

Build Leadership Pipeline

Lesson Nine: How to Retain Leaders

Welcome to Lesson 9 on Building a Leadership Pipeline. I'm going to talk to you about how to retain leaders. Recruiting people is important, giving them team meetings, getting them on track but how do you keep them in a place of serving with a great attitude and enjoying what they're doing.

So here's a range of things that you can utilise to retain volunteers and leaders as you build a leadership pipeline.

Purpose

The first one is purpose. It's absolutely vital that you keep your big picture purpose front and centre for all your volunteers and leaders.

People's motivation to be involved in serving drops when they just feel like they're, I'm just a cog in a big machine, I can't seem to work out why we're doing this, I don't know the beginning from the end, I just feel like I'm doing a task. If people are lifted out of that and begin to see the purpose, they get motivated afresh. It's really rocket fuel for you volunteers when you tell them about the big picture. It will help them get through any disappointments and hurts, they'll get out of bed early to serve Christ and his church.

So don't be afraid to constantly remind your leaders and volunteers the why behind the what.

Use all sorts of ways to do this. Use social media, Sunday announcements, re visioning segments at volunteers meetings (you're all in meetings), use the church e-zine, use the bulletin or however you communicate to your church, in one on one conversations remind people of the purpose. Stories of purpose and vision fulfilment that happen, those good news stories. Use all sorts of means and methods to bring the purpose front and centre back for people as they serve in your leadership pipeline.

Celebrate

The second way to retain leaders is celebrate the wins that you have. There's a real strong link in research between goal achievement and motivation. It confirms what we already know to be true in our lives. Every time you achieve a personal goal - you might lose a bit of weight, increase your fitness, read a book or finish a study program. We always feel better about ourselves, our lives, and the entire universe because we feel like we're conquering something.

So it's important to set achievable, yet challenging, targets for teams to get to. Maybe even for the whole church. I love the goal of an annual visitor's number for a church. Not a great growth goal but it is a goal that focusses the church on outsiders - I love that goal.

But whatever goal or target you set with various teams or across the whole leadership team, celebrate it. Highlight the achievement. Honour the key volunteers who played a role in that. Show pictures of that event happening or that program coming to fruition and reward special efforts.

I'm a huge fan of "Volunteer of the Month". Of celebrating in front of the whole church unsung heroes and making a big deal of it. Celebrate even an entire Department on one Sunday. Get all the leaders out from that Department, give them a Mars Bar or a Cadbury block of chocolate each, something that goes thank you for reaching that target with us. Celebrate achievement.

Outcomes focus

A third way to retain leaders is to be outcome focussed. Research into people's motivation shows that people remain highly motivated when they have autonomy and can direct their own lives. When people are not empowered, when they're micro managed, when a leader comes into their world and meddles with a task or an authority or a power that a leader has previously given them, motivation drops.

You don't retain leaders by authorising them to act and then meddling in what they're doing with that action. It's vital that you release them and you focus not on the process, but on the outcomes. Let's face it, everyone has a different style and if the outcome of say a small group meeting is that people build relationships and focus on the scriptures, however they run it - in a morning, afternoon, evening. Whether they run it in a home, in a cafe. Whether it s40 minutes long or 2 hours long, let the style flow out of the leader and into the life of the group.

As long as the outcome is achieved let people have their head, as it were. Let them have their process, let them have their style. Give people liberty to express their leadership in the way that they need to. It's got to be legal, ethical and moral of course! I'm not talking about dodgy stuff here. I'm talking about letting people express their personality and their process in their own unique way. Vital I think to be outcome focussed if you want to retain high capacity leaders.

Encourage

The fourth thing is encourage. When people achieve, what they want is a pat on the back and there's different strokes for different folks. You as a key leader can play a great role in how you encourage. For some people it's a simple thank you note. For other people it is public affirmation where you give them an award. Other times it's appreciating people in sermon's and announcements. Other times it's a quiet little text saying thank you. It can be

boasting about someone's work to another key leader or another influencer in the life of the church.

It's vital that you do this I think in various ways. Some churches hold an annual volunteer appreciation night to thank their volunteers. So you need a mixture of the private and the public when you're doing this level of encouragement.

Remember only encourage the behaviour, the attitudes, the results that you want repeated by others. Don't think you can encourage a person who's behaving badly into a good place by holding them up in front of others to boost their ego to get them to the place you want them to be. Don't do that. Encourage and spotlight the behaviours and attitudes that you want repeated in others.

Example

A fifth way to do this is be an example yourself of what you want repeated. There are many scriptures around that. In 1 Corinthians 11v1 Paul said "follow my example as I follow the example of Christ". In 1 Timothy 4v12 Paul exhorts Timothy to set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and purity.

I could go on with a number of scriptures but it's important that when you set an example you understand what's going on. You'll inspire people with your example. You'll also model then how to act, how to behave, how to serve in a certain way and also you'll be an antidote for all those bad examples that are out there and sometimes unfortunately get into the life of the church as well.

Team

The sixth and last way that you can retain leaders is put people in teams. Jesus loved teams, he had a team of 12. You can see in the book of Acts, Paul with his team, John with his team, Peter with his team. Put people in teams, they serve way better in teams.

Next Steps

Establish volunteer of month

Why not think about establishing a volunteer of the month? Celebrate individuals and Departments each month in your church.

Write 5 encouragement notes

Write 5 encouragement notes to people, especially to introverts. People not so keen on public praise. Write them an encouragement note, privately blessing them with your words of encouragement.

Articulate purpose to 7 leaders

Why don't you take the time in the next week or so to articulate the purpose of the church to 7 different leaders. Weave it into conversations and remind them of the why behind the what.

I reckon these six ways will help you to retain more leaders as you build that leadership pipeline.

Download and Complete the Check List