



How to Avoid Volunteer Fatigue

Create interesting roles and clearly define responsibilities

Recruit the right person for each position by matching skills, interests and abilities. Identify how their contribution will make a difference. Include specific details beyond skills and duties (e.g. if they will be seated or standing, outdoors, etc.). Appreciate and respect that motivations to volunteer and time commitments will vary.

Choose effective leaders

Assign supervisory and leadership roles to those with proven skills and abilities and/or coach others to sharpen their skills. Provide clear guidelines to give recognition, feedback and how to take disciplinary action. Reduce confusion and inefficiencies by having one leader as a contact, whenever possible.

Equip volunteers with information

Provide an orientation and access to ongoing training opportunities. Post a “customer service tip of the day”; lead a quick update meeting at the beginning of each shift and consistently communicate clear expectations, changes and important details.

Be flexible with scheduling and duties

Offer a variety of shift options (e.g. 2 or 3 hours, full or half day) and allow for regular breaks (every two hours). Provide options for multiple roles; rotate positions where volunteers can be seated for all or part of their shift (when possible or applicable). Have someone overseeing the volunteers to watch for signs of fatigue before it becomes an issue.

Foster volunteer well-being and development

Encourage volunteers to have sufficient rest, to keep hydrated and to be well fed, and to dress or prepare appropriately for the season (e.g. sun protection in summer). Create learning/mentorship opportunities and succession planning for future events. Ask what other opportunities they are seeking for future roles.

Use existing resources

Approach volunteer organizations with existing memberships to draw from and establish connections within the local high school(s) to invite students to participate. Ask volunteers to bring a friend or family member who is willing to get involved.

Be open to feedback and keep connected

Invite volunteers back and be respectful when they decline. Conduct an exit interview when they choose to leave and note reasons/apply changes, when warranted. Ask for permission to stay in contact throughout the year (newsletter, email or Facebook, etc.) with updates or for other volunteer opportunities or social events.

Make it a positive experience!

Create a good volunteer recognition program; make it a fun and sociable experience to keep them engaged and draw in more volunteers.