

Volunteers
Blessing or Curse!



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Volunteer involvement in the construction of smaller churches has been on the rise over the last three decades. Many laypersons are investing vacation, retirement, and leisure time in order to save small churches big dollars. According to statistics, millions of dollars have been saved in construction costs, as well as, reducing long-term debt loads. All this is due in part to the thousands of volunteers who have taken ownership to become good stewards.

The results to the church's bottom line are obvious, but the impact on these laypersons is even greater. They receive a new and revitalized commitment to their church and its ministry. In addition, a greater awareness for the need of church workers is realized from this self-sacrificing act. These efforts leave many with a deeper sense of satisfaction and spiritual contentment.

As with all things in life, there is, "a right way and a wrong way". Even the greatest blessings become a curse when there is a lack of knowledge, understanding, and proper planning. A church should consider the following suggestions when utilizing their members for construction volunteers.

- Step One:** Hire professional people with years of specialized church design and planning experience to oversee the project. Make sure the company selected has experience coordinating volunteer help.
- Step Two:** Run a S.W.O.T. analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats)
This will reveal the skill level of your volunteers. Whether maximizing or minimizing volunteer help, it will be vital that their skills coordinate with the building project's size, scope, structural system, etc.

Example, your membership has several carpenters and framers that have volunteered their time. It is reasonable then that the building should be designed for wood "stick built" construction instead of using masonry walls.

This type of planning and coordinating will yield tremendous dividends by saving time in construction through the efficient and effective use of people skills, as well as, the realization of sweat equity to the bottom line.

Primarily, volunteers will use their vacation time, as a result, scheduling volunteer crews well in advance, will be necessary. A building project is a time-consuming process requiring local approvals, permits, and other related efforts that can require up to nine months to complete. The delays and time requirements for the entire pre-construction process, never fail to amaze people.