

VOLUNTEERS IN ORGANIZING SPORT EVENTS: FOREIGN EXPERIENCE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The most significant working contribution to major events in sports is provided by a very large number of volunteers who undertake tasks across the range of opportunities afforded by such events. This study seeks to identify the evident gaps that exist in understanding areas such as what volunteers do at sport events; what motivates them; how and where to recruit the volunteers; should volunteers be rewarded somehow for a job well done?

As for the results and main findings, different types of recruitment systems, the accommodation and assignments that depend on the level of sport event have been defined. It's necessary to mention that the role of volunteers has considerably increased. Besides, European volunteer experience might be adopted at organizing Sochi Olympic Games in 2014.

Introduction

Sport can be described as one of the biggest social movements in the world. In many countries the organization of sport events relies on the dedication of thousands of volunteers. Numbers of volunteers between 40,000 and 60,000 have been noted for some recent major events. Besides volunteer sport clubs and associations, they provide a large part of the opportunities for EU citizens to practice sport. Therefore, they make an important contribution to promotion of physical activity as a part of a healthy life-style.

Being a volunteer is a great adventure in one's life. It allows gaining experience in many areas, meeting new people, realizing how events look like from the background. It is also a great occasion to check skills (language, organizing) and a character, and to learn something new from more experienced colleagues.

The aim of our research is to analyze and to compare the role and significance of volunteers in organizing sport events. The study includes the Olympic recruiting experience and student volunteer programs that exist all over the EU countries.

Methods: examination of scientific publications (published works), content analysis of Internet web-sites, and comparative analysis of international, national and regional volunteer programs.

1 Roles of volunteers

Volunteers play an incredible role in staging most prestigious sport events. Volunteers are given the opportunity to raise their competencies and skills in organizing sport events, gain new experience in different fields, they will be useful for the organizing committee, and they exchange knowledge and learn about the culture of the country, make new friends all over the world and much more. Diverse tasks and assignments are proposed to volunteers: accreditation and welcoming, preparation of daily

bulletin and the documentation of the event, photo archive, free time programme, sport programme and competition, logistics. It is very important to give people opportunity to raise their skills, abilities and to use their potential and experience. Today we could say that without this volunteer workforce, the events simply would not happen.

2 International volunteer programmes

Volunteers are the foundation of nearly every successful nonprofit organization and competition organizing committee. Staging mega sport events, such as Olympic and Paralympic Games, World and European Championships is always accompanied by thousands of local and international volunteers. Another interesting experience is organizing student sport championships headed by FISU and EUSA. As for national and local programs, it is run by national sport associations and unions. (Это я не понимаю, что такое – бег или организация и проведение?)

2.1 Volunteer programme for London-2012

The volunteer program will be coming home to the city where it all began. The OC of London-2012 considers volunteers as “Games Makers”. There are two types of Games Maker roles; specialists in areas such as medical services, sport or press operations and generalists, with roles ranging from spectator assistants, uniform distributors and ticket checkers. From January 2011 the organisers will start inviting successful applicants to a selection event. Selection events will be applicants' first taste of the excitement surrounding the Games. The events will be held in London, Glasgow, Newcastle, Manchester, Coventry, Cardiff, Belfast and Weymouth. After these selection events, the organizing committee will offer applicants roles. And they will receive an official uniform to wear during the shifts, which they can keep after the Games as a souvenir; also they can get free meal vouchers. But the members of OC are going to recruit volunteers from across the UK, and are unable to provide accommodation for “Games Makers”, and will not reimburse travel costs to selection events, training or test events.

2.2 EUSA volunteer programme

Volunteers are strength of the university sport – said one of the participants of IX FISU Forum, which took place in Cracow in 2008. Student sport organizations and their work with volunteers are also needed to be mentioned. The volunteer programme was initiated by the EUSA Student Commission. 2-3 volunteers from all over Europe get the chance to join organizers of each European Universities championship and help during the tournament. The hosting organization of each European Universities championship (EUC) covered accommodation costs during the organizing period, food and transportation to the spot. The travelling costs to the EUC have to be paid by the student or his/her institution. Active students from all over the Europe can apply for the place in this program. Minimum two foreign candidates will be accepted per event, other volunteers are from the country that stages the championship.

2.3 National volunteer programme

University Sport Association of Poland (AZS) perceives a huge strength of volunteering, and it has effects for the future of one's career. Sports teams, affiliated with AZS, are numerous in top Polish leagues in such sports as volleyball and basketball. That is why AZS created a data base of volunteers from Poland helping them in participation in sport events. The portal started in the middle of May 2010, is a platform for communication between organizers who prepare sport events and people who are keen to work as volunteers. The Polish sport authorities hope “www.wolontariat.azs.pl” to become a place to help many people in developing their personality, gathering experiences and unforgettable memories.

