

Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

1. Background

2. Introduction

3 Volunteer Involvements

- Why do you need volunteers?
- What benefits can you offer potential volunteers?
- Why do people volunteer?

4. Managing Volunteers

- Focusing workshop
- Where might you find volunteers?
- Planning the role of the volunteer manager
- Recruitment strategy
- Training strategy
- Retention strategy

5. Checklist for Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

Appendix 1: Position Description

References and Further Reading

National Qualifications Framework

1. Background

Sport is an integral part of the Australian lifestyle. It enriches our lives, enhances our health and brings people and communities together. Sport fosters the development of excellence, team spirit, competition and pride. It unites people of all ages and walks of life. Sport and leisure is a huge growth industry in Australia.

Spin-offs include substantial benefits to the economy - millions of dollars in the case of big events. As a nation, we're known internationally as sport mad and justifiably proud of our successes. Sport is now big business and clubs need to keep ahead of the latest principles and practices in marketing and development in order to survive and prosper.

To do this, many clubs today are adopting a strategic approach to club administration and becoming more business-like in the way they manage their program and events. As a result sports bodies and other non-profit organisations throughout Australia are achieving some spectacular results.

By becoming more entrepreneurial, clubs and non-profit organisations are gaining enhanced public profiles, growing their membership and attracting strong commercial partnerships and through sponsorships.

Despite the financial challenges - Sport in Australia is still dependent, to a very large degree, on the huge number of dedicated volunteers who give so freely of their time and energies.

SportzMortgage has developed a series of information packages with volunteers like you in mind.

2. Introduction

Volunteers are the life blood of every sport and leisure organisation in Australia. They contribute time and energy year after year to assist in the development of sport and leisure activities. Without these people sport and leisure organisations fail to function effectively or in the worst case scenario – fail to exist. Volunteers are extremely valuable, deserving of praise and public recognition - which is not always forthcoming.

While there is a move towards employing paid administrators, it is clear that clubs and organisations will continue to rely heavily on volunteer administrators. This resource focuses on valuing, growing and developing your volunteer team. Two key points to consider in relation to sports clubs and organisations:

- Business management has progressed rapidly, giving the general public higher expectations of quality and excellence in organisations.
- Employment, social and personal pressures encourage people to be selective in their leisure time and gain value and enjoyment from recreational activities.

Sport basically falls into three different categories: -

- Sport as a recreational pursuit - holiday and weekend activities
- Sport at club level - competition with regular training
- Sport at championship level - representative and international

3. Volunteer Involvement

Whilst “volunteer” is a word used to describe the unpaid work carried out by individuals, the irony if there is one is that most volunteers are actively recruited by committees to fulfill specific roles. In fact many who end up in a volunteer role never actually thought to apply as they didn’t think there was a need – hence the need for committees to be continually on the look out for suitable people.

There is little doubt that volunteering has been the backbone to thousands and thousands of Clubs and Organisations throughout Australia. The challenge for Clubs survival longer term is to ensure a healthy number of potential volunteer candidates coming through the system. This means having a basis and a system to recruit train and develop volunteers.

The volunteer role within organisations is now somewhat more sophisticated than in the past and requires a serious commitment from both the volunteers and the organisation. As a result the management system within a Club needs to address a range of issues including: -

- **Recruitment Strategies**
What is the role required to be filled – What skills qualities and attributes are required to be performed in the role and who are the known candidates.
- Training
Succession can be an issue if a person/candidate has reservations about their ability to carry out the role; hence a documented account of how a person will be trained and inducted into the role should be on hand.
- Recognizing and valuing contributions
People by nature like recognition and yet whilst most people who perform volunteer roles do so for their own reasons (not necessarily recognition) Clubs should have a strategy for recognising the efforts of all volunteers and have a plan to publicly acknowledge such efforts. Effective recognition programs can help to retain volunteers – particularly when they feel valued. Whilst it might be true that all efforts are valued – the person doing the role and making the commitment needs to feel the appreciation.
- Assessment and evaluation
Whilst not intended to make the situation more complicated than it needs to be – a time or process should be in place to assess and evaluate performance. Just like managing a business – if develop is needed or the wrong people are in the wrong roles – they need to be fixed.

