

YOUTH MINISTRY MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Everything you need
to successfully manage
and administrate your
youth ministry

GINNY OLSON DIANE ELLIOT MIKE WORK



ZONDERVAN™

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49530 USA

Youth Ministry Management Tools: Everything you need to successfully manage and administrate your youth ministry

Copyright © 2001 by Ginny Olson, Diane Elliot, and Mike Work

Youth Specialties Books, 300 S. Pierce St., El Cajon, CA 92020, are published by Zondervan, 5300 Patterson Ave. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49530.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Olson, Ginny,

Youth ministry management tools : everything you need to successfully manage and administrate your youth ministry / Ginny Olson, Diane Elliot, Mike Work.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-310-23596-0

1. Church work with youth. 2. Church youth workers. 3. Church management. I. Elliot, Diane. II. Work, Mike, 1961- III. Title.

BV4447 .O49 2001

259'.23—dc21

00-043936

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible: New International Version (North America Edition). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in an retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, with out the prior permission of the publisher.

Before you use any forms or tips or checklists or any other piece of advice in this book, evaluate them for their sutability to your own church and youth group, for any potential risks, for safety precautions that must be taken, and for advance preparation that may be required. Neither Youth Specialties, Zondervan, TCS Software, nor the authors are responsible for, nor have any control over, the use of misuse of any information published in this book and CD-ROM. Neither are these resources a substitute for your own legal counsel.

Edited by Linda Bannan, Cheri McLaughlin, and Dave Urbanski

Cover; interior; CD-ROM label, and splash screen design by Left Coast

Additional design contributions by Mary Fletcher

Other contributions by Heidi Clevenger, Tom Gulotta, Lorna McFarland Hartman, and Roni Valerio-Meek

Printed in the United States of America

00 01 02 03 04 05 06 / / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4

- **Team building**
- **Risk Management**
- **Getting a youth ministry job**

Team building

It's 3 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon. You're standing in the church parking lot with a smelly sleeping bag, a half-empty bag of Doritos, and the insides of a couple of cans of shaving cream.

You've just sent the last kid home from the retreat, and you look around at an exhausted group of volunteers. Somebody suggests heading out for burgers and you think, "Bed or burgers?" You know in a second what your decision will be—as bone tired as you are, you want to spend just a little more time with this group of people to hear their stories and to celebrate the weekend.

Because that's what it means to be part of a team with members who are committed to each other.

Being a team member is about standing up at each other's weddings. It's about getting up before sunrise in order to get to the hospital to pray together before one of you has surgery. It's about bringing over red Jell-O with mandarin oranges to a home whose cook is ill, or green beans with cream of mushroom soup and little crunchy onion rings when a baby is born. (In fact, you may want to make cooking a qualification for being on your team.)

*Team building is about creating community together.
It's about doing ministry together.*

In Team building—

17. Building a healthy team
18. Recruiting volunteers
19. Life cycle of team members
20. Developing interns

Building a healthy team

"It's difficult to work in a group when you're omnipotent."

Q, "Star Trek: The Next Generation"

Chapter preview

- ▶ Why you need a team
- ▶ Make way for volunteers
- ▶ Roles for volunteers
- ▶ Expectations of spiritual maturity
- ▶ Lifestyle expectations
- ▶ Participation requirements
- ▶ Relational expectations
- ▶ Expectations of length of service
- ▶ **Quick Start:** Identify spiritual gifts and arenas of interest

Why you need a team

Various needs of both adolescents and the adults who work with them make team ministry essential.

