Recruiting Volunteers

This resource is designed to help your Club develop effective recruitment policies and practices. The effective recruitment of volunteers requires of Clubs a more planned and professional approach which is similar, yet different from Human Resource Management.

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A. Introduction

The management and running of Clubs and Leagues relies on the involvement and commitment of a large number of volunteers. Volunteers are often described as the ‘backbone’ of our sport and approximately 50,000 are involved in one way or another in soccer. Because volunteers are such an integral part of Clubs/Leagues it is important to make them feel valued and appreciated for the great work they do.

The purpose of this module is to:
- Introduce a human resource management approach to managing volunteers in Clubs and Leagues
- Explain the value of volunteers’ diversity, motives and roles
- Explain the processes of human resource planning, recruitment, selection and orientation.

B. Human Resource Management

Human resource management (HRM) is an essential function in the running of Clubs and Leagues. Gone are the days when Club/Leagues were run by one or two people who looked after everything from lining pitches to applying for grants. People today can’t give the same time or resources to Clubs. Thus more people are required and we need to get the most from people’s time, energy and skills. Volunteers need to be managed.

Volunteers come into Clubs with different needs and expectations, and with a diverse range of backgrounds, interests, skills and experiences. As a result, their motives, level of commitment to and involvement in the Club, the benefits they seek from their volunteer experience and the amount of time they are prepared to devote to the Club will vary enormously.

HRM involves planning and organising the recruitment, selection, orientation, training, development and appraisal of volunteers. The two major elements of the HRM process are the acquisition of human resources and the maintenance of them. Importantly, the performance of volunteers is underpinned by their ability to do the job, the
commitment and effort they are prepared to put into the job and the support provided by the Club. The role of HRM is to bring suitable volunteers into The Club, help them develop a sense of commitment, provide or plan for training and development opportunities, offer support, and recognise and reward volunteer performance.

C. Why do people volunteer?

Most people who volunteer in soccer clubs do so because they have played themselves and want to give something back to the Club or because their child is playing for the Club. Some people work in Clubs because of a sense of pride in their community and/or because they love the game.

In order to recruit volunteers effectively, clubs need to emphasise the benefits that volunteering provides. There are many benefits to being a volunteer in a Club: social contact with like minded people; feeling pride at a Clubs growth; an opportunity to coach future stars; being able to pass on skills and knowledge of the game. However, one of the most important benefits to being a volunteer in a Club is that you have an impact on the ethos of the Club – which in turn impacts your child’s formation or your community.

D. Volunteers managing volunteers

Because volunteers manage other volunteers there can sometimes be ambiguity about the lines of responsibility and authority within the Club.

Some positions come under the category of Management while other positions can be described as Operational. It is essential that there are good lines of communication and cooperation at all levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
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<tr>
<td>Board or committee member, Secretary, Treasurer, President/Chairperson, Vice-president/Chairperson, Volunteer Coordinator</td>
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<th>Operational</th>
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<td>Coach, Team Manager, Bus Driver, Fundraising, Grounds Person</td>
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E. Human resource planning

Human resource planning precedes the recruitment process in that it analyses current needs and projects future needs for volunteers in relation to existing and planned programs and events. As a starting point, the person responsible for HRM should develop and maintain an inventory that details the qualifications, education and experience of individual volunteers and the positions that they hold. The inventory should be updated regularly, as people move from one position to another or leave the Club. This enables a Club to identify where it has an actual or projected shortage or surplus of volunteers.

Where a need for a new volunteer is identified, a job analysis should be used to construct a job description. Through consultation and observation a description of the job requirements is prepared by the person responsible for HRM. A job description specifies the title, duties, conditions (e.g. days, hours, frequency) and specialist skills or qualifications required (e.g. coaching accreditation). A job description enables potential volunteers to understand what is expected of them before taking on a position.

Job description for volunteer positions

- Job title
- Purpose of the position
- Immediate supervisor’s name and contact details
- Benefits for the volunteer
- Qualifications and specialist skills required for the position
- Main responsibilities and tasks
- Hours, frequency and days volunteer is required, or to be negotiated
- Start and end date for position

A limitation of the traditional approach to HRM is that it is modelled on work organisations in which labour demands are estimated and staff are recruited. In contrast to recruiting paid staff members, volunteers are often elected to a position, particularly at the policy level. They may not necessarily have the qualifications, skills and experience to fulfil the particular role to which they are elected. In other circumstances, a volunteer might be recruited rather than elected because the Club needs an extra ‘pair of hands’ and not because they have particular
skills or abilities. Such situations are difficult to manage especially when there is a shortage of volunteer labour.

Planning can take a Club only so far and plans need to remain flexible if volunteers are going to be recruited successfully. For example, some Clubs traditionally hold their management committee or board meetings at a particular time each month. Being inflexible about negotiating a different meeting time, may result in well qualified candidates who cannot meet at that time being excluded from the pool of potential volunteers.

F. The Volunteer Coordinator

The process of human resource planning raises the issue of who should be responsible for HRM. The design and implementation of a human resource plan for volunteers is more likely to occur in Clubs that have taken the time to select a motivated and suitably qualified Volunteer Coordinator.

Among the Volunteer Coordinator’s responsibilities is determining where volunteers are needed, preparing or updating job descriptions and planning a recruitment campaign. They may also be required to analyse training needs and to keep the human resource inventory up to date.

Clubs with sufficient financial resources might consider appointing a paid person to the position of Volunteer Coordinator because of the strategic importance of recruiting and matching volunteers to appropriate positions. Volunteer Coordinators should hold a policy level position within the Club because they need to be fully aware of strategic plans and objectives.

