



Volunteer, Coach/Officials and Player Retention

Volunteer Retention:

Once clubs have recruited volunteers, it is essential to create a positive and welcoming environment to ensure they stay with the club for as long as possible. As with other things in life (such as career and community involvement) if a person feels valued and appreciated for what they do they are more likely to stay involved. This is the same for club volunteers with the hopeful outcome being continued involvement and commitment to the club. Here are a few tips on volunteer retention:

- **Clear role descriptions** - Make sure your volunteer opportunities are interesting, attractive and have clear role descriptions
- **Value and respect** - Make sure volunteers feel valued and respected by your membership. It is important that volunteers have a voice in decision making when it impacts on their activity.
- **Support** – Offering support to volunteers is essential. Examples of support mechanisms are a volunteer mentor, providing access to training opportunities and CPD. It is also important to ensure there is a friendly, supportive environment for volunteers to be a part of.
- **Recognition** - Recognition of volunteers is very important. This could be in the form of a gift at Christmas, volunteer expenses or verbal gratitude. It may also be nominating volunteers for local or national volunteer awards.
- **Good Volunteer Management** - Ensure your club endorses good working practice in the management of volunteers to encourage lifelong participation in volunteering. Offer more opportunities to progress and take on additional roles. Matching volunteers to specific roles depending on their strengths will also ensure that they will stay in the role for longer.

Coach and Officials Retention:

Similar to volunteers, coaches and umpires also need specific support in order to stay with the club for as long as possible. Here are a few tips on the retention of coaches and volunteers:

- **Recruitment** – where good recruitment processes are in place, the most suitable coaches and officials are chosen. Where poor recruitment or no recruitment practices are in place, clubs will often have to deal with major issues because they have inappropriate coaches in charge of teams and poor practices are being utilised.
- **Induction** – it is a good idea to link any new coach/official with an experienced person within the club whose role is to mentor the new person and to induct them in the policies, rules and behaviours of the club.
- **Coach Coordinator** – someone needs to have the role of overseeing and supporting the coaches and officials. This may be a club coaching or officiating coordinator whose job is to manage the activities of this team of people. It may involve sourcing new information and resources for them, providing a listening ear for any issues they might have and representing their concerns to the club administrators. The coach coordinator may also assist with information on CPD for coaches.

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- **Feedback and review** – a process needs to be put in place where coaches and officials have an opportunity to review their performance and others are able to offer comment on their performance (eg players under their care). Without this process it may not be possible for a club to find out about how to improve its performance and the performance of its coaches and officials.
- **Appropriate job roles** – clubs must make sure that the tasks given to the coaches and officials are appropriate to their level of skill and experience.
- **Training and education** – up skilling coaches and officials is an important part of the support that clubs can provide. Sometimes clubs need to take on novice coaches and officials who lack experience, skills and often knowledge about the sport. By supporting coaches with training and education, it is possible for the club to develop a highly skilled and more competent team. Even experienced coaches and officials can benefit from ongoing development.
- **Designated page on club website** – more and more clubs are now developing their own website. Consideration needs to be given to the inclusion of a designated section for coaches and officials. This section could be used for information, handy hints, coaching and officiating tips, highlighting special achievements, rule and policy changes etc.
- **Recognition** – it is vital that a club recognises the efforts and contribution of its coaches and officials. There are many ways in which clubs can do this as a means of showing the coaches and officials they are appreciated and valued. A person who is valued is more likely to continue their involvement with an organisation and they will see this as being well managed.
- **Exit interviews** - When a coach or official has decided to leave, it can be helpful to discuss with them any areas of improvement that can be made by the club to ensure coaches and officials are being acknowledged, recognised and rewarded.

Player Retention:

An individual's motivation for becoming involved in sport are not fixed and can change over time. It is important to create an environment which meets the needs of players and members. This can include:

- A welcoming and friendly atmosphere
- A player welcome/induction process
- A range of membership fees
- Age appropriate coaching
- Opportunities for competition
- Understanding the many reasons why people become involved in a sport and wish to join a club
- Having a social convenor on the committee to organise club social events
- If players are leaving it is important to find out the reason why so that this can be addressed

Succession Planning:

A succession plan is a way of making sure all the good work a club puts into practice is not wasted. It is a way of planning for the future by putting in steps and processes to maintain momentum and good work.

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- **Develop a plan for the future** – this is an opportunity for key club people to discuss and document the important areas within the club. Through this plan the club will be able to see how its playing numbers will grow or decline and in turn the impact this will have on areas related to coaching and officiating. The plan will also provide a means of determining what resources the club can commit to such aspects as recruitment and retention, training and development, recognition and reimbursement of the coaches and officials.
- **Develop job roles for coaches, officials and volunteers** – this should be a clear description of what is required by the club for these roles. It will also assist the club in its recruitment of new people as it will be very clear what is required. Use the opportunity to talk to senior coaches and officials about what should be contained in these job roles.
- **Policies and procedures** –developing an induction and information handbook for use in its recruitment of new coaches and officials is one example. Information about all aspects of the club, the tasks involved and all relevant information that will assist a person in taking up a new role with the club needs to be included. Other matters to be addressed need to relate to issues impacting upon these roles such as insurance cover, legal issues, child protection and codes of conduct.
- **Review and evaluation** – the club needs to implement a review and evaluation process to provide coaches and officials with an avenue to raise issues or concerns about any aspect of their role or the club administration. This process will also contribute to the club remaining informed about how it can improve in all aspects relating to coaching and officiating.

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