- ▶ **The need of this generation.** Whereas adolescents used to have all sorts of adults with whom to connect—parents, grandparents, Scout leaders, teachers, coaches, Sunday school teachers—these days those connections are fewer and disappear faster. Students have much more coming at them, but they have fewer places to talk about what's going on in their lives. (Perhaps that's why so many of them are turning to chat rooms.)
- ▶ **The need for multiplication.** Experience shows that a person can develop only a limited number of relationships in the limited amount of time available. That means you have a choice—you can pour your life into 15 kids, and at the end of the year you'll have affected 15 kids. Or you can spend your time developing five or 10 volunteers (and five kids on the side because that's why you're doing this in the first place), and those 10 volunteers in turn nurture five or 10 kids each. At the end of the year you'll have reached anywhere from 30 to 105 kids and five to 10 adults.

Worship team

- ▶ **Worship team leader.** Gives direction to the team, both on a personal and a performance ministry level. *5 hours a week*
- ▶ **Band members.** Guitar, drums, keyboard, et cetera. *4 hours a week, includes rehearsal time*
- ▶ **Drama leader.** Develops a team of students to perform once a month. *10 hours a week*
- ▶ **Script writers.** Students and adults who write scripts that minister to high school students. *5 hours a week*
- ▶ **Drama team members.** Students and adults who perform scripts to minister to high school students. *4 hours a week*
- ▶ **Director of a student arts festival.** An entrepreneurial type who understands the importance of the arts in communicating the gospel to this generation, who knows how to organize and promote a festival, and who can coach a team of volunteers to assist in the development. *Varying time commitment*

unteer should squeeze 10 kids into her five-seat car. The wise youth worker—and the youth worker determined to stay at one job more than two years—thinks beforehand about the consequences of scenarios like these.

- ▶ **The need to use our gifts.** Youth workers do everything from designing brochures to reserving buses to counseling kids in crisis. In other words, we spend a lot of energy doing things that pull us away from what we're good at because of what Charles Hummel calls the "tyranny of the urgent." Volunteers can help out by bringing their gifts and passions to the team. If one of your weak areas is graphic design, for instance, and yet you find yourself spending hours designing camp fliers, pray and search for someone in your church who has a background in design. He may have never have thought about volunteering with the youth ministry because he's scared to death of having a conversation with a high schooler. But he'd love to help out with designing fliers (and the camp T-shirt). The task gets done in a third of the time and looks ten times better. You're freed up to prepare the messages, and he's using his gifts for the kingdom in a way he hadn't realized he could.

- ▶ **The need to use common sense.** Wherever two or more are gathered, there is more protection than if there was just one. Youth ministry tends to be both relational and risky. No youth worker these days should lead an overnighter with students and without another adult. No new volunteer should lead a group without first shadowing a veteran to watch and learn. No veteran vol-

FasTrack

48 Unless our youth ministries are only going to consist of five kids, we're going to need some help.

FasTrack

49 Your requirements for volunteer time commitment must be long enough to form relationships with students and short enough to appeal to volunteers.

Make way for volunteers

Before recruiting volunteers, take time to lay the groundwork. A strong foundation minimizes future errors. Granted, not many people ever see the foundation, but they can sure tell whether or not you had one as soon as the first major storm hits (and the storms will hit).

- ▶ **Describe the roles.** List all the roles (both existing and potential) for volunteers in the youth ministry. Let your imagination run wild. What have you been dying to see happen in the ministry but don't have the time or perhaps the ability to pull off? Jog your vision by thinking in categories, such as area of service or time required to do the service.
- ▶ **Define expectations for volunteers.** Code your phone DO NOT DISTURB, or head out to the local coffee shop with your laptop. However you can, get some uninterrupted time to write out your expectations for volunteers in youth ministry—expectations for spiritual maturity, lifestyle, and participation.

What would you do?

Julia, hired to oversee kindergarten through senior high ministries, set as her first priority getting to know those already working with the kids. She learned that one of the grade school Sunday school teachers was a white witch. It had happened this way: During the past few years, this woman's husband and child had become Christians. She was curious about what they believed in, and decided to check out Christianity. The pastor's sermons were over her head, she told Julia, and she didn't quite follow what went on in the Bible study her husband attended. She did understand the stories and lessons in her child's Sunday school class, however; so she started to help out there. She ended up teaching.

