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How to Triple Your Attendance

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To Lead is to Serve – How to Attract Volunteers & Keep Them.

People feel happiest when they feel they belong.
When people feel included, they support you.
When excluded, they will undermine you.

*“We quickly went from 80 members to 300
using these principles.” – Dr. Eugene Callendar
St. James Presbyterian Church, New York City*

Most people enter a room looking for a recognizable face. They don't feel safe until they've found someone to connect with. If you are a leader in your organization, you probably do feel safe, included and connected. You are comfortable, so you may not notice when others are feeling left out. Your challenge, if you want to increase attendance, is to notice.

I served on the Board of Directors of an organization that was losing members. Attendance was lagging at the meetings, so we did two things:

1. We asked board members to say hello to everyone at every meeting, spending extra time with people the board member didn't know.
2. We created “Greeters” – five members who conversed (actual conversations) with attendees. The five wore “Greeter” badges, and then each one recruited someone else to be a greeter at the following meeting.

With this plan, everyone was assured of being welcomed by at least two people. We initiated this welcoming policy at a June meeting. We met once a month. By August, we had tripled the attendance. Three times as many people were now attending the meetings!

It didn't require extra time. It didn't cost money. The board members and the greeters were at the meetings anyway. Instead of talking to each other, they were reaching out to everyone.

Surveys show that people want these things:

- Make my life easier.
- Save me time.
- Don't rip me off.
- Give my life purpose.
- Pay attention and appreciate me.

In business, customers want a good price and a good product. They also want attention and appreciation. With volunteers, one survey showed the key to keeping them was *continuous* recognition and appreciation. Attention and appreciation can't be doled out occasionally. They have to be given on a regular basis.

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