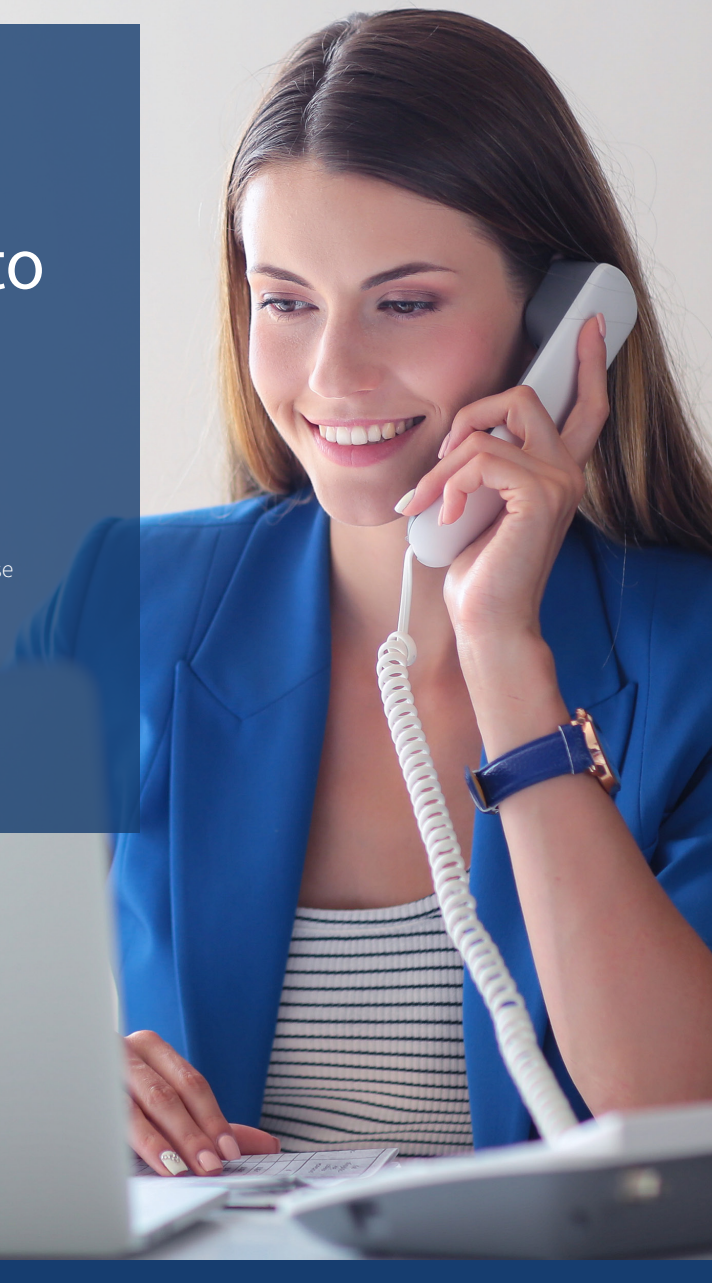


Lack of Administrative Support Is an Obstacle to Nonprofit Growth

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The Staffing Problem

Nonprofit organizations are consistently understaffed. One area of significant impact is the lack of administrative support, often leaving nonprofits to buckle under the weight of the workload.

Virtual administrative assistants present a cost-effective solution to help nonprofit organizations meet their growth goals.

Volunteers and Interns Only Go So Far

Most nonprofit organizations rely on volunteers to help fill the gaps and advance the mission. The reality, however, is that volunteers can only do so much. Unlike a steady employee, the [number of volunteer hours they can commit varies week to week](#). Volunteers are, by definition, donating their time and talents and have other commitments that often take priority over their nonprofit work.

And yet, many nonprofits depend solely on volunteers to shoulder the organization's workload, including administrative and operational tasks, rather than spending resources on paid staff.

[In a piece for the Atlantic](#), author [Jonathan Timm](#) speaks to budget challenges as follows, "One response would be to cut a program or reduce the number of people an organization serves. But nonprofit leaders have shown themselves very reluctant to do that. Instead, many meet financial challenges by squeezing more work out of their staffs without a proportional increase in their pay. [The Urban Institute Report](#) found that most nonprofits choose to cut salaries, benefits, and other costs long before scaling back their operations."

