

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

Volume 19 Issue 7

PO Box 892589, Temecula, CA 92589-2589

July 2007

Making Meetings Work

Church leaders and volunteers spend a great deal of time in meetings. Unfortunately, meetings are often frustrating due to the fact that they begin late, go too long, and produce more discussion than action.

So . . . what can we do to make meetings work? The following are ideas you can use today to create better meetings.

First, begin by scheduling meetings at odd times. For example, starting at 10:50 a.m. is better than starting at 11:00 a.m. Doing this helps focus the starting time in people's minds.

The more people feel genuinely valued, the more they are willing to give back — in both time and service. Leaders must continually demonstrate concern for people's needs.

Second, start on time and end on time. When you make a habit of starting and ending on time, people show up. No matter who is missing start the meeting on time. Close the door when it is time to begin as a signal that the starting time is important. When it is time to end, bring the meeting to a close. Continue any discussion at the next meeting.

Third, plan your agenda around three items: Information, Decision, and Discussion. In the first part of the meeting share items of information that need no discussion or decisions. Next move to items that need decisions. NOTE: most people can only make three major decisions in one meeting. If you have a need to make more than three decisions, schedule a second meeting. Finally, move to discussion as the meeting nears the end. People will naturally want to finish on time, and this will help curtail overly long discussions. If further discussion is needed, continue it in the next meeting.

Fourth, focus on the most important decisions first. Let people know that items of interest to them will be dealt with early in the meeting. By doing this, you will motivate those who are chronically late to show up on time.

Fifth, speak privately to those who are chronically late.

When people are habitually late, talk with them outside of the meeting. Explain that their input is important, and that you value their insights.

Sixth, follow through on decisions by assigning them to specific individuals for completion. Teams and committees are good at discussing issues and making decisions, but poor at follow through. Delegate all action items to people, and ask them to share during the information or discussion time during the next meeting what they have done.

Seventh, take time to build community. Meetings tend to drain people of their spiritual vitality. Take time to share personal stories and pray for each other. But, be sure to get the work done, or people will be even more frustrated with meetings.

**For information on scheduling
Dr. Gary L. McIntosh**

call toll free . . .
1-877-506-3086

e-mail . . .
cgnet@earthlink.net

write . . .
PO Box 892589
Temecula, CA 92589

Do you motivate with sticks or carrots?

Make recognizing volunteers part of your routine.

Motivating Volunteers

It is no secret that volunteers are hard to find and motivate. Years ago when a pastor needed a third grade teacher, all he had to do was ask for help from the pulpit. After the worship service several people would volunteer to teach the class, at least until a permanent teacher could be found. Today, of course, if a pastor made such an announcement, people would avoid eye contact with him after the service. Very few would take the class, even for a short period of time.

So how do church leaders turn people into a potent volunteer force? Here are some proven methods:

1. Find one person with a vision who can get others excited. Face it! Some people are better at motivating people to volunteer than others. Find the person who seems to be able to get others involved, and ask them to develop a MOT — Ministry Involvement Team.

2. Start a Ministry Involvement Team. Ask the person in #1 above to find two to five other people in the church who will take on the responsibility of placing people in ministry. The job, or ministry, of this team of people will be to get others involved. The people on this team should not be involved in other ministry activities. Their sole ministry is to get others into ministry.

3. Focus on people rather than programs. Ask the Ministry Involvement Team to develop a way to interview and place new volunteers one-by-one. Since the “you all come” approach does not work any more, the team must get to know people’s individual gifts, abilities, and passions before they can find a place for them to serve.

4. Allow people to explore various ministry opportunities so that they may find out where they can contribute the best. Encourage the Ministry Involvement Team to give volunteers several options for ministry. No one should ever be offered just one option for service, but instead be given at least three potential areas where they might serve.

5. Recognize that all volunteers are temps. Temporaries are right for a particular time and place, or for a season in the life of the church. Let people know up front that it is okay to move on to another ministry when their season is over in their particular role or ministry. No one has to stay in the same place for a lifetime.

6. Stress the importance of attitude over skills. Communicate that you are looking for character and compassion, as well as competence. Recruit for the first two, train for the last. Remember: the pain of a temporary ministry vacancy is less than the discomfort of a wrong person.

7. Motive with carrots rather than sticks. Carrots of praise work better to motivate volunteers than sticks of fear and guilt. Praise works best when it is very specific, personal, and regular. Recognize volunteers as part of your routine. Thank, you dinners, gifts, and public recognition are all helpful. What makes the most impact, however, is a personal handwritten note of thanks. People will keep a handwritten note for a lifetime, and they will continue to volunteer.

How are you at motivating volunteers in your church? Which of the above ideas can you begin to use right now to improve your practice?



Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D. is
President of the Church Growth Network

For information about training workshops, seminars, and church consultations call 951-506-3086.

Growth Points is published twelve times a year. The subscription price is \$16 (U.S. Bank or World Money Order) per year. Permission is granted for use in a local church. For other reprint usage, advance permission must be obtained. Formerly published under the title *Church Growth Network*. Copyrighted 2007 ISSN 1520-5096