G. Recruiting volunteers

Recruitment is the process of attracting new volunteers to Clubs. An important question to ask is ‘Why do people want to volunteer for our Club?’ For voluntary positions, the recruitment process is often informal and being able to attract a pool of qualified applicants can be a difficult task.
When recruiting volunteers for the first time, it is important to know something about how they first become involved in the Club. Personal contact with potential volunteers, whether through friends, family or individuals already involved in the Club are among the most frequently cited ways that volunteers first became involved in voluntary work. Some volunteers seek volunteer opportunities but relatively few volunteers are recruited through advertising or publicity. Clearly, people need to be asked to volunteer if a Club is going to be successful in recruiting volunteers. Few people come to a Club seeking voluntary work opportunities.

Once asked, the recruitment process should provide potential volunteers with a realistic preview of what a job entails. Volunteers need to be know the size and nature of the task ahead of them before deciding to commit their time and energy to a position. This is where an adequately prepared job description is very helpful. Details should include things like meeting times, major tasks and average weekly or monthly time commitment for the position. Benefits and conditions need to be clearly specified so applicants are in a position to make an informed decision about whether a job might suit their skills, experience and availability.

When recruiting volunteers it is important to emphasise the benefits for volunteers rather than the needs of the Club. Many volunteers give up their leisure time to help Clubs and may not be attracted by work-like recruitment campaigns. Volunteers need to feel valued by sport and recreation organisations and not feel as though they are being recruited to fill a position that no one else wanted.

H. Selecting and screening volunteers

The selection process involves choosing the individual who best meets the requirements of a position. Depending upon the level of the position (management or operational) the selection process can involve a number of steps which may include screening, formal interviews, testing, reference checks and a physical examination. However, it is not often that community based Clubs are in a position of working through a formal volunteer selection process, because the number of positions to be filled is usually greater than the number of people prepared to volunteer.
However, an important consideration in the selection process is whether an individual has the required accreditation or is prepared to undertake a relevant course, has some experience in working with others in a positive way, and is of good character are important considerations. Reference checks are advisable when appointing individuals to a position that involves close contact with children. Criminal history checks may also be necessary if a reference cannot be verified or a reference raises any questions about the character or integrity of a potential volunteer. Appointing a person to a volunteer position as a ‘last resort’ may be more harmful in the long term than temporarily leaving the position vacant and starting the recruitment process again.

**Volunteer recruitment and selection checklist**

- Appoint volunteer coordinator
- Prepare projections for human resource needs
- Prepare a job description
- Develop a recruitment plan
- Implement recruitment plan
- Screen applications and select (shortlist) volunteers to be interviewed
- Conduct interviews and select successful volunteers
- Where appropriate check volunteers’ references
- **Important:** For volunteers who will have close contact with children (i.e., any person under the age of 18 years) there may be statutory requirements under child protection legislation to run a criminal history check or for the applicant to provide a written declaration that they are not a ‘prohibited’ person (e.g. someone who has a conviction for a sex offence)
- Notify successful volunteers and set up a time for orientation
- Notify unsuccessful volunteers

**I. Orientating volunteers**

Orientation is the final step in the recruitment process. New members are welcomed to the Club and given details about their position, the day-to-day operation of the Club, and
introduced to key people. Taking up a new position is a critical period for new volunteers and for the Club. Volunteers are making a transition from being an outsider to an insider or moving from a peripheral to a core position within an Club. New recruits cannot be expected to understand the requirements of their new position or how the Club functions on a day-to-day basis. For example, a newly appointed Coach needs to know where the equipment is stored, how to access it, what times the facility opens and closes, what to do in case of an emergency and so on. A well designed orientation process reduces stress on new volunteers, makes them feel welcome and may reduce the likelihood of turnover.

Orientation is based on the process of socialisation, which is about influencing the expectations, behaviour and attitudes of a new volunteer in a manner considered desirable by the Club. Socialisation begins with orientation to key aspects about the Club and its policies and procedures, the position, supervisors and co-workers, and day-to-day routines. In many Clubs the orientation process is less formal, but not less important if volunteers are going to perform their new roles successfully.

**Orientation program checklist**

- Provide an orientation guidebook or kit
- Provide copies of current newsletter, annual report and recent marketing/promotional material
- Provide a copy of the constitution
- Enter the name, address and contact details of each volunteer into database
- Gather and file copies of qualifications and accreditation certificates from each volunteer
- Introduce the Club’s culture, history, aims, funding, members and decision-making processes
- Introduce key volunteers and/or staff (and organisational chart)
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of key volunteers and staff
- Detail the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the volunteer in their new position
- Familiarise volunteers with facilities, equipment and resources
- Explain and ‘walk through’ emergency and evacuation procedures
• Familiarise volunteers with the Club’s day-to-day operations (safety procedures, telephone, photocopier, keys, filing system, tea/coffee making, and authorising expenditure)

3. **Summary**

This module introduced the human resource approach to managing volunteers in Clubs and detailed the first four of eight steps (planning, recruitment, selection and orientation). The remaining four steps (training, performance appraisal, recognition and rewards, and retention or replacement) are discussed in the *Retaining Volunteers* leaflet. Primarily, the goal of recruitment is to acquire the human resources necessary for Clubs to function effectively. Recruitment is more effective when those responsible for bringing new volunteers into the Club understand what volunteering is, why people volunteer and what benefits are gained through volunteering. The Volunteer Coordinator was identified as the person who should be responsible for the volunteer recruitment process. Human resource planning and the preparation or updating or job descriptions should precede the recruitment process. Selection and screening help to ensure that the most appropriate volunteers are appointed to the positions available. Orientation symbolises the point at which new volunteers move from outside a Club to inside or from the periphery to its core. The importance of personal contact should not be overlooked in planning effective recruitment campaigns in Cubs.