

Taking Care of Your Volunteers

How to maximize volunteer effectiveness.

How to deal with volunteer burnout.

Tips to re-energize them.

Goals

- Understand the cyclical pattern of volunteer enthusiasm and volunteer burnout.
- Maximize volunteer potential during periods of growth or resurgence
- Handle volunteer burnout
- Re-energize a burned-out volunteer who wishes to become active again
- Learn how to keep the lines of communication open

Congratulations On Your New Volunteers

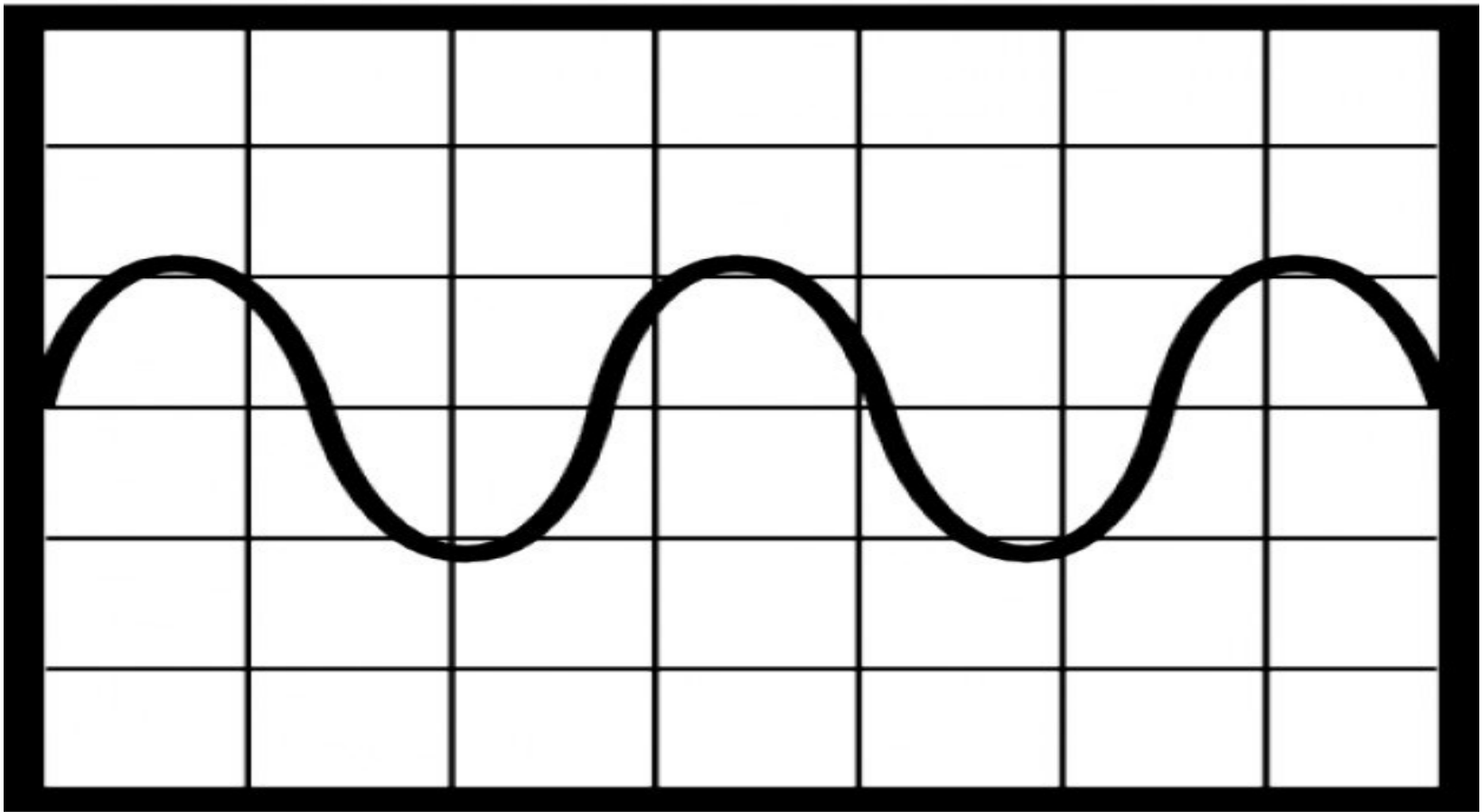
- We have information on:
- Getting new volunteers
- Firing a Volunteer

