

recognising and rewarding volunteers

top tips

We often reward the players in our club with 'Player of the Match', 'Top Scorer of the Year' and 'Fair Play' awards, but what do we do to recognise and reward the volunteers who ensure all that sport can take place?

Throughout the text, reference is made to sports 'clubs'. This term is used to include all sports organisations, such as leagues, county and area associations, and other community groups that provide sporting opportunities, whether in an organised setting, or a more informal environment.

sensitivity

We aren't known as a particularly sensitive bunch in sport. However, it is important to note that not all volunteers like to have their actions and activities publicly noted and we need to ensure that recognising and rewarding people doesn't result in the loss of volunteers through the embarrassment of being thanked! If you have a good Club Volunteer Coordinator (see the **runningsports** Workbook *Valuing Your Sports Volunteers* – purchase a copy from www.runningsports.org), they will be able to guide the club committee on the best way to say thank you to each individual.

recognising volunteers

Recognising Volunteers can be split into two sections:

- ❖ Recognising the actions of a particular individual/team of volunteers
- ❖ Recognising the worth of volunteers in sport and in your club.

recognising an individual or team of volunteers

Ensuring people feel that their role and their actions are important can be enough, in terms of recognition, and should be seen as part of the recognition system. Actions that can be taken to support this type of recognition include the following:

- ❖ A simple thank you from a senior committee member (the chairperson/president where possible) can be enough and this can be done in front of an audience or directly to the person(s) concerned.
- ❖ A short news article about a club volunteer in the club newsletter and/or on the website.
- ❖ A nomination for a club award or an external award that recognises sports volunteers.
- ❖ A mention of their contribution at a committee meeting and a record in the minutes.

recognising the worth of volunteers in sport and in your club

Recognising the worth of volunteers in more general terms is important, in terms of underpinning the recruitment and retention plans for volunteers in your club. If club members understand the importance of the 'backroom staff', the roles and tasks they undertake and the fun they have in performing these roles, it will certainly be easier to recruit new volunteers in the future. How can you do this?

- Produce features/articles about a particular role (rather than an individual) in the newsletter and/or on the website (eg a day in the life of the groundsperson, what does an umpire/referee do on match day, what does an event volunteer do, etc).
- Create a poster display on a club noticeboard, showing different roles.
- Put features in external newspapers/newsletters.
- Appoint a Club Volunteer Coordinator. This appointment will ensure all club members know how important volunteers are to the organisation.

rewarding volunteers

It is important to reward all of your volunteers, whether this is done publicly or not. There are many ways in which you can reward volunteers, and some are listed below. However, you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

- How would you like to be rewarded for your contribution to sport?
- What have other clubs done to reward their volunteers? This is one of the few times when stealing ideas from each other is a good thing!

When seeking the answers to the above questions, don't be modest about what you would like personally in terms of thanks (you don't have to tell anyone!) – be honest and you will come up with some good ideas. You will also find attending a runningsports 'Valuing Your Sports Volunteers' workshop an excellent way of meeting people from other clubs, and the tutor will positively encourage you all to swap ideas at the event (to find your nearest workshop, visit the runningsports website www.runningsports.org and click on 'Workshops').

Below is a list of a few ways you may reward your volunteers:

- Say thank you both during and after their performance of their role.
- Send a letter from a senior club official (this can be done annually and/or after someone has perhaps worked over and above their normal contribution).
- Ensure expenses are available, if required.
- Give or send a 'thank you' certificate (this is also useful for volunteers who are using their experience to add to their portfolios/CVs).
- Provide meals, particularly if you are asking the volunteers to be at a venue for longer than half a day.

- ❖ Nominate them for both club and external awards which recognise the contribution of volunteers.
- ❖ Pay for them to attend relevant skills and training events.
- ❖ Award membership deals (eg one month free), award them life membership, a lower membership rate for regular volunteers, etc.
- ❖ Have a party for the volunteers.
- ❖ Buy them a small present.
- ❖ Ensure their ideas are listened to, and act upon them where practically possible.
- ❖ Acknowledge them in a club newsletter/website.
- ❖ Send a birthday/Christmas/Diwali, etc card.
- ❖ Smile and call them by their name.
- ❖ Write references for them (if asked) quickly and efficiently.
- ❖ Ensure the management of their role and tasks is good, and support them – this can be a great reward!
- ❖ Introduce long-service awards.
- ❖ Give kit or badges where this enables the volunteers to perform their role (eg so the kit or badges identify them as club volunteers).

Most volunteers get intrinsic pleasure from volunteering, but we all like to be treated well and thanked when we have given our time up for free. It is an essential part of retaining your volunteer workforce – **don't leave it to chance!**

further information and useful contacts

CSV – Community Service Volunteers

For advice and services related to volunteering, contact CSV:

Tel: 020-7278 6601

Website: www.csv.org.uk

Volunteering England

Regents Wharf

8 All Saints Street

London N1 9RL

Tel: 0845-305 6979

Email: information@volunteeringengland.org

Website: www.volunteering.org.uk

Volunteering England and volunteer centres can help your club recruit and manage volunteers.

To find your nearest volunteer centre, visit:

www.volunteering.org.uk/Local+and+Regional/

For a list of useful publications, visit:

www.volunteering.org.uk/managingvolunteers/publications/

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