

Strategies for Recruiting and Inviting

Success in recruiting new leaders often depends on how effectively you ask others to engage in your ministry. These simple techniques and perspectives can help you master the art of asking.

1. Ask Boldly

An appeal is most effective when offered in a bold, forthright, and confident manner. If your ministry is important enough for you to devote your time, energy, and resources, why would you hesitate to ask someone else to join you? If you're reticent about asking people to get involved, think about these questions: Why is it important to you? Why is it important to them? And why is it important to God?

2. Keep a Positive Frame of Mind

It's also critical that you stay positive. Falling back on appeals to guilt or obligation, motivate few, if any, people. Expressing desperation only communicates that your ministry is struggling and marginal. No one wants to jump on board a project that is spiraling downward. People want to be part of something vibrant, exciting, and hopeful. Enthusiastic, positive asking will attract enthusiastic, positive people.

3. Capitalize on the Power of Personal Invitations

People are most motivated to support persons and organizations where they feel a connection. So a good rule in fundraising and recruiting is: the more personal the ask, the better. Yet many churches do most of their asking in the least personal, and therefore the least effective, ways: general announcements, newsletter articles, mass emails, and "dear friend" letters. A relational ask is powerful because it can be framed around the individual's gifts, aptitudes, and interests. Instead of the ask being framed around your need to find a volunteer, it's about how the opportunity can make a difference to the person you're asking.

4. Have a Clear Response Mechanism

Never ask something of people without making it clear and obvious how they can respond to your request. When you make a pulpit announcement, give people an immediate way to respond — perhaps a registration card or a tear-off form to place in the offering plate or a sign-up sheet to pass around. If a prospective donor or volunteer wants time to think about your request, don't put the responsibility on them to get back to you. Say, "I'm glad you're willing to consider this. Would it be okay if I get back in touch with you next week?" And then make sure you do. If you send an email request, provide a link so that people can respond immediately online. If you request something by mail, include a pre-addressed return envelope, preferably postage-paid.

5. Honor People Who Say No

If you do not create space for people to honestly decline your invitations, they will eventually start dodging your questions. If someone's reply is an honest, thoughtful no, you have gained valuable information to help you approach them the next time with something more fitting. Also, sometimes people who initially say no eventually responded affirmatively — they just need more time.

6. Aim High

Asking something significant of someone creates a positive dynamic by communicating that you think the person is capable of doing something important. This is why seasoned fundraisers aren't shy about asking for large amounts of money and the same dynamic exists when recruiting volunteers. Busy, capable people are more motivated to take on a challenging job than a trivial one.

7. Cast a Wide Net

Begin any significant recruiting effort by looking over the entire church roster. It will help you think of some people who might not otherwise come to mind and keep you from always relying on a small group of usual suspects.

8. Mix it Up

It's also helpful to mix it up occasionally. There is usually no one best way of asking people to serve. Some people respond better to one approach and others to something different. Trying something different and keeping it fresh generally yields positive results.

9. Say Thank You

An effective ask always begins by thanking people for what they have already done and reminding them what has been accomplished through their involvement. Linking asking to thanking people and telling the story of what has been accomplished cultivates a mindset of gratitude that is essential to servant leadership.

10. Stay Grounded

At the end of the day, your credibility when we ask things of others comes by virtue of your own willingness to serve and even sacrifice, because people are most motivated to help those whose commitment and service they respect. While the techniques and strategies of effective asking are important, at the end of the day they must be grounded in gratitude, clarity of purpose, and sincerity.

This material is adapted from *Synergy: A Leadership Guide for Church Staff and Key Leaders* by Ann A. Michel
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