We need to focus on the part in-between

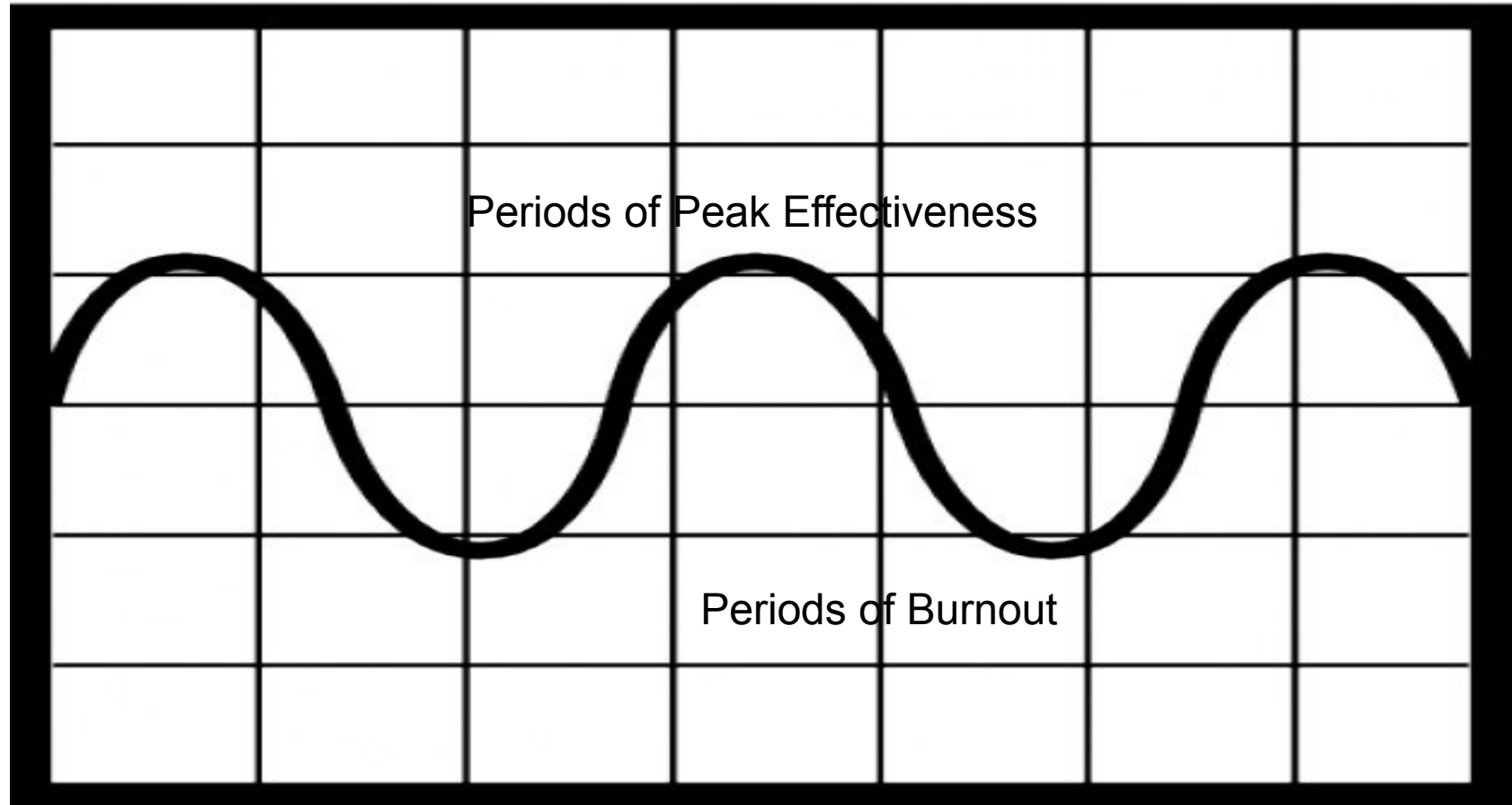
We're All Volunteers

- Mensa would not exist without its dedicated volunteers
- The amount of energy many of you bring amazes me
- BUT... volunteers can go through periods of energy and burnout
- These periods are cyclical

The Volunteer Cycle



The Volunteer Cycle



As You Move Through the Cycle

- Increasing knowledge and ability
- Peaking – becoming as effective and self-sustaining as possible
- Setbacks, limitations, problems – what can cause these?
- Decreased effectiveness, decreased motivation, eventually burnout
- Reach a low point, hopefully bounce back
- Get them active again!

What Do You Want?

- Peaks to be as high and lengthy as possible
- Periods of downward slide detected and addressed as quickly as possible
- Valleys as “not low” and short as possible
- Open lines of communication
- Support!