One position that feels the squeeze the most is that of the executive director. Executive directors are often the only paid staff member at an organization, left to shoulder the executive duties as well as the administrative support that goes with them. They amass a workload of responsibilities that can be impossible to complete. Moreover, when their time is diverted from performing tasks that align with the mission to tasks such as paperwork and spreadsheets, their job satisfaction decreases, and [turnover increases](#).



"The pressure from funders to tighten budgets and cut costs can produce what researchers call the "[nonprofit starvation cycle](#)," continues Tim. "The cycle starts with funders' unrealistic expectations about the costs of running a nonprofit. In response, nonprofits try to spend less on overhead (like salaries) and under-report expenses to try to meet those unrealistic expectations. That response then reinforces the unrealistic expectations that began the cycle. In this light, it's no surprise that so many nonprofits have come to rely on volunteers to fill what would more likely be staff positions."

That includes the ever-popular "free" intern solution. But while the intern may work for free or be less expensive to hire, the time and resources it takes to manage an intern can cancel out the cost benefit of whatever work they may accomplish.

Administrative support, critical to the sustainability of a nonprofit organization, is often cut from the budget and assigned to volunteers, absorbed by already fully-subscribed executive directors, or simply left undone.

The Impact: Stunted Growth

While the starvation cycle is by no means new and nonprofits do continue to function, the lack of quality administrative support ultimately presents an obstacle to growth.

First and foremost, it reduces the overall capacity of the organization. As discussed, volunteers, interns and lone executive directors can only assume so much of the workload. Without additional hands, especially hands that can support their efforts, viable opportunities for the nonprofit can go unaddressed.

For example, many fundraising initiatives are underpinned by a huge number of administrative tasks. Simply keeping track of receipts, volunteers, donors, acknowledgements, etc. creates a significant amount of work that, without a skilled administrator, may become unorganized, delayed, and even forgotten. The results can range from an inefficient and unrecorded program to an angry donor. Not the outcome any nonprofit wants to experience.

This struggle to reach and maintain a level of professionalism and continuity often extends throughout the organization's activities. Moreover, if no one is dedicating time to execute on these tasks - things like data management, meeting notes, communications, record keeping - they often get lost in the shuffle or placed on the back burner until volunteers have time to address them. This can lead to inefficiencies and, believe it or not, additional costs to correct areas that were not completed correctly the first time.

Any money the organization thought it was saving by not hiring support is lost in stagnation because the organization is simply unable to build capacity on the few shoulders available.



The Solution: Invest in the Right Administrative Support

One of the best solutions to this problem is a virtual assistant.

Research shows that remote workers are more productive. A study from TINYpulse found that [91 percent of remote workers](#) reported they are more productive working at home. They benefit from fewer office distractions and can work flexible, more effective, hours. They can structure their schedules around other responsibilities to complete more tasks, and they don't have to worry about long commutes that exhaust time and energy.



The CEO of Hubstaff suggests that remote employees “**stay longer, work harder and offer better ROI**” than in-house employees. The increased productivity is an advantage for both the nonprofit organization and the virtual assistants.

Here are a few more benefits to consider:

1. **Their office is virtual:** For many smaller nonprofit organizations, not having a physical address hinders their ability to find administrative support. Virtual assistants can work from any location with an internet connection, a computer, and phone.
2. **There’s a lower cost:** The organization doesn’t have to provide benefits, equipment, paid training, or bonuses, nor do they pay taxes like they would with a full-time employee.
3. **They come trained:** While interns and volunteers can be energetic and well meaning, they may not have the skills needed to adeptly address administrative functions. Virtual assistants have the right array of skills, training, knowledge of technical resources, and experience.

The virtual nature of today’s work world provides new options for nonprofits who previously felt they couldn’t hire quality administrative support.

In a [recently updated article](#) looking at small business trends, an owner shares that their business “has grown over 40% thanks to using virtual assistants.”

By 2020, Intuit predicts that [40 percent of the U.S. workforce](#) will be made up of freelancers.

It’s time for nonprofits to embrace the trend - and see the growth.



To grow your organization and fulfill your mission, you need the right people in your corner - especially when it comes to administrative support. Nonprofit Assistants are specialized virtual assistants trained in nonprofit best practices. They have the skill set, resources, and experience to help you maximize your time and your impact. Get the support you need at www.morethangiving.co/assistants.