**6 Ways Nonprofits Can Prevent Volunteer Burnout**

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Volunteers represent the heart and soul of any functioning nonprofit, but we should always remember that they’re not paid staff, and because of that their threshold for burnout is lower than you may think.

For some helpful tips on how to handle your own workload and avoid losing your volunteers to burnout, read on:

**1. Be Up-Front in the Recruiting Process**

One of the [best ways to avoid burnout](http://www.moneycrashers.com/job-stress-workplace-burnout/) is to be as clear as possible before you bring any volunteers on. Make sure that [during the interview process](http://learn.volunteermatch.org/webinars/successful-volunteer-interview-strategies) you’re crystal clear as to what responsibilities and time commitments are going to be required. The last thing you want is to hire people only to find they’re unable to fulfill your expectations.

**2. Better Project Management**

If you regularly hold events without enough volunteers or full-time staff members, job burnout is sure to become an issue. However, the same may be true if you over-schedule. Too many volunteers milling about with no real work to do is never a good thing. People who volunteer their time want to feel useful, and if they don’t they probably [won’t stick around for long](http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/engagingvolunteers/2011/09/27/why-im-not-going-to-volunteer-with-your-nonprofit/). Review each event with a keen eye for detail and make sure to select the right number of people to assist with each one.

**3. Communicate Better**

How well do you know your volunteers on a personal level? You certainly don’t have to meet one for dinner every night, but you should always show interest. Asking a few questions about friends, family, and hobbies can’t do any harm. If your volunteers view you as more approachable and invested, they’re more likely to be honest with you when a project comes up they’d rather not do – instead of accepting it and eventually burning out.

**4. Recognize Them More**

How often do you [recognize your volunteers](http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/engagingvolunteers/category/volunteer-recognition/) for the work they do? If it’s not often, it should be. You’ve got plenty of options at your disposal to do so. Everyone likes to be thanked in person for a job well done. Or, you could put together a little shout-out on social media. Include a group shot from your latest event and your employees are likely to get a big kick out of it. Thank-you cards in the mail do just fine, as well. Whatever you choose, just make sure it highlights your gratitude and appreciation.

**5. Interchange Responsibilities**

If you’ve had volunteers in the same job for months – or even years – try [switching up responsibilities](http://learn.volunteermatch.org/webinars/where-do-i-go-here-engage-volunteers-new-ways) among them. It may create a bit more work on your part matching up skill sets with responsibilities, but doing so can make for a more cohesive and better-trained group of volunteers, and less turnover. Just make sure they take well to their new responsibilities.

**6. Create Better Volunteer Positions**

Which positions at your nonprofit require volunteers? If the majority involve mundane and tedious work like filing papers, making cold calls, or other less sexy administrative duties, you may not be able to keep them around long. Consider creating volunteer positions where the work fits right in with the mission of your organization. They can feel like they’re doing something integral to the cause they’re passionate about, and you can benefit a great deal as a result.

Once you’ve cracked the volunteer burnout nut, it’s time to make sure you don’t fall victim yourself. Don’t skip lunches and breaks. Your work ethic is admirable, but you’re not doing anybody any good by burning the candle at both ends. Be sure you get daily exercise to have more energy during the day and sleep better at night as a result. Once you exit the office for the day, leave all work matters there and don’t take them home with you. Preventing volunteer burnout is important, but make sure you’re [taking care of yourself](http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/engagingvolunteers/2011/04/20/how-volunteer-managers-can-take-care-of-themselves/), too.

**What ways do you know of to prevent volunteer burnout?**