

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT CONVERTING PARENTS INTO PARTNERS

Farah Mohammed
Community Engagement
Commissioner



Volunteers take directions Partners take responsibility

Parents don't want to be 'helpers.' They want to be 'partners.'



There is a massive difference between a volunteer and a partner.

A **Volunteer** asks: *'What do you want me to do?'* (And then waits for you to tell them).

A **Partner** asks: *'How can we make this better?'*

So, what's next?



Lowering the barrier ... so parents actually say “Yes”



The P.I.E. method ... of asking so you never have to send a desperate mass email again



Building a ladder ... so people move from ‘showing up’ to ‘stepping up’



The hardest part about getting parents involved right now is...

1. The Barrier Audit

The Barrier	The Root Cause	The Partner Solution
The Imposter Syndrome	“I’m not an expert/teacher/coach like you.”	The "Shadow" Invite: Ask them to assist for 15 minutes while you lead. Show them it’s about <i>presence</i> , not <i>perfection</i> .
The Social Anxiety	“I don’t know anyone else there, it’ll be awkward.”	The “Bring-a-Buddy” Slot: Specifically design roles for two people. Encourage them to sign up with a friend so they have an “anchor.”
The Childcare Paradox	“I want to help, but I have my other kids with me.”	The “Tag-Team” Station: Create a “volunteer kids’ corner where one parent watches the volunteer’s children while others work

The Barrier Audit

	The Root Cause	The Partner Solution
The Black Hole Fear	“If I say yes once, they’ll trap me forever.”	The “3-Week Pilot” : Frame the ask as a “test drive”. Give them a hard end date and a “graduation” ceremony after 3 weeks.
The Skill Mismatch	“I hate the tasks you’re asking for (e.g. talk to people).”	The “Inventory of Awesome” : Stop asking for “volunteers.” Ask: “Who is a spreadsheet wizard? Who loves power tools? Who is a pro at making pancakes?”
The Commitment Creep	“I have no time.”	“Micro-Tasking” : Break a 4-hour job into sixteen 15 minutes sprints.

The Reframing Exercise

"Is this a 'Time' problem or a 'Clarity' problem?"

Often, people say they don't have time because they don't understand the task.

"How can we make this 'bite-sized'?"

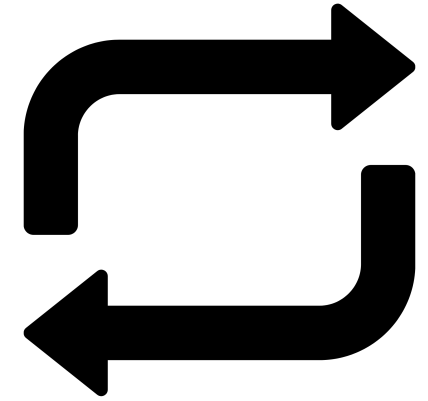
If the job is too big, can it be broken into three 20-minute tasks?

"What is the 'Win' for the parent?"

Partnership should provide value to the parent, too—like friendship, skill-building, or a sense of purpose.

If the "Ask" comes from a stage or a mass email, it feels like a tax.

If the "Ask" comes from a peer over a 30-second conversation at pickup, it feels like an invitation to a community.



2. The P.I.E. Formula

P – Personal (Why them?)

Most people ignore mass emails because they don't feel "seen." A personal ask starts with a compliment or an observation of their specific skills.



The Script: *"I saw how great you were at handling that rowdy group of kids last week..." or "I know you're a wizard with spreadsheets in your day job..."*

The Goal: Make them feel uniquely qualified, not just a "warm body" filling a seat.

I – Impact (Why does it matter?)

People don't want to "help out"; they want to "make a difference." You must connect the task to the mission.

The Script: "If you can help us with the check-in desk, it means new parents won't feel lost when they walk in. You'll be the first friendly face they see."

The Goal: Show them the "hero" moment of the job.

The P.I.E. Formula

E – End-Date (When am I done?)

The biggest fear parents have is "Volunteer Life Imprisonment." If they don't know when the job ends, they will say "No" to protect their schedule.

The Script: *"This is just for the next 3 weeks," or "I just need you for one hour this Saturday."*

The Goal: Give them a clear "exit ramp" so they feel safe saying "Yes."

