



What Workers Want

Making a caring connection with your team means walking in their shoes.

2 Thessalonians 1:11

What do your church workers want from their leaders? Here's what your paid staff and volunteers are thinking about, even if they don't say it out loud.

"Give me a clear, compelling purpose."

Happy workers are crystal clear on their ministry's purpose. They can tell you not only why their team exists, but also why that cause is important. For an important cause, they will give selflessly, and thank you for it. As Andy Stanley said in a talk on vision, workers want answers to three big questions:

1. What is the problem?
2. What is the solution?
3. Why are we the ones to solve it now?

Answer those questions clearly, and people will volunteer for all manner of tasks.

"Involve me as much as possible."

On one hand, workers are busy and juggling multiple priorities. On the other hand, they desperately want to have input into the direction and execution of the ministry.

"Don't waste my time."

Your workers want to contribute. They see their work as a wonderful way to build meaning and purpose into life. And they evaluate every meeting, e-mail, and phone call to see if it adds meaning. If not, they will withdraw and allocate their time elsewhere.

"Don't starve my ministry."

Workers develop a sensitive nose for the hopelessly under-resourced project. Nothing leads to the starving of projects more predictably than a failure to regularly prune the ministry project list. As a leader, I find that I need a "stop doing" list at least as much as a "to do" list. Otherwise, I simply confuse and frustrate my volunteers.

"Stop the ball-hogging."

Any ball player knows how little fun it is to play with a ball hog. What that player is silently communicating is that he doesn't trust you to do something good with the ball. And eventually, you just want to sit down.

"Celebrate moments by creating traditions."

A couple of years ago, we got to the end of our ministry season and I wanted to hold our monthly volunteer meeting near a lake. I decided to do a take-off on the foot-washing story; we gave each leader a servant's towel and, as a group, affirmed some way that they had imitated Jesus' service. Dry eyes were at a premium as we soaked in the affirmation of God and our peers. The next year, with the same result, we decided to make the towel-affirmation a tradition.

—TED HARRO; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership journal*, © 2006 by Christianity Today International. For more articles like this, visit www.Leadershipjournal.net.

Discuss

1. How well do we know what our church workers want from our leaders?
2. How often do our workers tell us what they want? What happens when they do?
3. How would you deal with a "ball hog" in a caring manner?