

WHY WE LOSE MEMBERS/LEADERS –
Provided by Karen Robert readers@live-now.org

Burn-Out: People often leave organizations because they are asked to do too much too quickly. To avoid burn-out, try to offer members a series of slowly increasing responsibilities.

Cool Out: The opposite of asking people to do too much too fast is not asking them to do anything at all. "No one invited me." "No one told me they needed me." Don't be hesitant about asking people to do things for the group. People want to be useful. Don't lose track of people.

Keep Out: Veterans inevitably will gravitate towards one another at meetings. But it is important that newcomers also feel included. Allow some time at the beginning of each meeting for group discussions that include new and old members. Encourage openness and promise confidentiality. This is a great way to get to know the other members of the group intimately and tear down the "keep out sign" that cliques always post.

Pull Out: Newcomers may become old-timers, but they don't want to feel that they must. People are more likely to participate when the extent of the participation is in their control. No one likes to feel trapped, so let members control their level of commitment. When members set explicit limits, respect them.

Can't Win: Nothing scares members away faster than a sense of futility, or a clouded perception of what the goals are. Clearly state your objectives for the short term and long term, and set reasonable limits. Only plan within the group's capabilities.

Can't Lose: While trying to establish reasonable goals, bear in mind that striving for an easy goal strikes most people as just as pointless as working for a useless long shot. So when setting goals, make sure there is some challenge involved. That way you can justify a huge celebration afterwards.

No Growth: Volunteer work should be interesting and should offer variety and a chance for personal growth. There is redundant work to be done of course, but distribute it evenly, and mix in as much fun as you can. Encourage members to take on more challenging tasks and projects as they learn more about the Friends.

No Appreciation: Volunteers don't just enjoy being appreciated; they need and deserve it. Without it, they tend to lose faith in the value of what they're doing. There are three primary elements of showing your appreciation. First, show them that you are grateful for the work they have done. Second, don't take it for granted that they will continue doing work for the group. Third, show general respect for their opinions and their work by returning phone calls, answering notes, passing along information, etc.

No Fun: The Friends at times have very serious fundraising to do, which isn't always fun for people. However, this doesn't mean that you can't make your group creative and enjoyable for members. If people get overwhelmed every time they do an event, they are going to stop coming.