

Long-term volunteers in sport organisations – an integrative negotiation

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Introduction

Sport in Europe features many long-serving, veteran volunteers, giving their time freely for 10, 15, and 20 years, and volunteers are the backbone in the European model of sport. Sports clubs rely on long-term volunteers – the stayers and the serious volunteers. Studies have highlighted a shift from long-term volunteering to short-term volunteering. (Cuskelly, McIntyre, Boag, 1998).

Purpose

Why does a person become a long-term volunteer? One answer is that volunteers are there (in the clubs and events) because it is better than not being there. How can the managers and the organisations meet the needs and influence the likelihood of becoming and remaining a volunteer? One answer is that managers need to understand the reasons why people are there and not depend solely on appeals for altruism and other-orientation (Chelladurai, 1999. Slack, 2002).

Methods

Data are collected from a questionnaire to 90 delegates on the Norwegian Skating Associations (NSA) meeting every other year (June 2003). Most of the delegates are non-paid and long-term volunteer managers in local skating clubs in Norway. Response rate: 60 (n=53). Mean age: 47. Per cent male: 75. Mean membership: 9.6 years.

Results

Important individual factors

Helping others
Developing friendship
Something to learn
Something to decide

with good organisational matching

- the feeling of being useful
- the feeling of belongingness
- the feeling of being trained
- the feeling of influence

Discussion

The data shows that motives are mixed. All delegates on the Norwegian Skating Associations (NSA) meeting are serious, career volunteers, and want to be consulted and become involved in policy making processes and be listened to (Cuskelly, Harrington, Stebbins, 2003). The voluntary sport organisations have an other-orientation. The activities themselves in the sport organisations have often a self-orientation (Chelladurai, 1999). Managers must have an exchange-oriented motivational strategy: volunteers want something the clubs offer in return for something they have – a self-orientation for carrying out other-orientated activities (Heinemann 1998). Self-orientation as a significant motivational factor does not minimize serving others. Sport organisations must be organised and managed to meet the needs of the volunteers because they are the basis for all organisational activities and processes (Chelladurai, 1999). Organisational commitment and behavioural outcome gives stayers and leavers/causes some people to stay and some to leave (Cuskelly, Boag, 2001). Almost all the long-term volunteers in the case have an ongoing negotiation with themselves and the organisations. The stayers find a win-win solution, like an integrative negotiation process which provides something for the volunteers and something for the organisations, and which allows both sides to achieve their objectives. (Lewicki, Saunders, Barry, Minton, 2003).

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