

## **Building Troop Morale: Chapter Officers**

Roundtable Discussion – Participants provide best practices and challenges for Building and Maintaining troop Morale

Morale is a state of mind, which involves feelings and emotions. Created within each member, it is often considered an elusive quality. It involves the attitude and perception towards the work, chapter environment, co-chapter members, leaders and the organization on a whole. Positive member morale is usually exhibited by confidence, discipline and willingness to perform. There are no single factors that explain high or low morale, but rather a combination of related factors.

How do you keep volunteers engaged?

You have goals to accomplish through volunteers. How do you make your goals a priority for them?

Challenges: Priorities in members lives as they matriculate through life.

A disengaged member is not necessarily a sign he/she is lazy. Less engaged teams are less productive, less vision-focused and prone to withdrawing their efforts and adopting counterproductive behavior. This occurs when leadership is unclear about expectations, members have not been effectively trained or do not feel a sense of ownership over their work. Low morale causes members to lose interest in going the extra mile, especially when they do not feel valued by leaders or care about the projects assigned.

In today's economic reality, the root cause of low employee morale can include job security issues, uncertain business conditions, limited upward mobility, a perceived lack of fair compensation and excessive outsourcing practices. In such an environment, employees focus more on their career choices, a sense of personal well-being and financial future.

While more traditional managers tend to see low morale as intangible, its importance and impact on profits, productivity and financial competitiveness are measureable and affect organizational objectives. The Gallup Organization estimated that there are 22 million actively disengaged employees costing the economy as much as \$350 billion dollars per year in lost productivity including absenteeism, illness and other low morale issues.[1]

High morale in the work place is essential to success and is mostly influenced from the top down rather than from the bottom up. Managers that create low morale in employees do so from a top-down command and control mode, which implies that employees' do the listening and managers need not reciprocate.[2] By prohibiting open dialogue on workplace issues, managers are denied a firsthand view of problems that exist. This can result in a gap when addressing the real problems and can further exacerbate them, leading to employee distrust, disrespect towards management and reductions of morale and workforce motivation.[3]

Less engaged teams are less productive, less customer-focused and prone to withdrawing their efforts and adopting counterproductive behaviour.[4] This occurs when management is unclear about expectations, employees have not been effectively trained or do not feel a sense of ownership over their work.[5] Low morale causes employees to lose interest in going the extra mile, especially when they do not feel valued by managers or care about the projects assigned.

A costly indicator of low morale is high turnover; when employees leave because they are not happy with their jobs and have few external reasons to stay. The negative impact of employee turnover is disconcerting because of its tremendous impact both financially and on productivity levels. More importantly, when employees leave, they take with them the knowledge, skills and ability that helped contribute to the goals, profit and performance of the organization.[6] The Saratoga Institute suggests that the average internal cost of turnover ranges from a minimum of one year's pay and benefits to a maximum of two years salary. Other research indicates that total turnover costs can reach as high as 150% of an employee's base salary.[7] High turnover also means that significant recruitment and replacement costs will be incurred.

## **Six ways to motivate church volunteers**

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*Editor's Note: This is the first installment of a two-part series.*

How do we motivate the volunteers under our care?

In order to lead volunteers effectively, I believe we must try to understand what makes them tick. I encourage you to look at the following checklist of motivating factors for volunteers in the church on at least three levels. First, read through the checklist and see if these motivational factors are true in your own life and volunteerism. As you read through the motivational factors, think about both positive and negative examples in your own experience.

Second, think about people who are currently serving as volunteers in your church and ministry. What specific motivating factors are at work in your ministry when volunteers are serving? What motivating factors are missing? What role do the missing motivating factors play in the current motivation level of the volunteers in your ministry?

Lastly, think of those individuals in your church who attend but have not yet crossed the line to volunteer their services. Could it be that prayer (see Luke 10:2) and addressing one or more of the following motivational factors would make it easier for the uninvolved to join the volunteer army of God in your church?

### **Checklist of motivating factors for volunteers in your church** **spiritual gift factor**

#1 The

Do volunteers in your church really understand their spiritual gifts? If you are going to foster an ethos of service, you must start by helping people understand and discover how God has wired them up spiritually. A general understanding of spiritual gifts is essential but not the essential

issue; it's helping volunteers understand their spiritual giftedness and how their giftedness fits into your ministry.

