

Avoid Putting Round Pegs into Square Holes

The last assignment of my twenty years in the military was as an Associate Professor of Military Science (ROTC) at Washington University in St. Louis. Part of my duties there included recruiting students for the ROTC program. The time frame was the late 70's and the student mindset at Washington University made the task very difficult, but thankfully, we did make our quota every year. Our success was built on the "face-to-face" meeting with prospective students. The telephone and mailings just didn't get the job done. We shared all of the requirements and expectations with the prospective student and we answered all of the questions with all honesty and candor.

I believe our local church Sunday School Director's are facing a similar situation as they recruit faculty for their Sunday School. For some reason, many qualified and gifted prospective teachers just want to sit in a class, without the responsibility of serving the Kingdom with their gifts and talents as mandated in Ephesians 4:12. Maybe these gifted and talented teachers were, at one time, improperly recruited to serve. Or maybe, they were recruited within the parameters of their gifts but without consideration of their passions. Please understand that a person recruited to fill a leadership position in the Sunday School faculty with no regard to their spiritual gifts and passions is like putting a round peg into a square hole. You have to force the peg in and, in the process, you create some damage to the peg. God has wired each believer with a gift-set and passions and when they are serving out of these specific variables, they will be more effective.

In a recent on-line article (01/25/07) entitled "*Making Adult Leader Enlistment A Success*", David Apple, a LifeWay Adult Ministry Consultant, identifies four questions that must be asked. Honest answers will greatly enhance the recruitment process. In his

introduction, he points out that we must recruit people to minister to others and not just to lead a specific ministry area. He further states that “Every member has the right to discover answers to the following questions if they are being challenged to consider a ministry opportunity.”

The first question to be answered is “What specific responsibilities are you asking me to do?” The expectations of the position must be identified and shared with the prospective leader. It is unfair to recruit a person to do a specific task and then change or add to the expectations as you go. Make the list of expectations as complete and specific as possible. Discuss these expectations so there is no doubt regarding what is expected from the person you are recruiting.

The second question is “What resources are available for me to use?” The best way to answer this question is to provide a list and samples of the literature and other helps available for the teacher. Remember, some teachers will want resources that others will pass by. You need to resource the specific requests and needs of the prospective teacher. Don’t forget to identify other people that can assist the prospective teacher and provide a list of on-line resources they can access as they fulfill their leadership role.

The third question is “How will I know if I am successful?” People want to make a difference for the Kingdom. They want to give their time and resources to something that is relevant and meaningful. Most everyone agrees to serve with the expectation that they will make an impact for the Kingdom. For a Sunday School teacher, transformed lives of the students and growth of the class are good targets to gage their success. Additional indicators could be the class’ participation in ministry actions made available through the church, participation in the evangelism ministry of the church and class,

building relationships in the class and with prospects, and the list goes on and on.
Identify both short and long term measurements that will indicate success.

The fourth question is “How will this help accomplish Kingdom work?” Some of the answers to this question will be found in the variables used to identify success found in the third question. Your answer to this question may give a person the insight needed for them to prioritize their service with the church. Something they are involved in may have to go! They need to understand that what you are asking them to do is not just “busy work”. The enthusiasm and attitude you have when enlisting some one to serve will speak volumes about the importance this assignment has for the Kingdom.

The most important thing to remember is your recruitment process must be “up close and personal”. Give time for the individual to consider your offer and to pray it through. A few days up front in this process will save weeks of ineffective ministry because you sought an answer right away. The faculty of your Sunday School are key to having a successful, healthy, growing church. The Sunday School is organized to accomplish The Great Commission, but it will only be as effective as the leaders you recruit. For more information, contact me at 1-800-736-6227 Extension 410 or at www.mobaptist.org/sundayschool.

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