

## Management in Volunteering

As in most European countries the sport sector relies heavily in volunteers and the lack of volunteers is one of the biggest problems of sport-club development. Sport organisations are challenged to take seriously care for this scarce recourse. They are forced to recruit, to educate and to retain volunteers. But only few sport organisations have tackled this challenge with a systematic approach.

Effective volunteering, that meets the pressures and responsibilities placed upon volunteers and organisations, requires effective strategic planning and management. But there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The size of the organisation, the number and types of volunteers and the complexity of roles being offered, demand a particular and individual course of action.

This short article will offer only a framework for the most relevant dimensions of a volunteer strategy and give some general advice, how to manage such a strategy. Each organisation has to develop its individual approach.

The most important sections of a strategy on volunteering should be:

- Initiation of an internal policy for volunteering
- Transparent working structures for volunteering and internal communication
- Recruitment strategy
- Qualification and training of volunteers
- Retaining culture
- Recognition measures; public relation and marketing strategy
- Financing and ways of funding

The concrete measures within these sections have to be related to the types of volunteers, being included in the strategy. The matrix gives an overview on the strategic sections and areas of management.

### Management-Matrix for volunteering in Sport for All (frame for a working plan)

Area of management Type of volunteer	Initiating the internal policy for volunteering	Transparent working structure and internal communication	Recruitment/ Retaining	Qualification and Training	PR and marketing	Ways of funding
Volunteers in leading positions - in SFA organisations: -in clubs or local entities: <b>Job description:</b> ...						
Volunteers as instructors/trainers in SFA clubs <b>Job description:</b> ....						
Volunteers as helpers in a club <b>Job description:</b> ....						
Volunteers supporting special events <b>Job description:</b> .....						

### Management principles

Management can be defined as a long-term, systematic steering of development processes. It follows the principle of constant and step by step improvement of the strategy-plan, orientated on the available resources and the acceptance by the involved actors. Political willingness, careful planning (action plan, defined sequences for implementation and evidence based evaluation procedures are the basic elements for successful management.

#### Basic principles to steer the management process:

- on long term basis;
- step by step;
- continuously;
- holistic;
- conform with the available resources
- interactively
- networked

Three phases of the management proceeding should be differentiated:

- Preparation phase
- Implementation phase
- Evaluation phase.

### Main proceedings in the preparation phase:

Political convincing, creating of transparent working structures for volunteering and intensive communication on the aims and subjects of the volunteering strategy are basic preconditions for a successful implementation.

To create political willingness, commitment and support within the organisation from board level down to the grassroots following aspects should be considered:

- What is the present situation in the field of volunteering in your organisation?
- Who can be contacted from outside to support and to cooperate with your organisation?
- What should be implemented in an attractive “mission paper”?
- How to create awareness within your organisation?
- How to get commitment?

In general a prudent analysis of the feasibility is an important starting point in the preparation of a volunteer strategy.

Availability of reasonable and transparent working structures for volunteering is also a precondition to put the strategy into practice. For example following questions should be considered:

- Who/what kind of body should be in the leading position to manage the volunteering program (chairperson; steering group; committee ;...)?
- Who/what kind of body should be responsible within the horizontal and vertical sections of your organisation?
- Who can be involved for partnership, networking and consultation?

A regular internal communication to the persons and bodies who look after volunteers and also as far as possible directly to the active volunteers is essential to keep all involved persons on track and to make them satisfied with their engagement. Effective communication channels and tools should be checked before the volunteer program starts or should be invented, if not existing (e.g. special online volunteer newsletter; information box in the magazine and on the web-page of your organisation; meetings with the responsible persons, to exchange experiences and to give input on new findings.

### Some recommendations for the implementation phase of the volunteer strategy:

Particularly in this phase the general principles, how to steer the volunteer strategy, should be taken into consideration. Moreover following points are important:

- Clearly defined and well structured sequences in the working plan.
- Proper time scheduling
- Priority list of actions.
- Distribution of tasks.
- Avoiding of overtaxing with tasks.
- Initiating of reporting and feedback possibilities.
- Offering monitoring and consultation possibilities.
- Openness for flexibility and modification.

### Evaluation and documentation phase:

While putting such a demanding volunteer strategy into practise, an evaluation and documentation of the outcomes is often neglected. But for a sustainable development a careful assessment of achieved results is inevitable. It's important, to identify operational indicators for progress and success, such as the number of recruited volunteers, the length of their engagement or drop out, their satisfaction or needs.

Questioning instruments (questionnaires; interviews; ...) for the volunteers and also for the persons, taking care for the volunteers in different tasks, are usually used instruments as well as observation tools.

How often such kind of evaluation should take place, depends u.a. on the scale, the spreading and the differentiation of the project as well as from available resources. But the timeframe for evaluation procedures should be determined already within the working plan. But at least a yearly evaluation within a long lasting strategy is recommended.

To collect data with the evaluation instruments is one thing. The interpretation, documentation and publication of the results is another point. This second step is often rather time exhausting and therefore disregarded. If an evaluation should make sense and should be used for progress and sustainability within the strategy and its management proceedings, a serious interpretation and documentation of the outcomes is a must.

- Management in volunteering is a real demanding issue and needs extra personal and financial resources.
- It's recommended to dedicate a special representative on board level and/or a staff member with this task.
- A certain budget should be allocated in advance to put the volunteering strategy into practise.
- The investment will be highly rewarding for a sustainable development of the organisation.

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