

Where can I find good employees for my ministry when so few are applying?

**Suggestions and ideas on how and where ministries can find lay workers.**



**CONCORDIA PLANS**

## Executive Summary

Employers need to use both short- and long-term recruitment tactics in today's worker-sparse market. Gone are the days when you could put an advertisement in a newspaper or a sign in your window and have candidates-a-plenty apply for your position. The pandemic accelerated hiring challenges for employers in all industries, including our ministries.

Your ministry is not alone if you are struggling to find qualified candidates, or in some cases, any candidates at all. The time to implement a proactive recruitment strategy that includes both short- and long-term tactics is now.

## Today's worker situation

- While a worker shortage existed before COVID-19, the pandemic accelerated the number of open positions. In 2021, businesses added an unprecedented 3.8 million jobs. At the same time, workforce participation remains below pre-pandemic levels, meaning we have 3.4 million fewer Americans working today compared to February of 2020. (Ferguson, 2022<sup>1</sup>).
- Ministries are among those struggling to fill their positions. Candidates for positions in schools and qualified candidates for administrative support positions are particularly difficult to find.
  - > Education Week recently published information on the national teacher shortage. Researchers conservatively estimated there are more than 36,500 open teacher vacancies and 163,500 positions are filled by individuals not fully certified or not certified in the area they teach. (Will, 2022<sup>2</sup>).
- It can be difficult to retain good employees, as many no longer stay at one employer for the duration of their career as in generations past.
- The Great Resignation is projected to continue as 36% of Millennials and 53% of Generation Z plan to leave their current employers within the next two years (Mahony, 2022<sup>3</sup>).
- In the past, job security, decent compensation, or a tangible opportunity were enough for workers to stay. Now employees want to feel valued, feel a sense of belonging among caring and trusted colleagues, see the potential to grow, and have the flexibility to integrate work with their personal lives (Mahony, 2022<sup>3</sup>).



The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.  
(Luke 10:2)

<sup>1</sup>Ferguson, S. (2022, August 19). Understanding America's Labor Shortage. U.S. Chamber of Commerce. From: <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-americas-labor-shortage#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20businesses%20added%20an,compared%20to%20February%20of%202020.>

<sup>2</sup>Will, M. (2022, September, 6). How Bad Is the Teacher Shortage? What Two New Studies Say. Education Week. From: <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-bad-is-the-teacher-shortage-what-two-new-studies-say/2022/09#:~:text=With%20all%20this%20data%2C%20the,subject%20area%20they're%20teaching.>

<sup>3</sup>Mahony, M. (2022, January 5). How to Attract Top Talent in 2022. Harvard Business Review. From: <https://hbr.org/sponsored/2022/01/how-to-attract-top-talent-in-2022>



"We hear every day from our members companies – of every size and industry, across nearly every state – they're facing unprecedented challenges trying to find enough workers to fill open jobs." - Stephanie Ferguson, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

## What can you do?

There are many short- and long-term tactics your ministry can use to increase the number of candidates for your open lay positions.



### Advertising/posting positions

- Post and announce your position in multiple places and ways. Candidates rarely go directly to an employer's website, so make sure you're advertising in places where the candidates you want will be.
- Some common low-cost ways to announce openings include through bulletins, newsletters, and emails to congregation members or parents of students at your school. You can also post openings on social media through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, which also allows those who follow you to share them. Job posting sites such as Indeed or ZipRecruiter are other good options.
- Some colleges have free online posting websites for employers. Check your local colleges and tech schools to see if they have a school site or bulletin board on campus for job postings.
- Allow people to send, email or drop off resumes even if you don't have an open position. You can tell them you will hold their resume in the event a position becomes available. You can also keep in contact periodically, especially if you think you may have openings in the future.
- Ask businesses near you or near-by ministries such as schools or churches if they have referrals or would be willing to make announcements and add your postings to their communications.
- Make sure you include information about the mission in your posting and how the role contributes to the mission. Many workers want to make a difference or work for an organization that is aligned with their values.
- Ask staff what the best part is about working at your ministry (besides mission, of course) and make sure those perks come through in the job postings and when you're interviewing.



