

Essay Title: Preparing New Leaders

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Author: The Reverend Bill Zelazny

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RECENTLY IN A CONVERSATION, a Publicity Committee chair in a church told me that she had been told by the Nominating Committee member who recruited her that “all I had to do was hang a few posters.” Of course, she soon discovered there was a lot more to do, or that could be done to be effective.

Many congregation leaders tell me they have problems finding volunteers. In a recent issue of BoardMember, Kelly Felice, a professor at Metropolitan State College of Denver, gave some suggestions which I think are good to follow when trying to recruit volunteers. (Note that I said recruit, not ask. Recruiting is taking time to help a person understand the position and getting to see the contribution they can make to the institution that is important to them. Recruiting takes time. It needs to be started months before the position is to be filled. ASKING is just trying to get a yes out of someone as quickly as possible.

Here are recommendations for leaders and Nominating Committees:

- Invest in honesty with prospects. Tell them what is really being asked of them. Give them a written job description.
- When possible divide work into time-specific tasks. While organizations are used to working with operational committees, such open-ended committee assignments frighten people. Ask the volunteer to work for a specific length of time with the option to re-up.
- Provide in-depth training of new volunteers. Do not just throw volunteers into the job. The former chair or the board president should be sure the new volunteer sees the whole picture and understands every aspect of the programs and projects.
- Respect the work of the volunteers; do not redo their work at board meetings.
- Make hard decisions if you have to. Sometimes a volunteer is not the right person for the job. The role of a leader is to find the right spot for the person and if necessary not let them take on an assignment that will not be beneficial to them or to the church.

Being a good recruiter is an important part of making a church work effectively.

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Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108 617.742.2100 uua.org