

MOTIVATOR

CONNECTIONS MODULE #1

Focus Competency: Motivator -Inspires, encourages, appreciates team members, and models a servant-leader attitude like Jesus

Opening Question: What or who inspires you and why?

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Read scripture, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, and answer provided questions.

Assignment 2: Read article, Motivating Volunteers, and answer provided questions.

Assignment 3: Write three thank you notes to people on the team. Make them specific based on your observations from their interactions with our guests.

Assignment 4: Take the time to check-in with two team members, see what is going on in their life, how is their family, what is going on at work, etc. What did you learn? How did it make them feel?

Assignment 5: Meet with your leader to discuss what you learned from this session

ASSIGNMENT 1

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

²⁴Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win!
²⁵All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. ²⁶So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. ²⁷I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

QUESTIONS

1. What motivates you to serve on the weekends?
2. How would you rate yourself as being a motivator on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= Needs development, 5= Model for others to follow) Why?
3. What do you feel the scripture says about motivation?

ASSIGNMENT 2

Motivating Volunteers

Although I am still learning how to work with volunteers, here are 12 discoveries I've made that keep helpers happy and healthy. I call them vitamin B-12 boosters.

1. Volunteers give their time, give their best when they feel appreciated.

Even more than paid staff, volunteers have a need for recognition. Other than the satisfaction of work well done, recognition is their reward. When we supplemented our church office with eight receptionists who donated four hours once a week, we provided each of them with a nameplate. Each week when they come to work, they slide their name into the holder on the reception desk. We can't pay them, but we can certainly assist their feeling of importance and ownership in a ministry that takes individuals seriously. Public praise from the pulpit, hand-engraved certificates, newsletter recognition, and customized thank-you cards - these are just some of the ways ministry assistants in our church are "compensated."

2. Volunteers will do whatever it takes to get the job done when there is flexibility.

For years we struggled with finding people who would make a commitment to teach Sunday school for twelve months. When we finally opted for a rotating schedule (one month on/one month off) we had more than enough to draw from. Our system may not resemble what the textbook on recruitment teaches, but it appears to be more sensitive to the hectic lifestyles our members embrace. When we work to accommodate them at the level of their availability, they are more willing to accommodate us.

3. Volunteers require a detailed job description.

Trust and deadlines may motivate them, but sufficient guidelines are a must if they're going to hit the ground running. Uncertainty breeds anxiety and dissipated energy. Volunteers must be able to restate what it is they think you want them to do. Thoughts unattached to paper are too slippery for comfort. Job descriptions drawn up on paper aren't just for those who draw a salary, volunteers need them too.

4. Volunteers tend to renew their commitments when they are given the authority to do their job.

Contented workers are those who know you will not step in and take control once the assignment has been given. It doesn't matter if you can do a better job. That is not the issue. Letting someone else do "his or her best" so you can find needed rest definitely is.

5. Volunteers need more time than you do to complete a task.

Volunteers struggle with time management as much as paid professionals. In our church it takes office helpers as much as half an hour to settle in and get their mind on the job at hand before answering the phone or typing a letter. Like us, unpaid employees are exposed to Procrastinator's Disease (work always expands to fill the time allotted for it) and Murphy's fever (if anything can go wrong in completing a task, it most likely will). When we are more generous with deadlines, not as much will get done, but workers have a lot more enjoyable time getting there. I like what Ted Engstrom repeatedly told his employees at World Vision, "Never do today what can be left until tomorrow." That's the kind of realistic clock that ticks for those who don't punch one.

6. Volunteers perform most productively when they are treated like paid staff.

If not included in regular pastoral staff meetings, those who assist around the church during the week should have a staff meeting of their own facilitated by a lead volunteer. The pastor could be invited to drop in to hear their concerns, brief them on issues of significance affecting the congregation, review his personal calendar, and seek their input. Just yesterday I asked the head of our volunteer receptionists for her insights on how I might respond better to a ‘troubled’ member of our church she knows quite well. Not only did she give me good advice, but she left her workstation feeling like she had contributed to the overall ministry beyond just answering the phones. Paid staff not only have regular staff meetings, they also have Christmas parties, game nights, and dinners at the pastor’s home. Why shouldn’t the volunteers expect the same?

