

## How to Create a Functional Club or Committee

Clubs are more fun than committees by far, but require someone to invest very large amounts of time on social activities. That's why they're more fun! Committees, on the other hand should focus on accomplishing some agreed task, should complete that with a minimum of meetings, and then disband. Of course, saving-the-world is an endless proposition, but very few people volunteer for endless tasks. Try breaking those down into bite-sized bits.

Since clubs require so much more social time they depend on finding someone whose heart is really into socializing as well as the functional focus, whether that's rowing boats or a political action group. If you are lucky enough to know such a person, then getting resources to them is key. Far more often the ideal volunteer is not visible at that time, so someone else must assemble a group to do the necessary work. Usually that's you.

A few years of that can cure anyone of volunteering too quickly!

On the other hand, if your project is very clearly and obviously for the common good, you might be amazed how many people are happy to help out. Furthermore, there is almost always a polite audience for a pitch to do some common good, so long as you are not asking for money right away. And a small group of practically minded volunteers can accomplish miracles if well managed. "Well managed" means that you don't waste their time and deploy them strategically to make visible progress on the problem for which they came together.

At Ground Zero we faced the decision of whether to go for paid staff or stay with strictly volunteers decades ago. There are strong pros and cons to each decision. The biggest problem is that to support even one paid staff one must spend huge amounts of time raising funds, and most of that time is NOT going to serve the mission, but basically begging for money. The downside of all-volunteer groups is that this can be hard on some of the nicest, most compassionate people, who are usually the ones who volunteer for save-the-world work.

You decide for your own missions in life. There is one recommendation that applies to both paid and unpaid help on committees or clubs. Try not to waste their time. This is especially important in volunteer organizations, because the easiest thing a volunteer can do at any time is to walk away from your project. That's another reason why meetings should be kept to a minimum. They consume huge amounts of time, which better be productive or the practical people will walk away and you'll be left with the socializers.

There is nothing wrong with socializing; it's just not the same as getting work done. And if you are engaged in issues of life and death, well, it's important for you to get some actual useful work done.

A final pitfall is obvious to elders. These are the people who are full of ideas about what someone else could do if they would just raise all the money and do all the work. Every committee has one or more of those. They are full of creative ideas of work you might do, but they never seem to be there to do the work or pay the bills. Send them to the social club.