



HOW TO CREATE A POSITIVE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Volunteers are a crucial part of every athletics and running club. It's important that we value their contributions, offer help and advice when required, and continue to create a positive volunteering experience for all. Remember to make sure the volunteer is happy with the role you have in mind for them. Make them feel welcome and give them all the support and training they need to carry out this role.

The benefits of creating a positive experience for all volunteers include:

- ✓ If your club volunteers are enjoying themselves, there's a good chance they'll tell their friends and family about the fantastic work your club is doing.
- ✓ If a potential volunteer sees a welcoming environment during their first visit to your club, there's a good chance they'll want come back again.
- ✓ A positive volunteering culture within your club will enhance the volunteering experience, ensuring that everyone who volunteers at the club feels valued.
- ✓ Volunteers will feel supported and have the confidence and knowledge to undertake their roles to the best of their ability resulting in smooth running of the club.
- ✓ Volunteers who enjoy their role will ultimately impact the experience of your athletes and runners.

Definition of a volunteer experience

Volunteer experience is defined by the interactions and experiences your volunteer has with your club throughout the entire volunteer journey, from first contact to becoming a happy and loyal volunteer.

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Did you know?



95% of volunteers enjoy their volunteering experience.
89% continue volunteering afterwards because it makes them happy.



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Key ideas to create a positive experience

- ✓ Create and implement a volunteer induction process and information pack.
- ✓ Provide volunteers with club kit to make them feel part of the club.
- ✓ Give new volunteers buddies that know the club and the surrounding area, so they can support the volunteer in their new role.
- ✓ Make sure that you give them tasks they will enjoy and that they understand.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for individuals to volunteer with those that they share common ground and interests with.
- ✓ Hold events so that volunteers can socialise with one another. This social aspect, where friendships are formed, is very important

Be clear on roles and responsibilities

- ✓ Create role descriptions so volunteers understand what they are committing to and responsible for.
- ✓ As time is often a barrier to volunteering, consider letting volunteers undertake tasks instead of taking on roles, or put them together in small project teams whereby it allows for short-term commitment.
- ✓ Be flexible and understand that not all volunteers can give the same amount of time. Any time they can offer is valuable and all contributions make a difference.
- ✓ Think about how you can give them access to view races or competitions, especially if their children are competing with them.

Nurture a sense of pride, reward and social benefit as part of your club

- ✓ Build a culture of recognition in your club. Club members can have a big impact on a volunteer's experience, so encourage club members who benefit from a volunteer to thank them.
- ✓ Create awards to recognise the achievement of volunteers (e.g. 'most creative', 'most helpful' or 'most cheerful').
- ✓ Recognise significant milestones for volunteers (e.g. birthdays, educational achievements, 'new home' or '10 years of volunteering').
- ✓ Personalise how you say 'thank you' after events by leaving them a specific 'thank you' note or by asking the announcer to say something.
- ✓ Give away freebies if you can, such as refreshments, race entries or merchandise.
- ✓ Upload photos to your club's Facebook group (with permission) to create a sense of community, or host club awards nights for volunteers.

Training and development

- ✓ Empower volunteers to take ownership of their own development. This is a responsibility of the club and the individual.
- ✓ Provide access to training and development and offer to cover or subsidise training costs and expenses.
- ✓ Encourage volunteers to speak about what development opportunities they might like to take up.
- ✓ Promote a 'sharing' culture within the club, where volunteers share what they have learnt on courses or through their own observations.
- ✓ Ensure the volunteer is happy with the role you have in mind for them and that you give them all the support and training they need to carry out this role.
- ✓ Act as a reference and/or provide an endorsement on LinkedIn.
- ✓ Give constructive feedback that will help them in their role.



Avoid conflict

- Create and implement a Volunteer Code of Conduct.
- Keep an eye out for cliques forming that make other volunteers feel uncomfortable. If this is the case, chat to these people to make them aware of the situation, looking to remove any barriers to ensure a collaborative volunteering experience for all.
- Make sure your volunteers know that you or another member of your club is available should they need to ask any questions or raise a concern.
- Address any situations where you feel volunteers are taken for granted or unfairly criticised.
- Avoid criticism and work with volunteers to help them understand how problems or challenges can be resolved.
- Remind them of the positive impact their volunteering has on the athletes and the club.

What motivates volunteers?



A passion for the sport/club.



Being part of a community.



To 'give something back'.



To utilise/develop new skills.



The reward of seeing others grow.



A recognition of need.

What challenges and barriers do volunteers face?



Time commitment.



Unclear information on how to become a club member.



The requisite skill set.



Unclear expectations.



Cliques.



The perception of need.

Did you know?



41% of volunteers feel undervalued, which can lead to a sense of disgruntlement, so remember to be kind and compassionate.

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