

Paid volunteers- managing expectations

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Paid volunteers exist in many of our churches, staff that are part time paid AND work hours in the same role voluntary. When organisation priorities change, these working relationships can be tested as the leadership strategically increase existing, or add new, resources to other areas of the church.

Could these relationships have been better protected from the beginning?

At the core is a common human tension from which churches are not immune, unmet expectations from our relationships. These tensions test the relationship; hopefully build character, but not always.

Here are some things to consider the when relating to paid volunteer staff about their role in your church.

Steering the ship in all seasons

Communicate changed church priorities as appropriate. As church conditions change, strategic decisions are made regarding what's needed to 'steer the ship' in the right direction. What was promised on the ship deck last month may now be needed to strengthen another area for the season ahead. Share with staff why and how the decision was made.

Wise empathy

Guard and protect your working relationship with your staff, especially outside the church work context. Many church families, leaders and staff, also live life together, sharing their hopes and dreams with each other.

Realise that, as a leader, any informal heart felt casual conversations regarding staff role terms and conditions with your staff, is NOT a conversation of equals and is best kept within the 'office'. Even at the office promises or hopeful intentions made to staff may be premature and best left alone until reality catches up.



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What the role is and what it isn't!

Define the voluntary component of the role to staff as a voluntary agreement.

Include a statement to the effect of 'these tasks are performed voluntarily and carry no expectation to be remunerated'. Remember to keep the voluntary component of the staff role separated from the paid part of the role which is covered by your Individual Employment Agreement.

Consider having any voluntary Intern roles as a fixed term. Why? Most Interns are investing in the role and will have expectations on where it will lead. The Intern agreement should state that there is no expectation of employment at the end of the term.



Appearing to accept change won't mean there isn't an internal struggle with the unmet expectations for both leaders and staff. Protect your staff working relationships with realistic expectations and healthy relationship boundaries. Your volunteer staff may still need to process the changed situation, but any unintended barriers are eliminated.

Ricki-Lee welcomes any feedback or opportunity to discuss this topic further.

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