## Community Connections:

- Partner with other ministries in the area to share names of candidates – just because a candidate may not have been a good fit for one ministry doesn’t mean he or she wouldn’t be a strong candidate for your ministry.
- Check with veterans’ organizations in your area that you can partner with for postings; check out [this site](#).
- Explore agencies that help individuals with disabilities find employment in your area; read more [here](#).
- Go to networking events in the community or for the profession for which you are recruiting.
- Go to career fairs at schools or in the community.
- Develop internship programs or offer student teaching opportunities.
- Ask your current staff, members at your ministry, or parents at the school to share a post about an opening or to pass the information on to at least one person.
- Reach out to alumni from your school or current congregation members if they work in the field for which you are trying to recruit. They may not be actively looking for a position but may consider a change for the right opportunity, or they may know other people who might be interested.
- Consider retired individuals. Many people who retire may find they still want to work part-time or on a temporary basis and be active in your mission.
- Consider high school students to help fill part-time positions such as after school care helper, tutor, or administrative help. Some high schools even have work-study programs during the school day so students can get real-world experience while obtaining school credit.
- Ask the person leaving the position if he or she has recommendations for a replacement. He or she may know someone who may be a good candidate to recruit.
- Keep the door open for “boomerang” employees. These are employees who leave and want to come back, perhaps because they went to work somewhere else or had to leave due to a personal situation. Ask them if you can keep in periodic contact, and occasionally reach out to see how they’re doing.
- Partner with an expert if you have one in your ministry community. Corporate recruiters or human resource professionals may be willing to offer advice or to assist with a search.



## Position and Compensation Modifications:

- Consider a job-share arrangement. Job sharing is when you have a full-time position need, but it could be split between two people who want to work only part time.
- Evaluate the compensation for the role to understand if the pay is competitive in your market and consider adjusting if necessary. Concordia Plans has a free compensation support tool that can help with this; it can be accessed [here](#).
- If the pay is not competitive compared to the local market and you can't adjust it, lead the conversation with non-salary perks that can set you apart. Examples include flexible hours, summers off, no nights or weekends, free tuition or day care for workers' children, a strong benefits package and making a difference in the lives of our students or community.
- Consider a flexible schedule, the ability to work from home or be a hybrid (part working from home/part working in the office). Many candidates prefer or are actively seeking hybrid work. One recent study from Gallup reported that as many as 60% of employees prefer a hybrid work arrangement. While this is not feasible for all positions it could be helpful in recruiting some clerical or administrative support positions.
- Make sure you discuss the total compensation package with candidates. Share details not just about salary but about all their benefits such as pension, 403(b) matches, health insurance, vacation and other time off allotments, tuition reimbursement and any other benefits or perks like allowances for the classroom or periodical funds. If you need assistance determining if you have a competitive benefit package Concordia Plans can help.

Beth Jones, SPHR, is a Human Resources professional with almost 20 years of human resources experience. She has experience in a variety of industries, including education, health insurance, financial services, and nonprofits. She has led teams, consulted, and provided services to employers of all sizes--from large Fortune 100 employers to small nonprofits--and for a wide range of HR disciplines including workforce relations and planning, culture and engagement, compensation and benefits, reward and recognition, payroll, and training and development.



As an active SHRM member, Beth has found it rewarding to mentor and guide new HR professionals entering the field and has volunteered her time and skills to help small nonprofits with HR issues. As she is most passionate about serving nonprofits, she finds her current position as Director of Ministry Solutions at Concordia Plans fulfilling as she can focus exclusively on helping nonprofit ministries obtain affordable products and services that ease administrative burden, help nonprofits focus on their missions, save money and reduce employer risk. Current solutions available to some ministries include HR, payroll and compensation services.



**QUESTIONS?**

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