

Overcome the Overwhelm

Relief Right Now

By Virginia Lang



Part 2

Perfection is the Enemy

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Part 2 – Perfection Is the Enemy

Know what? Nothing is perfect. Nothing is *meant* to be perfect, probably ever, and certainly not on the first try. It's easy to get stuck, paralyzed even, because there's one more revision, one more piece of information, one more graphic or photo or re-recording, "before I can show this to anyone" or "before I can turn this in". If you obsess, you will stress, the project will churn, and you will achieve overwhelm – fast! Here are a couple of strategies:

The sloppy first draft. Just go for it. Get all the thoughts, or all the numbers, or all the images, references, methods or designs, out of your head or your file and onto the screen or the paper. Let it pour. Include stuff you like but think you'll never use. It might come in handy later. Don't worry if it's too long or sloppy or downright terrible. It's supposed to be terrible the first time. And it's not stuck in your head anymore! It will get better when you revisit it. It will get even better when you send it past another person and then revise it again. Will it ever be perfect? Probably not, but it will be good, better than you think, you'll have a product that you can be proud of, and it won't be churning around in your head, stressing you out.

Ask for help and delegate! Success is almost never accomplished alone. Take a look at any highly successful leader and you'll see that she/he is surrounded by an amazing team dedicated to supporting her – and the mission. Many nonprofit executives, managers and board leaders have either consciously or unconsciously chosen to actively oversee every detail of day to day operations or governance. That's a sure recipe for Overwhelm. Sometimes we're convinced that it's easier to do it than ask someone else or train someone else – or accept that they may do it just as well even if differently. Whatever your position is, try to think of it more as the sweet spot where circles of responsibility overlap, rather than a place on a pyramid or flow chart.

Delegation – asking for help – can be one of the hardest things to learn if you're used to relying only on yourself. The truth is, if you micro manage others, it almost always leads to burnout for you and frustration for them. Employees and volunteers (and even friends!) who are micro managed do not feel trusted, valued, included, or motivated.

If you surround yourself with the best people you can find, then trust them and support them, building on their strengths, they will make you look like a rock star.

So what's that first small task, like we talked about in Part 1? Make a list of the staff and volunteers that work for your organization or in your area of responsibility. How many are there? Small task number two: Add to that list the basics of their job descriptions. Then ask yourself: Do they act independently? Do they surprise you with their innovation and enthusiasm? How do you support them? What can they do to help you?

Begin to create a team that loves to work with you and happily delivers your programs to accomplish the project and the mission you ALL care about.

In Part 1, *I Can Do that*, we talked about making everything into smaller bits – manageable tasks that can help you begin to Overcome the Overwhelm. Now you've got a couple more tools you can begin to work with for relief right now:

- **Start with a sloppy first draft to get out of your head. Then strive for completion -- and perfection will take care of itself.**
- **Assemble your team and let it fly, with support and trust.**

Yup, you CAN do that! Now download Part 3, *React Against the Grain*.

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Lang Consulting specializes in planning, training and development for nonprofit organizations and helps nonprofit professionals and board members develop their leadership skills in the areas of communication, fundraising, outreach, board/ staff development and volunteer management.

Ginny works nationally with nonprofits, and individual private clients; In Bellingham, WA, she is a member of Exploration Academy's Council of Advocates, the Vista Advisory Committee for the Opportunity Council, and she leads business and nonprofit workshops at Whatcom Community College. Ginny is a trainer with the Washington Nonprofits Training Institute and has served on the Steering Committee for the Whatcom Council of Nonprofits.

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