ushers, stuffing bulletins, work party, etc.)

Begin your task with a short devotion and prayer. Take turns leading devotions, and demonstrate a variety of simple devotion patterns, such as reading the text of a hymn, responsive reading of a Psalm, etc. Include comment and discussion in your devotion.

Invite personal concerns in the prayers. Include thanksgivings, work and school concerns, etc. as well as prayers for ill family members. Do it regularly as it may take time for people to become comfortable sharing.

Have a social time or party once a year, even something as simple as meeting for coffee at Starbucks

Do an icebreaker periodically, something as simple as asking everyone about their favorite TV program as a child, their favorite music artist, or what they enjoyed about high school.

c) For those who lead solo-type ministries (tasks done at home; office data entry, phone callers, etc.)

You can do many of the same things as the leader of a team-type ministry, but you'll need to be a bit more creative.

Share a devotion by email or snail mail once a month. Have a prayer chain (phone, email or letter) just for your group. Include personal prayer requests, as well as prayers for your ministry and your church.

Have more frequent social get-togethers, maybe 2-3 times a year. Be flexible on the scheduling to include as many people as possible, perhaps alternating times to cover differing schedules.

Do some seasonal fun things such as a simple 'secret friend' gift exchange at Christmas, gathering food for a family at Thanksgiving, a cookie or candy exchange around Valentine's Day.

d) In all ministries, partner each new person that joins with a current volunteer

Karen Kogler, Dec. 2008

