

5 THINGS

EVERY VOLUNTEER WANTS TO KNOW

Even If They Never Ask



Leading volunteer teams is what we do. And when we take a moment to put ourselves in their shoes... to better understand their perspective... we discover there are a few key questions they are asking. Even if these questions never escape their lips.

Want to improve your volunteer experience? Take a look at your ministry through the lens of 5 Things Every Volunteer Wants to Know.

Will I Feel Needed?

A volunteer is giving their time. And they want to know their time is valuable.

If they arrive to serve only to find...

...there's nothing to do ...responsibilities aren't clearly defined ...someone else is already doing the job.

It's hard to hang on to a volunteer that doesn't feel like their time is well invested.

I've made the mistake of failing to communicate the goal as I recruit small group leaders. I've got an objective in my head I'm trying to accomplish. I want no more than 8 kids in a small group. So, when a small group grows beyond 8 kids, I start recruiting.

But if the current small group leader doesn't realize their group is larger than we want it to be, they won't understand when I introduce another leader to their group.

And if the new leader doesn't know they have ownership in the group (i.e. a portion of the group assigned to their care), then they don't know where they can contribute. If they don't know where they can contribute, they won't understand why they're there. One of both of these volunteers can end up feeling unnecessary in this equation.

Investigate

Are the responsibilities well defined for each volunteer role?

Is it clear how each volunteer role works together toward a specific outcome?

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Can I Be Known?

Your volunteers want to be known. Some to greater degrees than others. But the premise is the same. At minimum, they want to know that someone knows their name. Most want you to know what's happening in their world outside their volunteer role.

To do this effectively, you need help. In your busy ministry role, there's a limit to the number of people you can meaningfully know. That's where a system of coaches comes in.

Layering coaches into your team expands your span of care and multiplies the number of volunteers that feel known in your ministry. You can't know everybody. But everybody can be known by somebody.

The truth is, a lot of life happens outside a volunteer role. And a solid team of coaches ensures that someone on your team knows them, sees them and walks with them.

Read & Distribute

[The Way of the Shepherd](#) / [It's Personal](#) / [Don't Quit](#)

Each of these books are great resources that equip you to create a team culture where every volunteer feels known.

Visit ginamcclain.com/free-resources for your guide to How to Build an Effective Coaching Structure.

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What do you want me to do?

This seems like such a simple question. But it's a pretty important question. Never assume that what needs to be done is clear. Instead, take the time to clearly define what needs to be accomplished. Not only do you remove ambiguity but you honor their time with clarity. And clarity is kind.

- Is there a written role description?
- Is it clear, concise and actionable?
- Are there checklists to follow to eliminate guesswork?
- Is there accountability so the volunteer knows what is checked and when?

Read & Do

Read the book, [Checklist Manifesto](#), and fall in love with checklists. Then head over to my friend, [Kenny Conley's site](#) and quickly download more ministry checklists than you can imagine. These are editable files that give you a headstart on crafting the right checklists for your ministry. Thanks Kenny!

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How do you want me to do it?

The how is just as important as the what. So, don't lose steam here. You might be standing across from the most talented, intelligent, credentialed person you know. Surely given time and space, they can figure out **how** to do what you're asking them to do.

But don't make that mistake. I did that for too long in ministry. And it's simply frustrating for your volunteers. You see, they are giving you what limited time they have. Honor that time by providing the training they need.

Deploy an Apprenticeship Process

Connect them with a mentor volunteer to teach them the ropes. Make sure the mentor and apprentice work off of a checklist that covers the bases of the role and documents your training steps. Fill in the gaps with video tutorials that cover safety training, best practices, etc.

Why do you want me to do it?

Simon Sinek would say this question should be at the top. Maybe it should. But I want to end here because it's the thing that should be remembered above all else. Why?

Why is this important? Why should I show up for it? Why should I continue to invest myself in this?

These are the questions that will scroll through every volunteer's mind at some point in their journey. And it's a fair question. Why is the question that forces you (the ministry leader) to refocus on the vision. Why is the question that teases out what's most important.

Ministry can quickly fill with a lot of busy work. Answering the question 'Why' keeps you focused on the actions that move your mission forward.

So, what's your why?

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Another way to answer the question 'Why' is to craft a single sentence that defines the win for your entire team. That one-liner can be recycled in announcements, emails, team huddles and a myriad of avenues that remind your team why they do what they do.

Want to know the statement I used all the time for my children's ministry team?

We measure success based upon the conversations we start, not the activities we complete.

Why? Because as Kara Powell would say, "Doubt isn't toxic to faith. Silence is." So conversation is the most important thing we can champion.

Conversations with small groups between kids and a small group leader. And conversations at home between parent and kid.

If we champion conversations in these key relationships, we move the mission of leading kids to find and follow Jesus forward.

Craft Your Why Statement

Invest the time to define why your ministry is important. Then graft that statement into your avenues of communication. When you hear others recycle it, you know you're on track.