Question: Should Julia let her stay or ask her to stop teaching? Why or why not?

Small groups

- ▶ **Adult leaders.** Adults who meet with a group of 3-8 students on a weekly basis for Bible study, prayer, and discussion. *4 hours a week*
- ▶ **Student leaders.** Current members of the high school ministry who desire to test their leadership skills by leading a small group of their peers. *4 hours a week*
- ▶ **Coach.** An adult volunteer who helps shepherd the student small group leaders. *4 hours a week*

Hands-on team

- ▶ **Greeters.** Parents who make new students feel welcome, gather permission slips, and hand out fliers. They also connect with other parents who may have questions. *2 hours a week*
- ▶ **Hosts.** Parents who provide both food and a place for small groups to meet, either on a regular basis or for special occasions. *Variable time commitment*
- ▶ **Drivers.** Parents who chauffeur the middle schoolers to various ministry events. *4 hours a month*
- ▶ **Office help.** Parents with an administrative bent who can organize and maintain a student database, send out mailings, call on event details, follow up on explanations on medical release forms, maintain the ministry computer. *Variable time commitment*

Specialty teams

- ▶ **Light and sound.** A team of students who run the sound system on retreats and special occasions.
- ▶ **Technology.** Includes an adult or student who can put your messages on PowerPoint or other presentation software and a Web-site designer who works with the promotion team to put the latest news and information on the Internet.
- ▶ **Graphic design.** Either a student or an adult with a strong graphic design bent who can put together newsletters, ministry brochures, fliers, posters, banners, birthday cards, welcome cards, and so on.
- ▶ **Games.** Adults or students who run weekly competitions or monthly events, like three-on-three basketball tournaments for outreach, the Valentine's Day parent-student 10K run, or the annual senior-citizens-versus-the-senior-highers sand volleyball competition.
- ▶ **Fundraising.** Adults with marketing, accounting, and entrepreneurial experience to run several fundraisers—or one large fundraiser—each year. Make sure they work with your church treasurer to stay within the ethical and legal boundaries of fundraising.
- ▶ **Public relations.** Calls for someone with a strong marketing background or who can creatively communicate to a large group. This may require only a minimal commitment, so team members can also serve as leaders in other areas.
- ▶ **Special events and projects.** Adults and students who develop service projects, mission trips, parent-student events.
- ▶ **Driving.** Adults who help transport students. To screen drivers use the **Driver Application (page 400)**.

One youth pastor's solution: Julia made the call to let her stay—provided that the woman serve in an assisting role only—helping to set up art projects and treats. She could have no direct relationship with any of the kids. The other teachers in the classroom knew the boundaries and accepted the woman in the role of helper. Two years later the woman was baptized after becoming a Christian.

P.S.: Julia had quite a few years of experience in ministry and was able to set firm boundaries for her volunteers when she had to. Her decision, of course, is not recommended for all similar situations. But considering who Julia was, who the volunteer was, and their common situation, the arrangement worked.

What would you do?

A 30-year-old man you interview for a volunteer position with your youth group states that he had been involved in several homosexual relationships in college. Although those experiences happened several years ago, he admits to having struggles with old desires during the past six months. Since he didn't want to repeat the homosexual behavior, he joined an accountability group. He says everything is fine now, but he just wanted to be up front with you about his personal history.

Question: Do you bring him on board or not?

One youth worker's solution: The youth pastor decided to bring him on board with the following stipulations:

- ▶ He must remain in the accountability group.
- ▶ For the first six months of volunteering, he must take a job offering no direct contact with students.
- ▶ The situation will be reevaluated at the end of the six months.

What would you do?

