



Volunteer

The path to volunteer development

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INTRODUCTION

Softball New Zealand is deeply appreciative of the contribution volunteers make towards our great game. As a sport we are constantly looking for more volunteers either as coaches, umpires, scorers or administrators to help run our game effectively.

Development of the game is dependent upon a large number of dedicated volunteers, who give their time freely, without concern for financial gain.

Society has changed reducing the pool of people who are prepared to volunteer. Softball has expanded, expectations continue to rise, our membership expects more, and hence the demands upon volunteers are greater. Retaining volunteers has not always been a strength within NZ Softball. We are often trying to find new people to replace those previously involved.

As a community we need to get better at retaining the people we have and then attempt to find others to share the load rather than it being carried by only a few dedicated volunteers. It is vitally important we develop and value the people who give up their time to make Softball happen.

This resource has been designed to help associations at the overall process of increasing and developing our volunteer pool. Investing time into our volunteers is crucial and something that can sometimes be skimmed over. To have a successful volunteer program, time needs to be invested into the planning and maintenance of the program.

This resource is broken down into the following sub sections to assist your association;

- Developing your Volunteer plan
- Recruiting and Engaging Volunteers
- Retaining Volunteers
- Recognising Volunteers
- Event Volunteers

Note: This resource compliments the following adjoining resource that you can actively use to help you on your way. “Workbook: To Aid Volunteer Development”



This icon highlights items in the above named “workbook” that will assist you.



THE CYCLE OF VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT



DEVELOPING YOUR VOLUNTEER PLAN:

The important background information.

What is the plan all about?

Getting the right volunteer into the right job at the right time needs planning and takes valuable time.

The purpose of the Volunteer Management Plan is to provide guidelines and methods for the effective management of volunteers.

In plain English it is a process that encourages your association to consider its volunteer workforce and create an action plan to support and develop this invaluable human resource.

The strategy behind a Volunteer Management Plan is to highlight the current volunteering issues your association has and to create a plan that will assist with growing your volunteer base, inducting your volunteers, providing clear guidance for your volunteers, retaining your volunteers, and recognising your volunteers.



A volunteer development plan will help the below four stages:

1. The Pre Recruitment Stage: Defining the direction, focus and purpose of your association and its volunteers in the future
2. The Recruitment Stage: Communicating more effectively with volunteers on how they can become involved and what is required
3. The Retention & Recognition Stage: Targeting your recruitment to match volunteers with vacancies they will enjoy, that they will succeed in and which they can manage time wise. Clearly identify volunteer roles to prevent putting too much pressure or time demands on them, and to help make their experience more enjoyable. Rewarding their efforts
4. The Review Stage: This will help the association understand why people volunteer, why they have left and what areas the association could improve on in regards to managing its' volunteers.

This plan needs to be tabled regularly at Committee/Board meetings to ensure it is implemented throughout the season and are in line with the Strategic and Development Plans of the association.



Please refer to page 3 for "A Starting Point For Writing Your Plan"

RECRUITING AND ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS

Recruiting volunteers can be a challenging task, and many associations utilise the same few dedicated people or just simply don't have enough. Unfortunately like money, volunteers don't grow on trees.

However volunteers will come from a variety of sources. They may already be members themselves, parents of members, past members, devotees, people from the local community, and friends or relatives.

The key factor for recruiting volunteers directly links to the

- **Pre Recruitment Stage** (defining the direction, focus and purpose of your club and its volunteers in the future) and the
- **Recruitment Stage** (Communicating more effectively with volunteers on how they can become involved and what is required).

So it is imperative for an Sssociation to make sure the administration is in place before setting the task of trying to move forward in leaps and bounds with your volunteer recruitment.

For an association this means;

1. Understanding the associations volunteering goals and framework
2. Having a culture that is encouraging of a volunteer environment
3. Having a code of conduct for volunteers
4. Undergoing an audit of the current volunteers and
5. Doing an inventory of the current areas that have volunteer vacancies
6. Having position descriptions for all volunteering roles documented that clearly define that requirements of the positions
7. Having a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator or liaison in place that has the necessary skills to manage the volunteers
8. Exploring alternative avenues to attract new volunteers.



W To assess your association please refer to “An Associations Volunteers Assessment & Strategy Table” on page 5.

W For a recruitment poster please refer to page 19.

An Association can engage with volunteers by:

- Selling and promoting its' self to potential volunteers
- Talking about the benefits of being associated with the operations of the association
- Understanding what may motivate each individual volunteer
- Putting forward a clear marketing message
- Promoting the associations volunteering opportunities through publicity, promotion and personal interaction
- Talking to people face to face if you are “shoulder tapping” them for a particular volunteer role. This will make the individual feel like they have something valuable to offer, and personal contact will get a better reaction than a phone conversation, or an email
- Making volunteering roles or the environment fun to work in. This may attract young people
- Exploring if your volunteering opportunities link into any requirements for leadership or current educational/training courses? If so this once again could be a good opportunity to tap into the younger generation of volunteers.

Selection and screening of volunteers:

As an association you may decide that screening is not required for some or the majority of your volunteer positions, however your association may decide that positions working with youth should undergo screening of some kind.