7. Volunteers deserve training.

It’s not sufficient to hand them a job description. The receptionist, usher, home Bible study facilitator, worship leader, or Sunday school teacher deserves to know techniques and tips to do the job the pastoral staff envisions. Dr. Robert Boyd Munger gave me a valuable model for training others while I was a student at Fuller Seminary. He said, “First I do it and you watch me. Then, we do it together. Then, you do it and I’ll watch you. And finally, you do it by yourself.”

8. Volunteers need relational support.

They need to feel connected. I am always available to my staff, both paid and unpaid. My door may be closed signifying a desire to have my privacy protected, but they know that applies to everybody else except them. At times an office assistant may need to pray over an unexpected situation that precludes her from doing her work. Other times the supply clerk may need to talk through a difficulty with a grown son that has him torn up inside. Or it may just be a welcome knock announcing that one of the Bible study leaders has homemade muffins to energize my sermon preparation.

9. Volunteers need to know there is a freedom to fail.

Our church chairman was an officer in the military for over twenty-five years. He survived in combat by learning from his mistakes and not being lessened by them. He serves on the church council, leads a home Bible study, and teaches Sunday school. In all of his commitments he has tried a lot of novel programs. Not all of them have succeeded. Nonetheless, he has a reputation in our church for being a successful leader. Two of his favorite sayings illustrate his approach to life. One he terms the eleventh commandment: “Thou shalt not sweat it!” The other he places with the Beatitudes: “Blessed are those who have permission to change their mind!” If that kind of freedom to fail results in the productivity and servanthood associated with a navy captain, it is worthy of replication.

10. Volunteers need time off.

It doesn’t matter if they are payroll or cinnamon-roll rewarded workers. Church work is people work and people work leaves people pooped. Sunday school teachers, who are encouraged to take the summer off from teaching (because they teach nine months straight for ten years in a row), are more inclined to return in the fall refreshed with their emotional elastic replenished. The same goes for volunteer custodial help, gardeners, greeters, or worship leaders. A breather is the best investment we can make to guarantee a high-yield return.

11. Volunteers should not be taken for granted.

We come to expect a level of performance and focus primarily on their output. But behind the performance of a highly gifted individual is an individual with hurts and hopes and family issues just like we have. It may delay the project awaiting me on my desk, but the few minutes it takes to stop and inquire about their weekend activity, their spouse's job or their recent prayer request will make a difference. It will remind them that they are donating their time to the greatest institution this side of Heaven. It will remind us that they are people first, volunteers second.

12. Volunteers need celebrations.

At our church, we look for reasons to have a party and seize the moment to recognize accomplishment. It's not a novel idea. They do it in the hair salon where I get my hair cut. Every season of the year is recognized by the contests, displays, and wall hangings. They even wear costumes at times. The team of hair stylists obviously enjoys working together. It's because they take time to have fun and celebrate life. What a great example! Those who find reasons to celebrate will laugh more, complain less, and trust each other to a greater degree. We just need to keep our ears open for noteworthy achievements and "seize the day." And guess who sets the atmosphere where celebrations are encouraged? That's right! (Now whose birthday did you forget this week?)

Questions:

1. Look at the Guest Services ministry what do we do well to motivate our volunteers? What do we need to work on?
2. How would you go about building relationships with the members of your team? How did someone do that for you?
3. How do you call out where improvement is needed with a volunteer while still providing encouragement? How have you seen this modeled before?
4. What makes you feel appreciated when you are serving? How can you make your team feel that way?

Assignment 3: Write three thank you notes to people on the team. Make them specific based on your observations from their interactions with our guests.

Assignment 4: Take the time to check-in with two team members, see what is going on in their life, how is their family, what is going on at work, etc. What did you learn? How did it make them feel?

Assignment 5: Meet with your leader to discuss what you learned from this session