3 Recruitment of volunteers

The pre-event planning phase starts with the hiring or recruitment of a volunteer Coordinator. This person needs to possess a variety of skills and personality traits, and eventually to settle for less will result in an ineffective program, or substitute a coordinator who quits.

The recruiting process might also include: volunteer registration form; an established information bank/database and target markets for recruiting, i.e., people, groups, businesses, etc.

The first step in this campaign consists in making an announcement – through the website of federation, of sport event and local sport organizations, which participate in staging this event. For example, LOCOG has just started the biggest post-war volunteer recruitment campaign in the UK's history; they have announced plans to recruit up to 70,000 volunteers for the London Games.

The second step is the filing and registration of an application form. Generally it contains some background questions (education, experience and skills), therefore there are some open questions – like explaining your motivation and describing your expectations; and questions about tasks which future assistant wants to assist and help during the event.

The third is the confirmation of an application form. Another example, this year young people and students have been chosen by organizers of European Championships, as compared with previous years when the student commission chose the volunteers.

Tab. 1 Comparison of international volunteer programmes

Features of volunteer programmes	VP Olympic Games 2012 (London, United Kingdom)	VP EUC 2010 Badminton, (Nancy, France)	VP of AZS 2010 FISU Canoe Sprint (Poznan, Poland)
Number of volunteers that is needed during the sport event	about 70,000	about 50	about 30
Target markets for recruiting, i.e., people, groups, businesses, etc.	Volunteers come from a diverse range of communities and backgrounds. The organizers value disability, gender, ethnicity, religion and belief or sexual orientation.	Volunteers generally are young people and students, who are keen on badminton.	Mostly students and young people who are interested in sport and organizing sport events.
Age of volunteers	Many of roles will require volunteers to be 18 or over by 1 January 2012. Also the organisers will unveil our Young Games Maker programme for under 18 years old in summer 2011.	There are no severe limits, but the organisers mostly attract people who are over 16 years old.	Volunteers must be over 16 years old.
Participation of international volunteers	Only UK and EU citizens or residents and people who satisfy the UK immigration rules.	2 or 3 international volunteers.	It depends on the organizers possibilities.
Communication skills	Fluent English is compulsory condition.	Volunteers speak at least three European languages.	Fluent English; one European language in addition is better. And Russian is always welcome.

The place where volunteers need to be and the travel costs covering	The venues are mostly located in the host city of London (UK), though some other events require facilities located elsewhere.	Nancy, France. The travelling costs to the EUC have to be paid by volunteer or his/her institution	Poznan, Poland. The travelling costs to the championship have to be paid by volunteer.
Accommodation covering	The accommodation won't be provided to volunteers.	The hosting organisation covers accommodation costs during the organizing period, food and transportation on the spot.	
The period of volunteer programme and the sport event	Need to volunteer for a minimum of 10 days at either the Olympic Games or the Paralympic Games; or for a minimum of 20 days if somebody wants to volunteer at both.	Volunteer should arrive 2 days before the start of competitions and depart 2 or 3 days after the competitions. In total it comes to about 10 days.	The tournament is held for 3 weekend days, the organisers kindly ask volunteers to come earlier and to stay longer to help with teams arrivals and departures.
The volunteer training	The volunteer attends a minimum of three training sessions before the Games (a minimum of 15 hours spread over three days)	The volunteers come to special meeting which is held the week before the tournament. They receive a preliminary planning of tasks and responsibilities.	The meeting of volunteers is organised in the first day of arrival, they get important information and planning.
Roles and tasks for volunteers	There are 31 teams (also known as functional areas, or FAs) who need Games Makers and we have divided them into 10 departments: from Commercial sales and Brand protection to Transport.	Volunteers could help in accreditation and welcoming, preparation of the daily bulletin and documentation, making a photo archive, organising free time programme, sport program, competition area, logistics etc.	Most volunteers are teams-attaché, they accompany national teams, the rest takes up logistics, making daily magazine and helping at competition area.
Services/benefits/parking/uniforms that are available during the sport event	Games Makers will be entitled to travel on public transport in London (zones 1-6) for free in order to get to their shifts during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Also they will receive an official uniform to wear.	The volunteers will receive an official uniform to wear: 5 different colour t-shirts for each day of competition. Besides organisers will cover transport costs at the place and take care of some cultural programme.	The volunteers will receive an official uniform to wear, and of course, organisers will cover transport costs at the place and take care of some cultural programme such as a free guided tour in the down-town of Poznan.

The recruiting process: application	The organising committee starts sorting through the application forms in December and will invite successful applicants to attend a selection event in 2011.	There are two ways for recruiting up volunteers: through the web-site of EUSA (international applicants) and through the web-site of the event (local applicants).	AZS created a data base of volunteers from Poland helping them in participation in sport events. This portal is a platform of communication between organizers and applicants.
The recruiting process: assignment and offer	Following the selection events, the organisers will decide which applicants can be offered a role. In addition, before making any offer, they must run background and security checks. Applicants will only be eligible to receive an offer if they pass these checks.	Applicants could fill their profiles though the web-site of EUSA from the end of February until the end of May. Then the organising committee decides who they are going to invite to each particular event. After the nomination an applicant will get an official invitation to participate in the volunteer programme.	People who are keen to work as a volunteer fill out forms on this portal, they choose the competition in which they would like to participate. Then the organisers according to their special needs will chose future volunteers and send them an official confirmation and invitation.

