



# **Volunteer Staff:**

**Strategies to Recruit, Engage, Empower,  
Manage, & Reward**

### **1) Establish a primary volunteer contact or coordinator**

The central leader of your operations and programs needs to understand the goals and how to effectively measure progress and success. Empower someone passionate & committed, perhaps a board president or director of operations, who can see big pictures clearly and communicate effectively to engage others. This person will not necessarily do all the work and manage all of the details for many, if any, programs. Rather, she or he will oversee the organization's network of volunteer staff who will directly accomplish tasks. This is likely the figurehead, at least publically, for the organization, and someone who understands programming needs and the various roles/responsibilities. Like a project manager, she or he should provide support and solicit feedback from the volunteer network. Ideally, this position could be budgeted across programs as either a stipend or eventual paid staff position, since this role can serve as a central "hub" for the organization to keep operations functioning healthily overall.

Example: Start with a volunteer Director of Operations as you budget programs to move towards a part-time then full-time staff Program Director

### **2) Provide structured role definitions and expectations**

Be clear and concise on the logistics involved with each role and volunteer position, including such key details as timing, locations, duration, public interactions, etc. Strive to convey the importance of the key aspects that will be involved, and be clear about any potential misconceptions (e.g., no high-level ultimate experience expected vs. only seasoned players who have some real knowledge to impart).

Example: Publish written positions and key details concisely but thoroughly at <http://www.discorganization.org/volunteer>

### **3) Recruit and market effectively**

Identify where and how to reach those individuals who are most passionate about your cause, perhaps middle school players or beach vs indoor competition, or about a specific event, such as a corporate league or high school state championship. Brainstorm and research both online and live communication opportunities to which those individuals are reasonably likely to be paying attention, such as a community newsletter, college team coach/leadership, group listserve, Facebook promotion campaign, etc. Approach promising prospects directly, and communicate your faith in them along with the benefit or reward that it might afford their program, child, family member, etc.

Example: In the organization's monthly e-newsletter, detail new vacancies or key volunteer opportunities, and include a link to a full published list of available positions.

#### **4) Use competitive and selective processes to engage**

Convey to prospective volunteer staff that each position will be entrusted with important responsibilities and trust, which will merit the selected applicant with significant prestige in the local community. Drive home the fact that only those who demonstrate true interest, potential and commitment will be seriously considered and entrusted with the key responsibilities that are involved.

Example: See the links to sample google forms for youth coaching applications in the “Great Youth Ultimate Coaches: Building Your Community” Affiliate resource

#### **5) Communicate clearly and regularly**

Set each volunteer staff person’s initial expectations with measurable goals, tasks and timelines for completion. Then regularly check in with the staff person to solicit her/his details on progress and notable accomplishments, being sure to inquire about any perceived needs or concerns along with thoughtful solution ideas and/or potential alterations to the role or responsibilities that are included. Note: this is a great time to evaluate whether a role needs to be expanded or even separated into 2 separate positions entirely.

Example: Establish a biweekly check-in meeting or phone call to discuss challenges or progress made towards a measurable task list.

#### **6) Recognize the contributions and positive impact**

Provide both written and in-person appreciation and thoughtful acknowledgement of work accomplished and jobs done well. Express this sincere appreciation both publically, perhaps in a community newsletter or your organization’s social media, as well as privately, perhaps in a direct email, handwritten note, phone call, or invitation to lunch. Consider hosting annual celebration(s), such as a volunteer appreciation party, as well as incorporating public recognition into competition events, such as an opening or closing address from the volunteer coordinator or program director, recognizing by name and role the specific volunteers that allow an event to successfully come together.

Example: Publish newsletter recognition, social media shout outs, live event program shout outs & word-of-mouth accolades in community (e.g., “John Doe made this event possible & should be thanked by every participant here today! Tell your team!”)

#### **7) Reward success and sincere efforts**

Offer available incentives clearly and upfront in the terms and conditions for accepting a volunteer role offer and committing to that volunteer position. Consider further rewarding volunteers, beyond any prior promise or expectation, for jobs especially well-done, with such things as:



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- Product or event discounts (e.g., complimentary league registration or half-price jersey)
- Annual membership (e.g., for local organization or USAU)
- Swag/equipment (e.g., reimburse cost of cleats, clothing, jersey, gloves, etc)
- Invitation-only experience (e.g., volunteer appreciation party/dinner)
- Stipend or charitable donation, if it can be budgeted appropriately (e.g., \$100 for running a 1-day event, \$500 for running a 6-week youth league, or donation of twice said amount to volunteer's specified charity)

Example: Offer or award a free league registration, complimentary USAU coaching clinic/certification, jersey/upgrade/disc, stipends for YCC & youth league coordinators, etc.