



Summary Overview: Best Practices from Top-Performing Organizations

Research Base: *Structured interviews with mobilization leaders from 18 organizations • Full report available with detailed narrative, examples, and discussion questions*

1. The Discovery Conversation Model

Top performers abandon recruitment pitches for structured discovery conversations helping candidates reach decisions—including decisions not to proceed. ABWE trains mobilizers to "go for the no." Mobilizers let candidates talk 80% of the time, asking follow-up questions and assessing need (Why be a missionary?) and urgency (Why now?). This counterintuitive approach produces higher quality applicants completing at dramatically higher rates.

2. Church Partnership as Foundation

Organizations with highest retention treat church partnership as non-negotiable. In discovery conversations, mobilizers ask "What feedback have you gotten from your pastor?"—immediately revealing church buy-in. If pastors affirm readiness, the process continues. If they suggest more local service, candidates move to nurture pipelines. Church buy-in represents the number one factor determining successful placement and retention.

3. Organizational Health as Prerequisite

"Mobilization flows out of organizational health" and "stops at the door of your agency's dysfunction." Organizations with healthy teams and transparent communication find mobilization more effective. Top performers demonstrate health through vulnerability in initial conversations—acknowledging areas of growth or struggle. This organizational humility builds trust while hiding dysfunction triggers disengagement.

4. Response Time and Communication Excellence

Organizations responding within 8-24 hours dramatically outperform those taking several days. ABWE changed to "8-hour response on most days" and consistently hears: "We reached out to others and haven't heard back—you're one reason we wanted to proceed." Effective response combines speed with personalization. Mobilizers treat inquiry response as highest priority, interrupting other activities to contact new inquiries immediately.

5. Strategic Assessment and Filtering

Organizations with strong conversion rates report deliberately high filtering standards early viewing early assessment as serving candidates well. FIM reports 75-82% conversion once candidates reach acceptance, achieved through rigorous screening. Assessment examines calling clarity, coachability, consistency, spiritual foundation, church connection. The question: "Is this the type of person who, after completing preparation, we would want to send?"

6. Kingdom-Minded Collaboration and Referrals

Perhaps most distinctive: willingness to refer candidates to other agencies when they represent better fits. Effective mobilizers maintain relationships with peer organizations and facilitate connections. This kingdom-minded approach builds credibility serving organizational interests. Candidates experiencing genuine care for their calling—regardless of whether they join that organization—build trust rapidly and become advocates.

7. Contextual Presence and Relationship Building

Top performers invest in physical presence where candidates are—sending people to specific campuses, working with professors, taking missionary kids out for meals. 90-95% of applicants come through missionary connections and personal relationships rather than advertising. Organizations create cohort-based programs bringing candidates together in community while they prepare.