Depending on the level of risk, associations might consider implementing some of the following steps:

- Decide what roles may require screening
- Determine in advance what this screening process might reveal that would make a volunteer unsuitable for a specific role
- Have a process in place to notify unsuitable applicants
- When advertising for certain volunteer positions, make it clear that they may need to undertake a screening process and won't be automatically accepted as an association volunteer.
- Ask for references (if required)
- Conduct Police checks for all those working with youth as a precautionary measure.



Please refer to page 16 for an example Volunteer Agreement.

RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are like gold to any association, so as an organisation, you want to be able to decrease the amount of turnover you have. This alone requires for associations to understand the importance of retaining volunteers.

What are the key reasons to retain your volunteers?

1. Recruiting new volunteers can be costly and is definitely time consuming
2. The experience of existing volunteers is invaluable
3. Your association may have invested time, and training into the development of volunteers
4. Retaining your volunteers enables the association to maintain continuity
5. The loyalty of your volunteers is essential to your association, especially during difficult or busy times.

Retaining volunteers for the right reasons

As an association you also need to retain your volunteers for the right reasons. Sometimes it may be the right time for someone to move on or to take more of a backseat.

Your association should plan for a succession in volunteer roles as it is healthy to have some degree of turnover. This will help bring a fresh energy and approach to areas and to help minimise volunteer “burnout” or overuse.

Top tips to make volunteering a better experience and help retain volunteers

There are many reasons as to why people continue to volunteer such as being part of a team, learning new skills, giving something back to the community or sport and feeling like they are getting something out of the experience.



Please refer to 11 for ideas on “How to Help Retain Your Volunteers”.

RECOGNISING VOLUNTEERS

It doesn't take long, or even cost a lot, but recognition can mean so much to an individual and give a positive spin off effect to your association. Recognising and rewarding the volunteer benefits the individual and can result in either long service or ongoing improvements in their performance and commitment.

It is important to reward all of your volunteers, regardless whether they have contributed just a few hours here and there or are a key volunteer dedicating a good chunk of their time to the association. Recognising and rewarding volunteers is not a one off tick in the box for the association, it requires an ongoing commitment from the association and should deliver a consistent positive measure to its volunteers.

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

Remember, rewards don't have to be expensive; they just have to be genuine and meaningful.

- Send a thank you card to your volunteers during and after they have undertaken their role
- Send a letter from the Board or other key administrator to volunteers annually or after they have perhaps worked over and above their normal contribution
- Ensure that expenses are reimbursed that you have agreed on in a timely fashion
- Produce a certificate of appreciation (this could be useful for those who want to add it to their CV)
- Provide meals or snacks especially if you are asking volunteers to be at a venue for longer than half a day
- Nominate them for both association awards and external awards which recognise the contributions of volunteers (Softball NZ Awards, Sport NZ Volunteer of the Year, Sports Trust Awards)
- Pay or contribute for them to attend relevant skills and training events
- Award key and long serving volunteers Life Membership or introduce long service awards where appropriate
- Host a function/party for the volunteers
- Ensure their ideas are listened to and acted upon where possible
- Acknowledge them on your association website and other publications
- Send birthday or Christmas cards
- Always be appreciative of them, talk respectfully to volunteers, smile and acknowledge them by their name
- Write references for them (if asked) quickly and efficiently
- Ensure management of their role and tasks are good and that they feel supported
- Provide them with clothing or badges which helps identify them as a volunteer and advertises your association.



Please refer to page 18 for a template certificate of appreciation.

EVENT VOLUNTEERS

In a nutshell events tend to require more volunteers.

There is a range of factors affecting volunteer management during events such as

- Is it a one off event or a reoccurring event?
- Is it a single day event or a multi day event?
- Does the event use single or multiple venues?
- Does the event involve a range of age groups and abilities or does it have participants that require a variety of needs?

Once the above is determined the association needs to:

1. Create a detailed list of what jobs need to be undertaken during the event. Volunteers need to clearly understand the tasks required of them
2. Create a list of how many volunteers you will need and then
3. Pair each potential volunteer role with the jobs they will be required to do and times they will be required to be at the event
4. Put a timeline in place for recruiting volunteers. A last minute approach will often end in volunteer vacancies or increased pressure on those volunteers you have already enlisted to help.

The above process should be maintained and reviewed immediately following each event, incorporating the input/feedback given from the volunteers involved and potentially those participating in the event (if possible).



Please refer to the table on page 10 for “Project, special events, short term opportunities for volunteers.”

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Please contact your local Softball NZ Softball Officer (listed below) if your association would like:

- Further assistance with creating your volunteer recruitment plan, or
- Would like soft copies of any templates referred to in the “workbook”.

Softball Officer	Contact	First point of contact for the below associations
	Nick 021537078	North Harbour; Auckland, Counties Manakau
	Naomi 021537068	Wellington, Hutt Valley, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taranaki, Tairāwhiti, Western BoP
	Lesley 021537069	Waikato, Nelson, Marlborough Canterbury, West Coast, Otago, Central Otago, North Otago, Southland