You've just come off a weekend retreat, and the volunteers decide to go out for pizza to celebrate and tell stories. You offer to wait at the church for the last kid to be picked up and then meet up with them. Thirty minutes later you arrive at the restaurant. While you're still outside, you notice through the window a pitcher of beer on the table. The ministry has a well-known policy of no alcohol at church-related gatherings. What do you do?

- Turn around and go home. You could use the sleep anyway.
- Let it go. After all, this isn't strictly a ministry event since the volunteers initiated it.
- Go in and confront the team.
- Go in and hope that this is just someone's idea of a practical joke.
- Other:

Relational expectations

Support your volunteers by clearly describing what kind of relationship you expect them to have with students. Without guidance the extroverts will try to build a life-changing relationship with every kid in the group, and the introverts will merely show up and sit in the back. Okay, that's an overgeneralization—but volunteers do want to know if they're to meet with students only during the scheduled meeting times, or if you expect them to contact students outside those gatherings. Are weekly phone calls an expectation? Do you want your small group leaders to get the students together for an activity once a month? Or would you be thrilled if a leader does it once

Smart Tip

One youth worker uses the Instant Messaging feature on her online service to carry on conversations with several kids at the same time.

Expectations of spiritual maturity

What level of spiritual maturity are you looking for in volunteers? Is it okay for some of the volunteers to be new believers? Seekers? Or do they need to have major portions of scripture tattooed to their forearms before you'll even consider them?

A good rule of thumb: Volunteers who have direct and regular contact with students (a small-group leader, for example) need a well-developed faith that they can easily articulate. A behind-the-scenes volunteer who does data entry or acts as the sound technician can be a new or nonbeliever. The main objective of your youth ministry is probably not evangelization of adult volunteers, though. Make sure you keep your main thing the main thing.

We like to make a distinction between our private and public lives and say, "Whatever I do in my private life is nobody else's business." But anyone trying to live a spiritual life will soon discover that the most personal is the most universal, the most hidden is the most public, and the most solitary is the most communal.

(Henri Nouwen. *Bread for the Journey.* HarperCollins Publishers, 1997)

Lifestyle expectations

Think through the following lifestyle concerns. What is your personal view on each one? What are your organization's expectations regarding each lifestyle for its staff and volunteers?

Alcohol

What is the view of your church or organization about Christians drinking alcohol? What is your view?

Does your church have a policy about alcohol being served at church events?

If volunteers must sign a ministry covenant of any sort, does it include a statement regarding alcohol?

Drug use

How long does someone need to be "clean" before he can work with students?

Can someone attending a 12-step program also minister among your students?

Clothing

Different cultures, subcultures, and regions have different standards of appropriateness in dress. How can you be culturally sensitive without being legalistic or scandalous?

What reasons are there for and against providing guidelines for what clothing you and your church consider appropriate for your culture for a given activity?

Sexuality

What is the view of your church or organization about homosexuality as a lifestyle for Christians? What is your view?

Does your church have a policy about people who are homosexual serving in leadership positions?

Can someone who has acknowledged having homosexual experiences earlier in life minister among your students?

What is the view of your church or organization about having had premarital or extramarital relations once? About living together unmarried? What is your view about these things?

If volunteers have sex outside of marriage or with a partner other than their spouse, what are the ramifications for their ministry with the youth? Counseling? Removal from ministry? A probationary period?

a year? If initiating extra activities with students is among your expectations for volunteers, consider offering a small stipend to cover expenses—fast food, gas, et cetera.

What expectations do you have of a volunteer's relationship to you? Do they need to meet with you on a regular basis? It's important that volunteers can regularly have access to you, one-on-one, to share their joys as well as their frustrations. Set up regular evaluations where they can evaluate both you and the ministry. Remember, you're there to serve them as they serve God through ministering to kids.

Smart Tip

Keep the culture in mind

For volunteers who believe that spending time together is more important than starting on schedule, a 6 p.m. meeting won't start till everyone has informally traded news and enjoyed a few munchies. For volunteers who live by their Palm® organizer, a 6 p.m. meeting that doesn't get rolling until 6:15 p.m. frustrates and discourages them. By placing on the agenda crucial, relationship-building activities like eating and socializing, you honor both styles...and even keep to the schedule.