The "Bad Ask" vs The "P.I.E. Ask"

The Bad Ask (Mass Email):

"Hi everyone, we are short on volunteers for the fundraiser. Please let us know if you can help. We can't do it without you!"

The P.I.E. Ask (Individual):

[P] Sarah, I noticed how organized you were with the school bake sale.

[I] We really need someone with your eye for detail to run the silent auction so we can hit our goal of \$5,000 for the new playground.

[E] It's a 2-week commitment, and once the auction ends on Friday, you're completely off the hook. Would you be open to that?" *(Result: Sarah feels valued, understands the stakes, and knows she isn't trapped.)*

The P.I.E. Swap Activity

3. Building a ladder



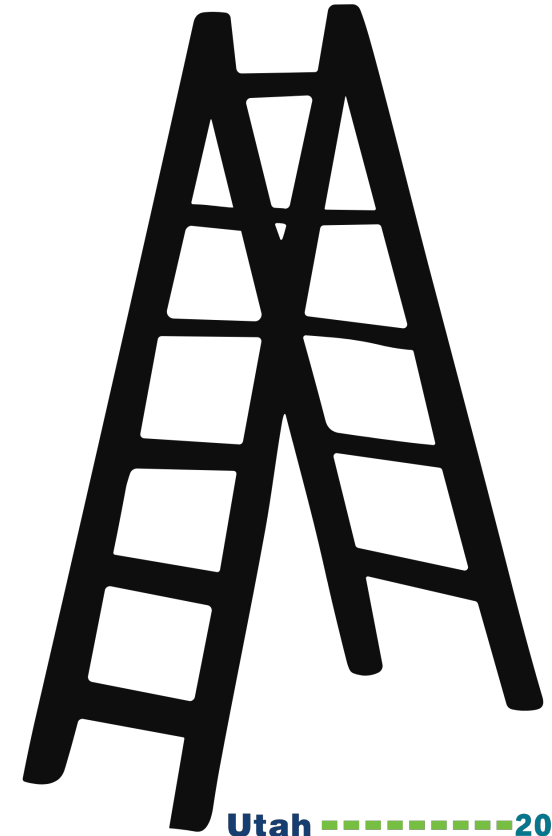
The Ownership Ladder: 4 Rungs



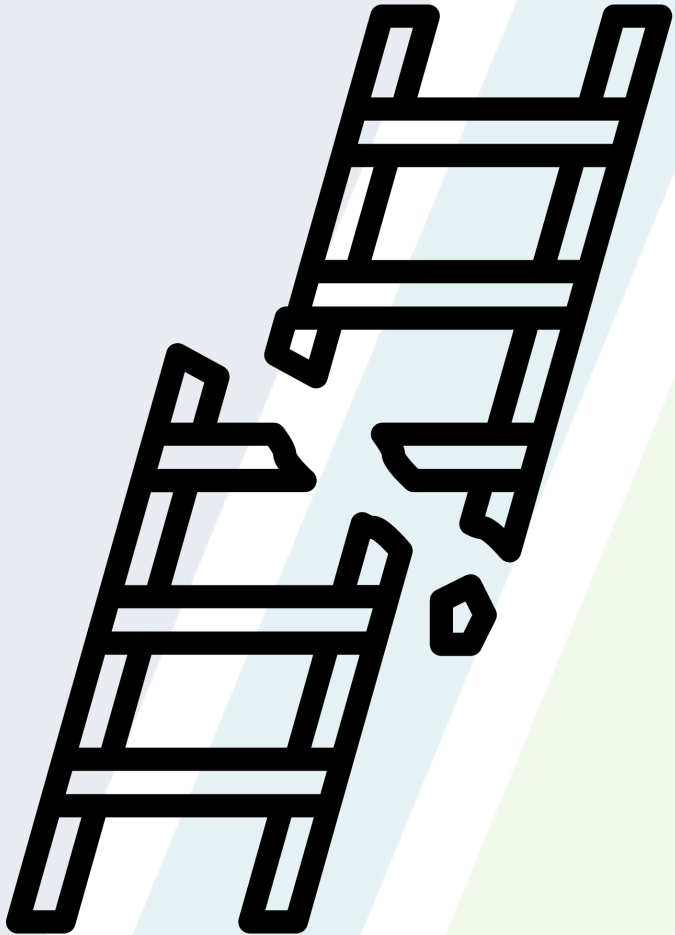
The "Ladder Audit"

Look at your most "desperate" vacancy and ask these three questions:

1. Is this a Rung 4 role?
2. Do I have a Rung 2 version of this?
3. How do I "Promote" them?



Why the Ladder Breaks



The ladder breaks for 2 reasons:

1. The Jump is too high
2. The Rung is too sticky

Your job isn't to find a 'Lead Volunteer.'

