

HOW YOUR CAMP CAN AFFECT
MILLENNIAL SUMMER STAFF
FOR A LIFETIME





Photo courtesy of Sky Ranch

HIRING FOR LONG-TERM IMPACT

by Mary Bowers

If you Google the word “impact” you will find the following definition:
“the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another”
or “having a strong effect on someone or something.”

You could think of the young people you bring onto your team each summer as being impacted and having an impact as they participate in the ministry of your camp. These young staff members are impacting your guests, your ministry and the rest of your team as they serve in various contexts across your camp. And as you invite them into your community, equip them with tools, and challenge them to do great things, you’re creating a major impact for those who serve alongside you. ▶

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After all isn't this the example that Jesus set for us when He gathered His disciples and invited them to do life with Him? He made contact and had an effect on their lives that was eternal.

I believe that the success of the ministry I work for (and the success of the ministry you work for) is in God's hands, but I am also convinced God is working through the young people who walk alongside campers, interact with parents and make good decisions as they go on the journey with us. (For this reason, at SpringHill we call them Summer Leaders rather than simply summer staff.)

Whether you're typically looking for 12 or 1,200 Summer Leaders, you have most likely experienced the impact they can have on your ministry — both positive and negative. But I want to challenge you to think about this “forcible contact” and the “strong effect” your ministry has likely had on them.

Over the next several years, most of us will be engaging with and hiring young people from what has been called the Millennial Generation (born

between 1980 and 2000). You don't need to look far to discover some of the “bad press” Millennials receive. They are often described in the media as narcissistic, entitled, stressed out, broke and desiring a trophy just for showing up.

What happens when your efforts to assemble a summer team “forcibly comes into contact” with a generation that does not think or work in the same way that you do? Here I will outline strategies that may assist you in understanding and impacting Summer Leaders. In the human resources column in the August/September 2016 edition of *InSite* I shared five strategies to help you improve sustainability as it relates to people. In this article I build on those strategies, focusing specifically on how they can be leveraged with Millennials.

Choosing Well

You need to have a clear understanding of your staffing needs and the ability to effectively share those opportunities with potential team members.

Millennials want to do important and meaningful work, and you are in the perfect position to offer them what they're looking for. Take the time to talk about the *benefit* of the experience, not just for the summer or two they spend with you, but also for their future vocation as well. Remember it is your mission, vision and values that will draw them in as they seek to make a difference in the world. Look for young adults who are excited and passionate about the same things that you are passionate about. Remember to leverage a camp employment experience as more than just a summer job by highlighting some of the skills they'll develop that will come in handy down the road, like leadership, problem-solving and collaboration.



Challenging Well

Start with training, and include feedback and stretch assignments in order to keep your team on track.

Young people entering the workforce want to be developed. If you want to create longevity and commitment, you need to be prepared to give regular feedback and understand each leader's potential and their unique role on the team.

Millennials work best with clear expectations and personal goals that they own. Set targets and celebrate when they get there. Have a solid grasp on what is foundational for your organization, and make sure your Summer Leaders are well-informed. Give your Summer Leaders the proper tools and resources to fulfill your expectations.

When making your summer assignments, you'll want to be strategic and create solid pairings. By giving staff the opportunity to learn from one another, especially if you have veterans who can show the ropes and lead the way, you'll set your new staff up to grow and succeed.

Communicating Well

Good communication involves both telling and listening. Millennials appreciate transparency and efficiency. Communicate your plan, both the big picture and day-to-day details. Take the time to ask questions and listen, and you will find that your Summer Leaders are often experts at efficiency and doing things better. It is easy to get stuck in the way things have always been done and miss the opportunities to be even better. Millennials tend to love collaboration, and it is this dynamic that can lead to innovation for your ministry.

Caring Well

Making sure that your team is well cared for takes time and intention.

Millennials are asking for authentic interactions. They want to be part of the team. It's helpful if you can encourage and monitor inclusion, making sure that everyone is invited to both the work and the play. Ensuring a positive experience throughout the time they are with you goes a long way in preventing burnout and fostering longevity.

