

"Making Every Minute Count:
Time Management for Volunteer Engagement Professionals"
Volunteer Fairfax Workshop – July 14, 2026
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What are your top 3-4 “Time Thieves”?

- ☐ Disorganization
- ☐ Interruptions from volunteers
- ☐ Interruptions from staff colleagues
- ☐ Procrastination
- ☐ Tasks that take a lot of time due to lack of skill or too hard
- ☐ Dislike of certain tasks
- ☐ Desire to do everything perfectly
- ☐ Competing priorities set by other people
- ☐ Hesitation to delegate tasks to others
- ☐ Tendency to “drop everything” for the volunteers
- ☐ Requests from the staff, leadership, or Board conflict with my priorities
- ☐ It’s my job to do everything
- ☐ Difficulty saying “No”
- ☐ Too much email
- ☐ Unproductive meetings
- ☐ Worrying a lot about how I can please everyone at the same time
- ☐ Other: _____

Most of the time, where are you on this continuum?

Proactive _____ **Reactive**

1 2 3 4 5 6

Saying No without Reserve or Regret

1. Why to say no

- a. Because you're not the right person for the job.
- b. Because it's already someone else's job — including possibly the asker's!
- c. Because you don't have the time, energy, inclination, commitment, resources to do a good job.
- d. Because you'll be letting a commitment to something else of equal or more importance slip.
- e. Because it's a no-no of yours.

2. How to say no

- a. Right out and without a lot of apology — say you're sorry once!
- b. With honesty — it's good to tell the truth about why you must say no.
- c. If honesty would hurt the asker, tell a compassionate white lie.
- d. With suggestions of other possible helpers — including resources right under the asker's nose!
- e. With some negotiation about future help, especially if you are able and willing but just **can't** right now.

3. Tactics askers use to get us to say yes. Beware of these...

- a. Flattery — “you're the best”...“everyone recommends you”...“you did such fine work on XYZ...”
Our egos get us into more trouble.
- b. Desperation — “I've tried everything and you're my last resort”
- c. Guilt or being “should upon,” — “you really ought to,” “how can you NOT say yes?”
- d. Persistence — When they won't take no for an answer.
- e. Trickery!

4. Phrases to use...

- a. “I have a previous commitment that I **cannot** break”—the commitment can be to yourself, family, friends, colleagues, your organization, and the like.
- b. “This is beyond the scope of our organization's mission...”
- c. “We don't have the resources to provide this kind of help to everyone, so can't offer it to a select few...”
- d. “We've already chosen where we'll be working (or focusing, donating, helping out, etc.) this year...” leaving unsaid that the asker's cause isn't on the list.
- e. Phrase to use with persistent asker who won't take no for an answer: “It's absolutely out of the question.”
- f. “What have you tried so far?” “Who else is helping with this?” “Have you thought about...?”

5. When to say yes

- a. When someone has clearly defined what they are asking of you in terms of skills, time commitment, reporting, meetings, financial resources, etc. and you determine you can deliver better than anyone else.
- b. When they have clearly detailed what you can expect from them in the way of the support and resources you need from them to get the job done.
- c. When you have mutual agreement about the preferred outcomes and you're confident the asker is **ready to use** the help you will provide.

If you never say no, what good is your yes?