

## **Managing job satisfactions of volunteers in South African sport**

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### **Introduction**

The values of commitment, mutual benefit, engagement, solidarity and free will are universal to mankind. In its different manifestations it forms the cornerstones of volunteerism. Volunteering as contributor to social development has been debated and researched on national and international forums. The long history of volunteerism (“Ubuntu” philosophy) in South Africa as an instrument of social action has also been recognised by the South African Government and factored into official policies of social development. Although sport as a social phenomenon in South Africa depends heavily on volunteers to deliver services to sport consumers, reality indicates problems regarding sustained commitment and retention of volunteers impacting negatively on learning curves and standard of sport event management. The relation between retention of both employees and volunteers and job satisfaction is well established in the literature but job satisfaction of volunteers in South African sport has however never been measured. South Africa is increasingly bidding for international sport events and bidding documents emphasize the contribution and legacy of volunteers in the proposed events. This official integration of volunteers into South African sport delivery structure thus now necessitates optimal matching between job context and job content in order to maintain job satisfaction, retain volunteers and thus managing this human resource effectively. The aim of this study was therefore to measure the discrepancy between the expected needs and the satisfied needs (as determinants of job satisfaction) of volunteers in a sport setting to serve as input for a human resource plan

### **Method**

An extended and adapted form of the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ) for physical education has been used (Coetzee, Spamer & Mentz, 2000). The instrument consisted of 40 paired needs (factors) influencing job satisfaction and measured the components of job context (supervision; interpersonal relationship, administrative duties; participation in decision making; rewards; organisational climate) and job content (responsibility; acknowledgement; progress and growth; achievement; experience of the task itself). An analysis of the needs (factors) stated in the adapted MIQ showed agreement with the job content and context of the South African sport volunteer. The research sample consisted of 178 sport volunteers involved in 25 sport associations in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Respondents rated the 40 needs Factors on a 4-point Likert scale (4=very important/completely satisfied and 1=no importance/not satisfied). Expected and satisfied needs were prioritised on the mean value of each paired factor. Significance of difference between expected needs and satisfied needs was tested with a paired sample t-test.

### **Results and discussion**

Volunteers were mostly (16,3%) involved in organising sport events, a finding that corresponds with Green and Chalip’s profile of volunteer work (1998). An average of 5.6 hours per week is devoted to volunteering but the mean duration of involvement is only 2.9 years. This finding supports the problem statement of retention of volunteers. Results further indicated a statistically significant dissatisfaction ( $p \leq 0.010$ ) with style of supervision, expected administrative duties, support system when experiencing problems, receiving adequate information on policies, plans and procedures, participation in decision making and the general organizational climate of the sport event they are volunteering services for, as components of the work context. In terms of the work content, a statistically significant dissatisfaction ( $p \leq 0.010$ ) was recorded regarding recognition of achievements and furthering their status as volunteers. 68,1% of the respondents reported that they were not exposed to any formal induction programme when their services were volunteered.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Volunteer satisfaction is a key component in effective management of sport volunteers. Results point to an unstructured and unmanaged situation regarding the work context of volunteers. Retention of volunteers depends on a person-situation fit (Clary et al., 1998) and dissatisfaction with work context will impact negatively on organizers of sport events in South Africa dependent on volunteers. Event organizers and bidders for international events alike should strategically address the concerns of volunteers to improve the efficacy of events. Broad outlines of such a human resource (volunteers) strategy for South Africa sport will be presented.

## **References**

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