You can also prepare individuals to step into the next role or relationship while they are in their current role, showing them the potential that lies ahead as they develop and grow. Empower them to lead others, challenging them that they can only take others as far as they have developed themselves.

Closing Well

It's ideal to have an end-of-summer strategy that gets implemented during a time when the team is not too tired or focused on what's next on their journey. This could include a time of recognition that celebrates the hard work and ministry that took place over the summer.

You may also want to consider casting the vision of what a role on the team might look like for the next summer early in the summer.

Finally, use the non-summer months to nurture relationships with your summer staff. Whether they're able to return next summer or not, they are key allies in helping you with the task of finding next year's team.

Recently I had the opportunity to hear Conner Hitchcock, a 22-year-old young man who recently graduated with a marketing degree from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business, share about his experience as a Summer Leader at SpringHill. Conner said that spiritually and professionally



SpringHill had prepared him better than any other experience could. He also shared that he learned how to make disciples of all ages, from campers to counselors.

Conner, who is currently working as a digital marketing specialist for a fast-growing e-commerce company, went on to say that the autonomy given to him during his summer role was something that he talked extensively about in job interviews, even more so than his experience as an intern at Target Corporation's offices in Minneapolis. "SpringHill really helped develop me as a leader in my three years of working there, and I feel incredibly prepared to take on a leadership role in the career that I recently began," Conner explained.

When you think about your summer staff, are you making impact? Are you choosing, challenging, communicating, caring and closing well? For young people like Conner, and so many others, your answers to these questions could mean the difference between them coming to work with you or not. ●

Photos courtesy of SpringHill Camps

BRINGING DIVERSITY TO YOUR MINISTRY



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Photos courtesy of Cedline Ministries

REFLECTING THE KINGDOM

by Mary Bowers

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that Sunday morning was the most segregated hour in America. In many Christian churches and ministries, the same could be said today, whether it's at a Sunday morning church service or a weeklong summer camp.

As we strive to bring our ministries more in line with what the Kingdom of God really looks like, we need to be intentional about creating diversity — especially when it comes to our staff. We want campers to see someone who looks like them when they get to our camps.

Cedine Ministries, a contraction of “cedar” and “pine,” came into being in 1947 as a result of Paul Zimmerman’s passion to present the Gospel and encourage Scripture memory work in the small segregated schools of the area. Bible clubs in the schools in the area rewarded Bible verse memory work with a summer camp experience. Unfortunately, many of these clubs would not let black kids go to white camps, and so Zimmerman stepped in to fill the gap.

Today, Cedine Ministries serves all ages of kids and whole families with a fun, Bible-based summer camp, a year-round retreat and conference center and a community outreach Bible quiz program.

Cedine Ministries serves 85–90 percent African-American kids, and their summer staff demographics are 50 percent white and 50 percent African-American.

To learn more about what diversity looks like, I reached out to David Lewis and Jacques Hall from Cedine Ministries and asked them to describe the diversity in their ministry. There’s no formula. Lewis and Hall are humble and say God is doing the work and it just happens. But there are important things to consider if you’re interested in pursuing more diversity at your camp or conference center.

Here are four steps to start with:

- 1** If you are serious about wanting a staff and/or camper demographic that is truly diverse, the first thing you need to do is to make sure that not all of the leadership in your organization looks and thinks the same.
- 2** Be cautious and understand what diversity means to your organization. Take the time to make sure the leadership, year-round and summer staff is all on the same page so that you can move forward with minimal conflict and misunderstanding.
- 3** Emphasize loving *all* kids. Be consistent in loving and disciplining kids. Understand it is your job to create and monitor a healthy group dynamic or organizational culture.
- 4** Create training that prepares your staff to be culturally competent with the demographic of kids/customers you are serving. Help them understand that there is not just one way we all think, look or communicate and that we are missing the full picture of who God calls us to be as community when we are all the same.

I challenge you to consider what you and your team might need to lay at the feet of God so that your ministry reflects community the way God created it to be. ●