

## MentorNet #03

# Helping Volunteer Field Workers to Persevere

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To sustain church or cell multiplication, a huge number of volunteer pastoral trainers must participate. By saying ‘volunteer’ we include workers who may receive support but not specifically to work with a project, such as Train And Multiply™, that we are helping them to implement. From our perspective they are volunteers, as we have no organizational authority within their denomination, church or mission organization. They identify with their own leaders and organizational structures and need well-motivated coordinators within their own organization to keep them focused. How can we help workers whom we do not pay to keep focused on coordinating pastoral training in a way that is geared to, and instrumental in, church or cell multiplication?

**A common pattern has emerged.** Following a workshop or interviews to explain the New Testament guidelines for training leaders the way Christ and the apostles did, volunteers are eager to use a curriculum geared to mentoring new leaders in new churches or cells. In time, however, their zeal subsides and traditional educators coax them back into more familiar programs and church multiplication declines.

**To keep volunteer workers on the job requires regular, caring communication.** Continuing motivation often depends on identification with a caring leader and group. When we mentor a worker in another organization, their leaders and group are already in place. We must understand this social context in order to merge our work with theirs.

**We need easy-to-use tools.** The volunteers that we work with all want to see their churches or cells multiply. That is a common hope. But many still fail to sustain coordination of a training effort that keeps up with the potential multiplication. So obviously, we need additional tools to help them keep focused on coordinating the training. I’m not referring to tools that help us ‘psyche them out’ to discern their personality type, then dangle a carrot in front of them.

I wrote a brief paper to do just that and sent it to Tom Richardson whose Ph.D. research investigated why volunteers stop doing good work. He waved a yellow flag—don’t use pop psychology. I had mentioned the classic personality types and what keeps them motivated. Sanguine types, like playful puppies, keep working as long as they can focus on people they like. Others are like bulls who set the pace, pushing to get the job done; they persevere as long as they can lead and get things done. Others are like carthorses that keep plodding because they love the process and can see incremental progress. Others, like eagles, see long range objectives and keep working as long they can evaluate the ethics and values of the project, and use their creativity to steer the process. Others are blends and like to coordinate it all. I thought that this was on target, but... even if we could define these types accurately, few people enjoy being compared to a beast and manipulated psychologically.

Dr. Galen Currah points out, “Many American Christians gave up use of the Bible to counsel people during the last generation, not because of liberal theology or atheistic propaganda, but because Christian professionals told them that only psychologists possess the required mystical knowledge.” Right on, Galen! I was taught that in a Christian college. But now we know that Pastors and Christian counselors who use Biblical guidelines, including in small groups, have a better record in solving common marital and personal problems than do the pros. This applies also to keeping volunteers on the job. As Galen put it, “Motivational techniques should arise from Scripture and the authentic presence of the Holy Spirit. The commands of Jesus are the greatest motivators. What takes away a volunteer worker’s motivation? Very often elitist clergy, educators or administrators leave ordinary mortals thinking that what they do or intend to do requires expert knowledge, theological competence or financial resources that they lack.” I Have seen such an elitist attitude by the pros discourage many workers. It’s been done to me and I’ve done it to others. Gloom! An honest application of 1 Corinthians chapters 12 through 13 or other passages on God’s spiritual gifts for all believers helps us get over it.

To find mentoring tools and sites, visit <<http://www.MentorAndMultiply.com>>.

We invite those who use Train & Multiply™ to write to George Patterson at <[GPatterson@cvmail.net](mailto:GPatterson@cvmail.net)>.

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