

## Users vs. Doozers or All I Ever Needed to Know About Volunteer Leadership Came from 'Fraggle Rock'

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As a youth minister, you walk a delicate line as it relates to the roles you create for your volunteer leaders. And there are two extremes to avoid: Users or Doozers.

The first extreme is for you to be a User, someone who simply “uses” his or her leaders to accomplish a job. You have tasks to complete, and your leaders are there to complete them. I've talked to former youth volunteers who have gotten burned out from being asked to fill ministry roles without feeling like they're appreciated, like they're part of a team. One of your most important jobs as the leader of the ministry is to actively look for ways to make your leaders feel loved, cared for, and valued. Check in with your leaders, especially the ones you lean on the most, and give them yearly opportunities to “re-up” with you in the ministry. Let them know how much you value them but also let them know that if they're ever in need of a break, or a change, you are open to that.

The other extreme is less obvious, and that involves refusing to see your workers as Doozers. Let me explain. The bulk of my childhood was in the 80s, and because I was also one of the fortunate ones to have had cable TV then as well, I grew up on *Fraggle Rock*. (I'll pause while you *Fraggleheads* sing the theme song. OK now let's continue...) *Fraggles* are *Muppets* that live in a hidden world of caves, connected to the outside world by a hole in the wall of a man named Doc. They live in a symbiotic relationship with small creatures called *Doozers*, whose primary purpose in life is to build *Doozer* constructions, which is the *Fraggles'* main source of food.

In one key episode (a very special episode?), the eco-earth-mama-*Fraggle* named *Mokey* successfully organizes a movement to stop the *Fraggles* from eating the *Doozer* constructions, thinking this is disrespectful to all of their hard work. But before long, *Fraggle Rock* is so filled with these constructions (since no one is eating them) that the *Doozers* have to pack up their belongings and leave. *Mokey* thought she was helping them, but she was actually taking away their *raison d'être*, their reason for existence.

Similarly, we can sometimes ask too *little* of our leaders for fear that we are overburdening them with our requests. And in this scenario, everyone loses: we don't lighten our load, and our leaders are prevented from fully participating in a ministry that God gifted them for. We have to remember that our leaders are like *Doozers*: they are made to *do*. We sometimes think we're blessing them by not asking them for help, just as *Mokey* thought she was helping the *Doozers* by not letting anyone eat their constructions. What she didn't realize was that *Doozers* were created to build. Likewise, your leaders were made to lead, to organize, to disciple, to be active participants in the Kingdom of God.

You are helping them realize what God made them for when you give them opportunities to lead. It will often take more work on your part to not just do it all yourself, but it is always worth it. The negative ramifications are the same as in the “User” scenario. Your

Doozers will eventually pack up and move on if they aren't given ample opportunity to fully use their gifts.

You would do well to take a quick self-evaluation of your ministry: are you at either end of the spectrum? Are you a User? Or preventing your leaders from being Doozers?

Who knew 80s cable TV could teach us so much?