What Don't You Want?

- Volunteers out of control
- Overworked volunteers
- Micromanagement
- Volunteer “hogging”
- Infighting
- Non-supervision
- Volunteers quitting, lapsing
- Finger-pointing
- LACK OF COMMUNICATION

The 4 “E’s”

Empower

Excel

Examine

Encourage

Empower

- Evaluate new volunteer's experience and capability
- Provide assistance in as many ways as possible:
 - Mentor
 - Reference materials, manuals
 - National contacts, volunteers in other chapters doing the same activities
 - Finance leadership!!

Assess Your Volunteer's Skills

Different volunteers will start with different skill sets:

- Introverted vs. Extroverted
- Sensitive vs. “thick-skinned”
- Soft-spoken vs. “blunt”

You may not always have choices for which volunteers(s) for which office(s). When you do, evaluate the skills needed versus the skills available.

M&Ms Get Volunteers

- Avoid giving an inexperienced volunteer a daunting first challenge
 - Chapter president/LocSec
 - Editor
 - RG Chair
- Show the time-frame for the task, give clear completion times
- What are ways you can break daunting tasks into “bite-sized” portions?

Let Your Volunteers Excel

- Peak performance – make the most of their abilities!
- BUT:
 - Don't overwhelm them
 - “If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it” only goes so far
 - Examine volunteer's personal skills

What Can Impede a Volunteer?

- Too many responsibilities
- Lack of progress
- Budget
- Abilities
- People skills
- Personality Conflicts
- Overreaching
- Harassment

Examine (The Downward Slide)

- Are you seeing results/progress?
- Are you getting feedback?
- Are things being prioritized properly?
 - Time
 - Money
- **ARE YOU ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?**

When It Hits Rock Bottom: What You Don't Want

- Tasks not completed
- Loss of revenue
- Verbal backlash
- Volunteer stops volunteering and possibly lapses from Mensa
- Domino effect – impact is so bad others stop working or lapse

How To Fire A Volunteer

- Dismissing a volunteer is not always the correct solution
 - Examine the entire situation (causal analysis)
 - Can redirection work?
 - Changes of assignments
 - Changes of team members
 - Changes of schedule, priority, funding
 - Did the volunteer have the right set of skills and resources for the job?

Elected/Appointed Volunteer

If your chapter's bylaws state how a particular officer is formally removed from office, you must follow those procedures.

Make sure everything is clearly documented.

If these processes are not followed, your chapter CAN be investigated.

Keep it Professional

- Keep the process succinct
- Never make it personal
 - “We don't think it's working.”
 - “We'd like to give you something else to do.”
 - “We'd like to give someone else an opportunity to do this.”
- Anticipate what negative feedback might come from the volunteer, and plan for it
- Involve an ombudsman or mediator if necessary

Encourage – Get Them Back

- If they hit rock bottom, and you want them back, do what you can to prevent a lapse
- Remind them of the positive contributions they have made to Mensa
- Active listening – be empathetic to their dissatisfactions
- Listen to their suggestions and requests
- Be prepared to start from Square 1 all over again if necessary

Know Your Volunteers

- Some volunteers will be happy doing tasks they like for long periods of time
- Some volunteers want new challenges
- Some volunteers work better alone
 - What type of jobs in Mensa can be done alone?
- Volunteers have different amounts of time, knowledge, resources

Thank Your Volunteers

Every volunteer should be thanked for the job they do, no matter how large or how small.

Saying “Thank You” goes up and down.

Consider rewarding your volunteers too, when possible.

Have you thanked your chapter president and officers? Your RVC and national officers? The AG Chair and committee?

Where Can You Get Assistance?

- National level resources (RVC, Membership, Ombudsman, National Office)
- Existing leadership workshop documentation
- Peers
- Members of your group who have prior experience at the task

Don't Get Assistance From

- Counterproductive members of your group
 - People whose words speak louder than actions
 - People who complain but never offer solutions or assistance
- Social Media
 - News travels fast; bad news seems to travel faster

If Things Go Well

Hopefully you get your volunteer(s) back

Hopefully the cycle repeats

If Things Don't Go Well

Do today's burned-out volunteers become:

- A statistic?
- Defeatists?
- Social Media Trolls?

References (informal)

Places from which I've gathered information:

- American Mensa LDW presentations
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Steven Covey
- *How To Put More Time In Your Life* by Dru Scott
- IBM professional Development classes (sorry, material long gone, gleaning from memory)
- The Internet