

LEAD Team Attracting the 20's Generation

The problem, simply put, is that people in their twenties are not very attracted to church. Even those who grew up in the local church often check out after high school. Will they every come back? It is true that some will return when they have kids. But this is a concession at best.

I hope I'm not alone in this, but I want them now! I don't want to be the youngest adult in my church, and I'm 45. I want the face of Christianity to be a young face – certainly younger than mine!

Perhaps you noticed the opening statement on the page on LEAD Team – “Get the Leaders! Get the Leaders! Get the Leaders! They will get the laborers.”

I feel like I pushed this too gently in my book, though I did give hints. However, I'll try to say it as plainly as I can.

If you want to get the 20's generation, go for the 20's leaders.
In order to attract 20's leaders, you must empower them to lead.

If you are in leadership in your local church, I have one big word for you – **internships**. Internships could be paid or volunteer, full time or part time, a year, or just a summer. Internships are very flexible, they offer experience to the student, and they are an opportunity with low cost of entry to bring leaders into the local church. The campus groups are already doing this to attract leaders to their organizations – kudos to them.

That said, let's list the options, commitments, and realities.

Options

- Full time, paid position for a year.

- If you have a great candidate but your church cannot afford the entire salary, perhaps the student leader can raise half.
- It is also possible that a 10-15 hour per week internship would fit nicely with a student leader that has another year of college left. They might even get credit for it. A summer internship might have the same benefits.
- It is even possible to work out a volunteer internship – perhaps 10 hours a week. This is about empowerment and opportunity.

Commitments

I think it is clear that if you intend to employ an intern that you should have some commitments that you make to their development. You want them to be effective, and to have a good experience.

- Expect to have regular one on one meetings – at least half an hour most weeks.
- Try to clearly define work that they are well suited to do. And make sure that you have time to get them started in that work.
- Listen to what they desire to do. Try to make it happen for them. You might be surprised at the variety of interests that potential interns might have. Of course you need to find a balance with your needs and their interests. But they might be things like worship, children's ministry, small groups, evangelism, youth, adult Sunday school, preaching, teaching, networking, marketing, technology, the list goes on. Keep in mind that these student leaders often have experience in their areas of interest. They "get" to do a lot in their organizations. You may be surprised at what they can do in yours.
- Consider how you might give them a well rounded experience – with some work in a variety of service areas.
- Probably, it will be your commitment to find and attract potential interns. Talk to campus staff about interns. Most likely they know some leaders that are not going on staff with their organization. Ask for references.

Realities

Have you ever noticed that Jesus picked disciples who had one recurring conflict? There is no record of them having an argument over politics, even though they had a tax collector and a zealot among them. Apart from Jesus, those two might literally have killed each other and felt good about it. The disciples didn't argue about class distinctions, social ideals, or even sports teams. The big argument was over who was the greatest. This has often bothered me. The founders of Christianity were having ongoing, petty arguments over position. Yuck! Couldn't Jesus have picked someone a little more mature?

Well, it appears that He didn't. In fact, he was the "old man" of the group. The disciples were all between 15 and 25 when Jesus died. Jesus chose and handed over the great commission to a bunch of kids. That means that when He recruited them, they were junior high kids through college age. Yeouch!

Drop everything, and launch a church with all staff between 15 and 25! Once they get old enough to rent a car, make them leave and start their own church! If you haven't noticed, I'm getting a little silly.

Yet, I must warn you. If you are willing to hire an intern, make sure that you can give them the direction they need. Don't be caught off guard if something fairly minor is a big deal to them. And don't be surprised if they desire position – or a title. Don't let it rock your world if they act a little adolescent at times. What they really want is influence and experience, but it might likely take a little extra hand holding.

Let's dream up some Internship examples.

- You encounter an emerging college leader who appears to mix well with people. He is interested in an unpaid internship. So, you propose this idea: "For the next 9 months, I'd like you to direct the greeter's ministry. This includes casting vision, training, and recruiting people to serve in this ministry. And if possible, I'd like you to train a director to take your place when the school year ends. I will meet with you for 1-2 hours a week to make sure this is progressing and teach you whatever you want to learn. Then, when this is well in place, we'll talk about the next thing."

- You meet with a campus staff member who introduces you to an emerging college leader who has a real passion for God's word, and likely has the gift of teaching. So, you propose an internship: "I know of an excellent Bible teaching curriculum I have been wanting to launch. How about if I recruit for it, and you and I can tag-team teach it for a while. And then, when you're comfortable, I'll step out and let you take over. I know of a bunch of people who would eat that up!"
- You know of a college age leader who is already serving in your children's ministry. You find out that she would benefit from an internship that deals with special needs kids – of which you have several who have been falling through the cracks. So, you propose a one semester internship to help develop a program to meet their needs.
- Summer is coming upon you, and your worship director wants a sabbatical. Now that you're thinking differently about internships, you ask the campus staff for a reference. Perhaps you can hire an intern for the summer to totally take over that ministry. They would get to organize volunteers, select music, and lead worship most of the Sundays.

I purposely did not mention money in any of these examples. I believe that compensation is secondary to opportunity. There are students who would love to quit their job at Starbucks and do something that gets them closer to a career. Maybe replacing that income is necessary for some of them. Others have some time available to volunteer. I'll bet that there are student leaders with some of each. Well, it is my belief that it will be worth the effort, because:

If you want to get the 20's generation, go for the 20's leaders.
In order to attract 20's leaders, you must empower them to lead.