Why do Clubs Need Volunteers?

Running Clubs is an expensive business and volunteers are needed, not just to perform tasks and fulfill various roles and responsibilities but also to keep the costs of administration down. These roles vary in time required to perform them but each example serves a specific example.

Roles include: -

- Coaching
- President
- Club Coordinator
- Fund raising events
- Managing equipment and building maintenance
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- General Committee member
- Club Delegate
- Or a host of other reasons

What Benefits are on Offer to Potential Volunteers?

Time is a limited resource for many people and your club is in effect competing with other aspects of a person's life to win a portion of their time. Naturally people's time is important and hence to win some of that time you have to be able to promote the positive aspects associated with your Club and what it has to offer volunteers.

- Developing New friendships
- Developing New skills
- Intrinsic rewards for involvement
- Watching others develop
- Mentoring young people
- Creating opportunities
- Training and personal development
- Trips, visits,
- Social occasions
- Gain CV references - "the qualities exhibited by volunteers look good on your CV"

Summary

Promote the benefits that your organisation offers to volunteers.

Why do People Volunteer?

If we asked 100 people why they do what they do in respect to volunteering, we would get dozens of different answers as it is very much a personal thing as to why people do that they do. People volunteer for many different reasons ranging from specific development through to a range of intrinsic rewards. Some of the reasons are listed below and can be used in formatting a benefit statement to be used in recruitment.

- Learn new skills
- Gain personal training and development
- Help others
- Increase enthusiasm and energy
- Share talents, abilities and experience
- Fight boredom
- Make new friends
- Build self confidence
- Explore career opportunities
- Feel needed, useful and appreciated
- Gain a new direction in life
- Give something back to the community
- Be a team member
- Get closer to the sport or activity your organisation represents
- Contribute to the sport or activity of the club
- Have fun

Summary

John Gardener once said "Sometimes the world is a better place just because of the kind of person you are" – that is very true when it comes to spending time in volunteer roles. Volunteers at all levels are often responsible for making the Club a better place to be - just because of the contribution they made.

4. Managing Volunteers

Key Elements

- Recruitment strategy
- Training strategy
- Retention strategy

Focusing Workshop

Before you start on a recruitment campaign, bring together key members of your organisation for a brainstorming session to examine the role of volunteers. Some areas which may be useful to include are:

- In a general overview, identify the people who have helped your achievers to achieve.
- What have your experiences been as a volunteer?
- Where have you come into contact with volunteers - what are your impressions/experiences?
- Summarize from all members of the group which volunteer activities you are presently involved in and why.
- What would be needed to improve the volunteer experience (e.g. having contact with other volunteers)?
- What can your organisation offer volunteers?
- Consider the role of a Volunteer Manager for your club.

Where to Find Volunteers?

Don't wait for opportunity to knock - go out and find it! Volunteers are all everywhere in the community and as previously stated - many people are unaware of the need to fill certain roles and hence need to be asked:

- Your work mates
- Your friends
- Your family
- People who have retired from employment e.g. local Senior Citizens,
- Students in training looking for experience
- Unemployed or part-time workers
- People looking for outside interests
- Ex-team players

Summary

Without sufficient numbers of volunteers - Clubs cannot survive! Not much more needs to be said.

5. Recruiting/Retaining Volunteers

- Decide why your organisation needs volunteers and what you can offer
- Appoint a person or persons to identify potential volunteers
- Design specific role for volunteers
- Decide what sort of people you want, how many and for how long
- Write position descriptions for each role
- Plan your recruitment campaign
- Interview candidates and recruit people that best -complement others
- Appoint specific positions
- Induct them into their new roles, providing support and feedback
- Involve volunteers in team meetings and in all matters that affect them.
- Provide opportunities for training.
- Manage, support and evaluate performance
- Reward and recognise volunteers appropriately
- Make necessary changes in roles and volunteers programs
- Review these steps regularly.