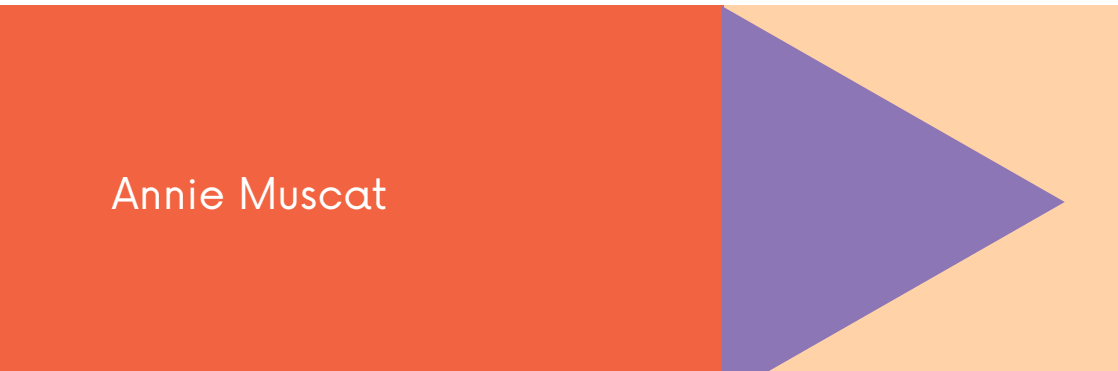


A Nonprofit Manager's Mini Guide to:

MINDFUL LEADERSHIP

Annie Muscat



Nonprofit managers **like you play an integral role in shaping the work environment and addressing the unique challenges faced by their employees.**

This mini guide provides practical strategies and opportunities for reflection to help managers foster a supportive, healthy, and sustainable workplace.

WHAT'S COVERED

- Understanding Passion Exploitation & Burnout
- Fostering a Supportive Culture
- Providing Access to Resources
- Integrating Sensitive Management Practices
- Creating an Open & Trusting Environment
- Examining Compensation
- Leading by Example
- Additional Resources

WHAT'S COVERED

WHAT IS PASSION EXPLOITATION?

Passion exploitation occurs when organizations leverage employees' intrinsic motivation and dedication to the mission, often resulting in overwork and undercompensation.

Examples include pressuring employees to:

- Work extra hours without additional pay
- Sacrifice family/leisure time for work
- Engage in undesirable tasks irrelevant to their job tasks irrelevant to their job description

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION

Are my employee's workloads realistic and in line with their job descriptions?

Do I regularly check in with my team to understand their workload and stress levels, and take actionable steps based on their feedback?

Do I respect and encourage my employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance, including clear boundaries for work hours?



You may not realize you're perpetuating an exploitative work environment.

It may be perceived as the norm or framed as commitment.

Consistent passion exploitation
almost always leads to...

BURNOUT

“Physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion accompanied by decreased motivation, lowered performance, and negative attitudes toward oneself and others. It results from performing at a high level until stress and tension, especially from extreme and **prolonged physical or mental exertion or an overburdening workload**, take their toll.”

-APA Dictionary

Burnout has been cited as a contributing factor to **voluntary turnover** and **nonprofit workforce shortages**.

COMMON SIGNS OF BURNOUT



Increased
Absenteeism/
Tardiness



Physical Stress
Signs
(disheveled,
fatigued)



Emotional
Changes
(detachment,
irritability)



Decline in
Work Quality/
Consistency

FOSTERING A SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

01.

PROMOTE WORK- LIFE BALANCE

Implement options such as **remote work, hybrid schedules, and flexible hours** to accommodate employees' personal needs. Actively encourage the use of **paid time off** and ensure employees take their allotted breaks and vacations.

02.

SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Establish guidelines for after-hours communication to prevent burnout. For example, **no emails or messages after certain hours**. Regularly review and **adjust workloads** to ensure they are manageable and aligned with job descriptions.

03.

RECOGNIZE & REWARD

Regularly recognize and **celebrate employees' contributions and achievements**. Ensure that salaries and benefits are competitive, adequately address cost of living expenses, and **reflect the value and effort** of the employees' work.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO RESOURCES

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

- **Counseling Services:** Offer access to mental health services, including counseling and wellness programs. Evaluate how/if employee benefits packages encompass mental health care.
- **Wellness Programs:** Introduce programs that promote physical and mental well-being, such as fitness classes, mindfulness sessions, and stress management workshops.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Training Opportunities:** Provide ongoing professional development opportunities to help employees grow and feel valued (e.g., conferences, courses, etc.)
- **Career Pathways:** Develop clear career pathways to show employees how they can advance within the organization.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION

Are there barriers for employees when it comes to accessing mental health care through the organization (e.g., not enough time/information)?

