



# BE AN ENABLER (OF VOLUNTEERS)

One important role of the lay leadership of a synagogue or organization is getting members involved as volunteers. At times, this can feel like a daunting task. Perhaps you find that no one has time or interest. Perhaps you feel like you're going back to the same people over and over again. Or perhaps you feel like you're pleading or compelling members into taking on a responsibility.

What's needed is a change of perspective and a change of tactics.

## CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE

Lay leaders who connect members with volunteer activities should view their role as the Enablers of Volunteers. The goal is not simply to fill a volunteer vacancy, but rather to match volunteers with the right opportunities (sort of like making a shidduch.) It's the right opportunity when two criteria are met. First, the volunteer is well-suited to the task, possessing the skills, experience, and temperament for the role. Second, the role should match the member's own personal involvement goals and interests.

As an example, let's say you have a vacancy or a project on the finance committee and there's someone in your congregation or organization who has a financial background. You might think this is the right match. Yet, the critical switch with this new tactic is digging deeper to better understand what the members wants to do as a volunteer and what role will elevate the member's experience in volunteering. Perhaps this member also has a woodworking hobby and would get great joy and pass along a true passion by leading a session on making a wooden yad with the b'nei mitzvah class.

The goal in volunteer matchmaking is to enable member to find a role in your community where they *get* as much as they *give*.

## CHANGE OF TACTICS

In order to achieve this matchmaking, the team of lay leaders needs to know the strengths, talents, gifts, and interests of the would-be volunteers. There are a few ways this can be accomplished.

One-on-one conversations that address these questions would likely yield the most in-depth results and are a great opportunity to deepen relationships of the synagogue leadership with members. This would be a time consuming process, so it may not be right in all situations.

Another option is an in-take form that asks the congregant to identify what kinds of activities would make use of their skills and talents, and can also address the question of how much time they have to give at this moment. It's important that these Skills, Talents, & Time forms get updated regularly as people's interests and availability change.

Finally, in order to achieve this matchmaking, the team of lay leaders also needs to know the details of the volunteer roles available. The best way to do this is to have a written description of the volunteer role with details of the expectations regarding the activities and the time required. The written description will help the lay leader identify potential volunteers, help the volunteers decide if they are interested in the role and (this is critical), if the role is accepted, the written description will give the volunteers the direction and clarity needed to be successful.

**If you'd like help fostering a culture of Enabling Volunteers, including creating a customized Skills, Talents, & Time form for your community, please contact [TAGoodQuestions@gmail.com](mailto:TAGoodQuestions@gmail.com).**



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