Conclusion

As for the results and main findings, different types of recruitment systems, the accommodation and assignments that depend on the level of sport event have been defined. It's necessary to mention that the role of volunteers has considerably increased.

The organizing committee must have a clearly defined staff structure and lines of communication. Volunteers must know whom they report to, especially in an emergency situation. If it is the organizing of a large event that requires many volunteers over a period of a few days, then a volunteer handbook becomes almost a necessity. It would include information about the event itself, venue information with a diagram showing key locations, a venue evacuation plan, event schedules, transportation schedules and key contact phone numbers.

As for volunteer training, it should be provided in advance of the event, especially a few days prior. An orientation does not only provide important information to them but it gives the organizing committee leadership the opportunity to motivate them and to explain the importance of their support. All of the basic information, uniforms, parking passes and job descriptions can be distributed in this orientation.

Establishing an effective communications system should be a priority if organizers plan to utilize this group of volunteers again. Using emails is certainly the most economical means nowadays, but a direct mailed newsletter is just as effective.

Regarding the conclusions we reached in the course of the research, it argues that there is a lack of extensive research that takes into consideration the wide range of themes and issues that pertain to volunteering in the sports events context. Besides, European volunteer experience might be adopted at organizing Sochi Olympic Games in 2014.

Literature

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DOBROVOLNÍCI V ORGANIZOVÁNÍ SPORTOVNÍCH AKCÍ: ANALÝZA ZKUŠENOSTÍ Z CIZINY

Na významných sportovních událostech je největší část práce odvedena širokou skupinou dobrovolníků, kteří provádějí celé spektrum činností provázejících takové události. Tato studie se snaží definovat doposud neprozkoumané oblasti týkající se činnosti dobrovolníků při sportovních událostech. Co je motivuje, jak a kde je najímat, měli by být nějak odměněni za dobře odvedenou práci? Výsledky a hlavní závěry výzkumu zahrnují různé typy náboru, ubytování a úkolů v závislosti na druhu sportovní události. Je nutno dodat, že role dobrovolníků nabývá na důležitosti. Zkušenosti evropských dobrovolníků mohou být také využity při pořádání olympijských her v Soči v roce 2014.

FREIWILLIGE BEI DER ORGANISATION VON SPORTVERANSTALTUNGEN – ANALYSE VON FREMDERFAHRUNGEN

Bei bedeutenden Sportereignissen wird der größte Teil der Arbeit von Freiwilligen bewältigt, die das ganze Spektrum der Tätigkeiten, die solche Ereignisse begleiten, übernehmen. Die Studie bemüht sich, die bis jetzt nicht untersuchten Bereiche der Tätigkeiten, welche die Freiwilligen bei Sportereignissen betreffen, zu definieren. Was motiviert sie, wie und wo werden sie angeworben und sollten sie für gut ausgeführte Arbeit entlohnt werden? Die Ergebnisse und Hauptschlussfolgerungen der Untersuchung umfassen verschiedene Arten der Anwerbung, der Unterkunft und der Aufgaben, abhängig von der Art des Sportereignisses. Des Weiteren ist es nötig zu sagen, dass die Freiwilligen immer wichtiger werden. Die Erfahrungen der europäischen Freiwilligen können auch für die Organisation der Olympischen Spiele 2014 in Sotschi verwendet werden.

WOLONTARIUSZE W ORGANIZACJI IMPREZ SPORTOWYCH: ANALIZA DOŚWIADCZEŃ ZAGRANICZNYCH

Najbardziej znaczący wkład w organizację wielu ważnych wydarzeń sportowych zapewniana duża liczba wolontariuszy, którzy podejmują się zadań spośród wachlarza możliwości dostarczanych przez te wydarzenia. To badanie stara się odnaleźć ewidentne luki istniejące w obszarach wiedzy o tym co robią wolontariusze na sportowych wydarzeniach; co ich motywuje; jak i gdzie rekrutować wolontariuszy; czy wolontariusz powinien zostać nagrodzony za dobrze wykonaną pracę? Jako główne wnioski, zostały wyodrębnione różne typy systemów rekrutacyjnego, zakwaterowanie oraz zadania które zależą od poziomu wydarzenia sportowego. Koniecznie warto wspomnieć, iż rola wolontariuszy znacznie wzrosła. Co więcej, europejskie doświadczenie wolontariuszy może być wykorzystane podczas organizowania Sochi Olympic Games w 2014.