**4 Signs Your Volunteers Are Getting Burned Out (And How To Fix It)**

It is no exaggeration that volunteers are the life-blood of any church. They are the hands, the feet, and the heart behind a church’s many ministries.

If you’re in church leadership, it’s quite possible that at some time you’ve had a hard time recruiting volunteers. If so, [**read this insight**](http://vanderbloemen.com/insights/3-ways-to-turn-your-attendees-into-volunteers) from our team on the importance of “shoulder-tapping” to increase your church’s volunteer base. Maybe it's time to [**"fire" a volunteer**](http://vanderbloemen.com/insights/when-is-it-okay-to-fire-church-volunteers) and you're not sure how. Or maybe you need ideas of how to encourage and thank your current volunteers. We have some ideas about [**that as well**](http://vanderbloemen.com/insights/8-encouragements-to-share-with-your-childrens-ministry-volunteers-this-week).

But maybe you’re struggling to *keep* your volunteers. Maybe you’re so entrenched in your church’s ministries and needs that you don’t realize your volunteers are getting burned out and falling away from serving.

Most of [**our team**](http://www.vanderbloemen.com/team) here at Vanderbloemen has both served in some capacity at their home church and overseen volunteers on a church staff. Viewing it from both perspectives, we’ve compiled a list of signs that you may be exhausting your [**volunteers**](http://vanderbloemen.com/insights/free-download-the-secret-sauce-to-an-effective-kidmin-volunteer-strategy) as well as suggestions on how to keep that from happening in your church's future.

Here are 4 signs your volunteers are getting burned out:

**1. They’re not mentally present.**

Have you noticed your volunteers “checking out?” Maybe even making small mistakes because they’re not mentally engaged? Perhaps their volunteer task is so mundane, they’ve stopped giving it any thought. If things have started falling through the cracks or being overlooked, it may be a sign your volunteers aren’t mentally all there.

**Fix it:** Brainstorm with your ministry leaders on how you can make tasks – even routine tasks – more engaging. Whenever possibly, thank your volunteers individually and in person for their contribution, so they realize how much even their perhaps unexciting duties are recognized and appreciated.

**2. They lack enthusiasm.**

Most of your [**volunteers**](http://vanderbloemen.com/insights/3-cs-to-recruiting-retaining-church-volunteers) probably went through a "honeymoon" period where they were really excited about serving their church body. But after some time, especially for volunteers who serve very often or in multiple capacities, that enthusiasm may wane. Volunteering week after week, on top of their busy lives, can feel like a chore, whether or not they realize it.

**Fix it:** Publically celebrate wins with your volunteers. Make the big picture and their contribution real to them again. And let them take a break! If they serve in multiple capacities, encourage them to focus on just one ministry or switch to an entirely new ministry where they haven’t yet served.

If you do not have any formal volunteer appreciation events at your church, it’s past time to get those in place. Public thanks, group celebrations, and thoughtful gifts for your volunteers should be a part of your church’s [**budget**](http://www.vanderbloemen.com/insights/free-download-8-costly-church-budget-mistakes).

I recently heard a story about a church here in Houston where several of our team members serve. The Senior Pastor made individual and personalized thank-you videos for each volunteer, talking about the ministry where they served, how they were making an individual impact in that ministry, and how much the pastor valued their contribution. This may not be feasible for every church, but I can’t express how much it meant to those who received it (and how impressive it was to those outside that church). The more you make serving fun and the more you thank your volunteers, the more others will sign up to join in on the mission.

**3. They made last-minute decisions about serving.**

We’ve all been there. We give a tentative “yes” to help with something, but wait until the last minute to see if we can really follow through or not. If some of your [**volunteers**](http://nteers-create-a-culture-of-service/) are constantly making last minute decisions about whether or not they can serve – which isn’t helpful to the church or to them – it could be a sign that they are overloaded or overcommitted, be it on their calendar or in their head.

**Fix it:** Set clear expectations up front about serving and all it entails. Let your volunteers know exactly when they need to commit by, and don’t make them feel pressured if they are in a busy season. Make sure they know if this is a one-time or continual commitment (and, if continual, how often they are needed), so they won’t be surprised later.

Also, don’t require more time of your volunteers than is necessary for their specific contribution. For example, if their task is to greet newcomers, they probably don’t need to be there an hour early every week they serve to have a greeters-meeting. Your volunteers may be more than willing to serve, but not able to make a huge time-commitment. Make sure you are offering some serving opportunities that don’t require a continued commitment and also some that don’t require a lot of time or training.

We all go through seasons of life where serving is more of a stress than a joy, and if your volunteers are hesitating to make a decision, that’s a good clue for you that they may be feeling burdened by their commitments. Be respectful of your volunteers’ time, and remind them that they know best whether or not they are in a season to serve.

**4. They withdraw, don’t show up, or fall out of contact.**

Are some of your [**volunteers**](http://vanderbloemen.com/insights/5-steps-to-recruiting-church-volunteers) no shows? Have any ghosted on you? It may be that your volunteers are feeling burned out and don’t know how to express that to their church leaders. They may even feel guilty or even resentful, so avoiding it (or you) seems the easiest course of action to them.

**Fix it:** Provide an off-ramp for your volunteers. Sometimes just knowing that they have been granted “permission” to opt out of serving for a time makes all the difference to a burned out volunteer.

Make sure to teach an entire pool of people the same volunteer roles, so you’re not relying on one person for a certain volunteer role every week. If you rely on one person, they may feel pressured to serve; and if there’s a week they can’t serve, you may be left in the lurch.

Also, it’s important to mandate rest for your volunteers. So many people over-commit themselves and work themselves to exhaustion; sometimes it takes someone forcing us to rest to realize how much we needed a break. Church leaders, consider requiring all of your regular volunteers to take a month off of serving per year. Your volunteers will come back from their break refreshed and excited to serve again.

Lastly – and I can’t stress this enough – be sure that you are setting aside time to spend with your church members *without bringing up volunteering*. I once heard someone say that they felt like their pastor always had an agenda when they spent time with them. Investing in face-time with no agenda will ensure that your current volunteers are feeling supported - not pressured - by their church leadership.

*What are other signs of volunteer burn out? Tell us in the comments below.*