Do employees take part in these programs? Why might they not?

When was the last time I checked in with my employees about their professional interests and goals?

TRAUMA-INFORMED MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

CATERS TO PHYSICAL
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

1 SAFETY

Inclusive leadership; creating an atmosphere to support an individual's need for psychological safety, respect, and acceptance

2 TRUST- WORTHINESS & TRANS- PARENCY

Transparency of intended goals or outcomes and the steps by which these goals will be attained

3 PEER SUPPORT

Horizontal alignment in an organization to provide connections among individuals

4 COLLABOR- ATION & MUTUALITY

"Power-with" instead of "power-over". Increase equity and open participation

5 EMPOWER- MENT, VOICE & CHOICE

Actively seeking input from all in the organization, to regularly communicate a preference for speaking up over walking away

6 RECOGNITION OF CULTURAL, HISTORIC & GENDER ISSUES

Embrace culturally competent practices; recognize identities and backgrounds

CREATING AN OPEN AND TRUSTING ENVIRONMENT

Normalize conversations around mental health while recognizing that widespread stigma and cultural differences might influence how/if individuals communicate about their mental well-being.

- Hold regular **one-on-ones** to check in on team members.
- Maintain an **open-door policy** to encourage employees to voice concerns without fear of repercussions.

Provide growth and support programs that empower employees to perform their job duties with confidence. Ensure that employees have some sort of safety net at work where they can debrief.

- Establish **mentorship programs** where experienced employees can support and guide newer staff.
- Create support groups or peer networks where employees can share experiences and **strategies for self-preservation.**





EXAMINING COMPENSATION

With rising costs of living and shifting worker values, nonprofits risk losing talented workers if they do not offer competitive wages.



MARKET ANALYSIS

Gather data from reputable salary surveys, professional associations, and industry reports to benchmark your organization's pay scales against similar roles in your geographic region and sector.*



TRANSPARENT PAY PRACTICES

ALWAYS include salaries in job listings. Communicate the organization's pay policies and structure to all employees.

Schedule pay reviews (annually or bi-annually) to adjust salaries based on market trends and cost of living increases.



COMPREHENSIVE BENEFITS

Request **employee input** to understand their needs and preferences for health benefits. Compare various retirement plan options and consider employer contributions.

Offer **financial education sessions** to help employees understand and maximize their retirement benefits.

***Note:** Just because other organizations are paying at a certain level, doesn't mean it's a fair wage.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE



MODEL HEALTHY BEHAVIOR

Demonstrate a healthy work-life balance by setting boundaries and taking time off.

Practice and promote self-care activities.

Stay up to date on research and best practices in nonprofit management.

Seek feedback from employees on how to improve the work environment.

CONTINUE LEARNING

Update your team on organizational decisions, changes, and progress.

Share the rationale behind decisions and involve employees in decision-making processes when possible.

PROMOTE TRANS- PARENCY



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Kanter, B. & Sherman, A. (2016). **"The Happy Healthy Nonprofit: Strategies for Impact without Burnout."**

Rao, A. H., & Neely, M. T. (2019). **What's Love Got to Do with It? Passion and Inequality in White-Collar Work.** Sociology Compass.

Robichau, R. & Sandberg, B. & Russo, A. (2023). **Beyond "Psychic Income": An Exploration of Interventions to Address Work-Life Imbalances, Burnout, and Precarity in Contemporary Nonprofit Work.** Nonprofit Policy Forum.

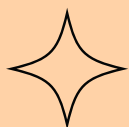
Miller, A. & Trochmann, M. & Drury, I. (2022). **Trauma-Informed Public Management: A Step Toward Addressing Hidden Inequalities and Improving Employee Wellbeing.** Public Administration Quarterly.

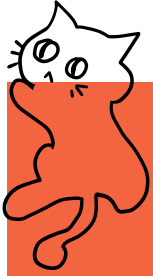
Great Expectations: Making Hybrid Work Work (2022)
<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/great-expectations-making-hybrid-work-work>

Restorative Compensation: Moving from Theory to Practice (2024)

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/restorative-compensation-moving-from-theory-to-practice/>

@nicoleolived "The Non-Profit Boss" on TikTok





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**Email amuscat@seattleu.edu to receive a
copy of the corresponding research paper:**

**"Burning Out: How the Nonprofit Industrial
Complex Infiltrates Our Organizations"**

2024