God has given each person in the body of Christ at least one primary spiritual function/gift. Frankly, I believe that teachers should primarily teach. Leaders should primarily lead. Helpers should primarily help. Administrators should primarily administrate. You get the idea.

Why do I believe this? Because of I Peter 4:10-11 (look it up), and because many of us know from painful personal experience that it is no fun to serve where you are not gifted. I'd rather eat nails than crunch the numbers of the church's financial books, though I bet that information would be fairly interesting.

Sure, we are all responsible to teach, lead, evangelize, help, administrate, etc. on some level. However, when we are using our primary gifting to serve God, we tend to be motivated because our God-designed giftedness is being used for His Kingdom.

When we are not plugging our primary gift into our means of service, then we are not so motivated.

## **#2 The passion factor**

Are volunteers serving in an area in which they have a God-given passion? It is possible to be passionate about something that you are not gifted to do, but more often a person's God-given giftedness goes hand in hand with his or her passion. Show me a person who is serving in an area in which he/she is not gifted and passionate and I'll show you a high maintenance volunteer.

You, as a leader, will constantly have to pump these folks up because they are not serving in an area in which they are passionate.

**#3 The clarity factor** Do volunteers know exactly what you want from them?

As leaders of volunteers, we make an awful lot of assumptions about the volunteers under our charge. We assume they know exactly what we want them to do.

Don't assume "â□" even with those volunteers who have served you long and faithfully. It is a huge relief to a volunteer when you tell them exactly what you expect them to do. Spell it out clearly and on paper at least once a year.

Walk your volunteers through your specific expectations step by step. If you don't take the time to clarify exactly what you want from volunteers

not only will you frustrate your current volunteers but you will add one more barrier to getting new volunteers for your ministry.

#### **#4 The feedback factor**

Are volunteers given feedback about their service?

In "The One Minute Manager," Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson write, "The number one motivator of people is feedback on results."

Are you giving feedback to your volunteers about their service? Do you know how to give feedback in a positive manner-both praises and reprimands?

"The One Minute Manager" is a fast read and a must read for anyone who oversees the performance of others, whether they be employees or volunteers, because the authors show managers how to set one-minute goals, do one-minute praises, and do one-minute reprimands-all necessary skills for effective leadership and management.

I remember my first year as a teacher in a public high school. At the end of the year, I walked into the principal's office and said, "I need some feedback!" I wanted to know how I was doing-the good and the bad. I found that working without feedback, neither praise nor correction, was scary and frustrating.

Volunteers want feedback too. Answer these questions with honest, specific examples:

When was the last time you verbally or in writing praised a volunteer for specific excellent work?

When was the last time you skillfully and lovingly pointed out an area of improvement?

Perhaps your first step is to buy and read "The One Minute Manager." I can highly recommend it whether you are a CEO of domestic affairs (i.e., a stay-at-home mom) or a CEO of a major corporation.

**#5 The equipment factor** Are volunteers equipped with tools and training to minister well?

It's a real drag to be asked to do something you can do well, but not to have the proper tools to do it well.

When I was a waiter working my way through college a few years ago, one of the tasks I enjoyed doing was vacuuming the carpet at the end of my shift. However, whenever the vacuum was not working properly (which was regularly), I hated that task. Why? Without the appropriate equipment, a relatively banal and easy task took longer and the job was never really done well. Not having the correct tools and training takes the

motivational wind out of a volunteer's service sail.

**#6 The modeling factor** Do volunteers have living models to follow? Motivational leadership pundit, John C. Maxwell, states that the No. 1 motivational principle is what people see. People do what people see. Without a living model of what you expect from volunteers, all the talk, teaching, training manuals, and videos are for naught.

Listen closely leader. You need to be the first living model of service you expect from your volunteers. The speed of the leader is the speed of the team.

If you expect the volunteers in your church to serve God in a motivated fashion, you must be the first living model you want your volunteers to follow.

Bill Allison is the founder and director of **Cadre International**, a speaking and training ministry for volunteer church leaders, teachers, and youth workers. This article was excerpted from his book, "Recruiting, Motivating and Retaining Volunteers in the Church."