Quick Start

Identify spiritual gifts and areas of interest

Many tools for discerning spiritual gifts are currently in use in churches. Find out right away if your church offers workshops or adult classes on spiritual gifts. Prospective volunteers who have taken the classes may already know that youth ministry suits their interests and abilities.

You can use the following questions to help volunteers identify their areas of interest and discern the most appropriate area in which they might serve.

Area of service

Find out what triggers a person to dream and plan and take action. That arena is where she'll find most satisfaction and where you'll get her best work.

- ▶ What keeps you awake at night (beside too much coffee)?
- ▶ What do you find yourself pounding the table over?
- ▶ What would your friends say is a recurring theme in your conversations?
- ▶ What topics do you find yourself drawn to read about?
- ▶ What Web trail do you find yourself following—music, movies, youth culture, counseling?

Spiritual gifts and natural abilities

Sometimes these overlap; sometimes not.

- ▶ What activities brought you joy, energy, or success in early childhood? In grade school? Middle school? High school? College? As a young adult?
- ▶ What are the recurring themes of your memories?
- ▶ What verbs do you find yourself using—organizing, creating, discussing, building, performing, writing?
- ▶ What patterns do you discern?
- ▶ What insights have you gained in spiritual gifts workshops (like Network or Life Keys) or from sermons or Christian teaching?

Participation requirements

What level of participation do you expect from team members?

- ▶ Do you require church membership and worship attendance? Can it be at another church?
- ▶ Do all ministry roles carry the same expectations for participation? Is the head of the drama team expected to be at Sunday school, for instance, even though she has no responsibilities during that time?
- ▶ Must volunteers attend both the Wednesday night Bible study and Sunday school?
- ▶ Must they attend weekly prep meetings? Quarterly volunteer training day?
- ▶ Do they need to attend all retreats, mission trips, and camps?
- ▶ How often do you expect them to meet one-on-one with you? Every month? Every other month?
- ▶ How long do you expect them to serve?

Expectations on length of service

Many people hesitate to volunteer for fear they're signing up for an unending commitment. Write into the job description how long you're asking them to serve. Some ministries require commitment for one school year: leadership training and development in mid-August, ministry kick-off in early September, and ministry closeout in early June. A summer team of interns comes in from June through August to allow the regular leaders to take the summer off to relax. One ministry that used the school-year commitment had leaders who stayed an average of three years. The leaders started with a group of sixth graders and stayed with them until they went to high school. The summers off allowed them to recuperate and come back eager to serve.

It's a good idea to add up the amount of time you expect volunteers to give each week. Also chart how many ongoing meetings they need to attend. You may begin to see why you have difficulty recruiting people. Adults generally won't give up two nights a week to be at church.

Schedule as many "cross-roads" meetings as possible. If the team is going to be at church on Sunday morning anyway, for instance, can you provide early morning donuts and Starbucks Coffee and have your weekly prep or check an hour before church starts? Can team members come an hour before the Bible study starts on Wednesday night for training, rather than making a special trip on Saturday?

Spiritual gifts

From the following list, choose those spiritual gifts you feel you already use. (Some of these gifts are alluded to rather than named in the Bible.)

- Administration
- Creative communication
- Counseling
- Discernment
- Encouragement
- Evangelism
- Helps
- Hospitality
- Leadership
- Listening
- Mediation
- Mercy
- Shepherding
- Teaching

In what way have those close to you (who are honest with you) affirmed those gifts?

Smart Tip

The Cocktail Party Principle

In case you haven't figured it out yet, food always helps motivate people to get to a meeting. Besides that, people tend to talk more freely when they have food or a drink in their hand. No wonder eating and parties show up so often in the Bible.