Your job is to find a 'Rung 1 Observer' and help them climb.

Partner vs Pirate



The "Guardrails" Strategy

The key to managing over-ownership is to set the boundaries **before** the work begins. Partners need a sandbox to play in, but they need to know where the wooden edges of that sandbox are.

1. Define "Decision Rights" - Early in the partnership, clarify what they can change and what is "Fixed."
2. The "Role Description" as a Shield - If a parent starts overstepping, refer back to the written document you created in the "Ownership Ladder" section.

The 3 Types of "Difficult" Owners

The Steamroller

The Renegade

The Micromanager

When a partner goes rogue, don't treat them like an employee (reprimanding) or a customer (appeasing).
Treat them like a **co-pilot**.

*"I love the passion you're bringing to this—it's clear you care deeply. However, when you changed [Decision X] without the team, it created a bit of a bottleneck here. **How can we make sure we're staying in sync so the rest of the team feels as invested as you do?**"*

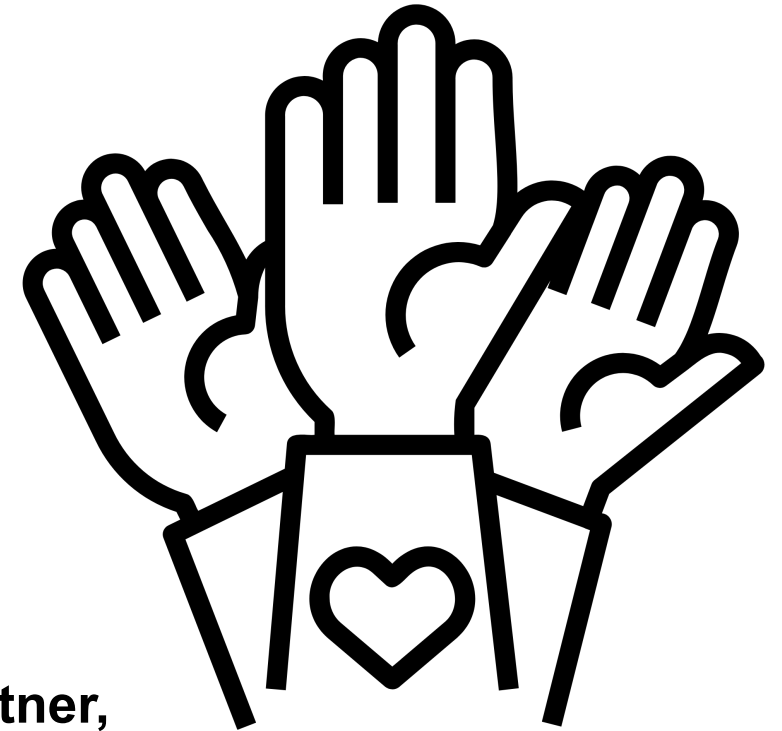


CALL TO ACTION

1. The “One Name” Challenge
2. The Power of the Pivot
3. The “24/7/30” Action plan

The Final Commissioning

If you want a volunteer, give them a task. If you want a partner, give them a vision. Go build something great together.



Connect with us on social media



FACEBOOK

- Utah PTA
- Utah PTA Advocacy
- Utah PTA Super Secondary
- Utah PTA Excellent Elementary
- Utah PTA Treasurers
- Utah PTA Reflections
- Utah School Community Councils
- Utah PTA Teachers
- Utah PTA Battle of the Bands

Connect with us on social media

INSTAGRAM - @UtahPTA



X - @UtahPTAOneVoice



PINTEREST - Utah PTA



YOUTUBE - Utah PTA One Voice



UTAH PTA SPONSORS

