Expanding on Success: 
Volunteer Management at the Midwest Tennis Classic

KEYWORDS: event volunteers, recruitment, retention, strategic management

Teaching Note and Overview for Use in Class

This case portrays the successful management of sport event volunteers for a professional tennis tournament. The focus is not on what needs to be fixed or managed differently to make this tournament successful; rather, the focus is on creating a plan for growth that incorporates and builds on what has already been done that enables successful recruitment, management, and retention of tournament volunteers. Therefore, the case presents an opportunity for students to consider ways to expand an existing volunteer base to accommodate not one, but two, successful tournaments each year. The main characters in the case are Dan Clark, the volunteer coordinator for the tournaments, and his intern, Rachel. In the case, Dan and Rachel meet with the volunteer committee chairs to begin planning for the necessary expansion of the volunteer management program.

The primary challenge facing the volunteer management team is to maintain the quality of the existing volunteer experience, and to transfer existing knowledge and processes used to manage volunteers for the current men’s tournament to a second (women’s) tournament while maintaining the satisfaction of tournament volunteers. These objectives must all be met within the constraints of just a 40% increase in the volunteer management budget. Students at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels should be encouraged to think creatively about ways to solve immediate problems concerning the volunteers, and to design processes that incorporate or build upon the existing strengths of the organisation.

The case study is quite flexible and can be used in upper level undergraduate and graduate courses in event or human resource management, as well as strategic management. The case enables integrative analysis and discussion, particularly...

Corinne Daprano and Peter Titlebaum are with the Department of Health and Sport Science at the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio, USA. Carla Costa is with the Sport Management Program at the University of Texas, Austin, Texas, USA. Email for Carla Costa is ccarla@mail.utexas.edu
with reference to recruitment, retention, and strategic development of the volunteer system, including the leverage of sport subculture. Useful teaching materials and resources are listed in Appendix TN1. Background and source material having to do with data in Appendix A of the case are described in Appendix TN2.

The case is quite rich, and is most fully exploited if it is analysed in two sequential assignments. Questions with which to build assignments and to organise class discussions follow.

**Assignment Questions**

The case contains substantial data, and could be used over several class sessions. It is probably most useful to allow students first to come to grips with the case fundamentals. The following five questions focus them on the fundamental management issues that the case raises, and could be covered over one or two class sessions:

1. What are the challenges currently facing the event organisers? What strengths and weaknesses does the organisation bring to those challenges?

2. Using the data in Appendix A create a profile of existing volunteers. What are their demographics? What are their motives? Which demographic and motivational characteristics seem particularly important? Why? How could your analysis enable more effective recruitment and retention of volunteers?

3. Consider the event’s relationships to local charities. Can those relationships be leveraged to enhance volunteer recruitment and/or retention? Explain.

4. Within the budget constraints, what might be done to obtain more volunteers? Could your profile from Question 2 help? How? Could a more diverse pool of volunteers be obtained? How? What would be the advantage? Do you envision any disadvantages?

5. Consider the Committee Chair positions. What roles should the Committee Chairs take in volunteer recruitment and retention? Explain.

**Enrichment Questions**

Once students have mastered the case fundamentals, subsequent questions will enable them to explore the strategic issues raised by this case. The following five questions could be covered over one or two class sessions. They work best if students address them only after they have completed the analyses and discussions associated with the first five questions (above).

1. Events like the Midwest Tennis Classic have a limited lifecycles each year, so there is a cyclical nature to managing the event’s volunteers. What is the cyclical nature of volunteer recruitment in this case? What effects does it have,
and how should those be managed? How important is it to retain “veteran” volunteers each time an event is offered? Given your analysis, how is expansion to two events each year likely to affect volunteer recruitment and retention?

2. Do some volunteer and volunteer management positions seem particularly vulnerable to turnover? Which ones? Why? What can be done to minimise turnover or the negative effects of turnover? Explain.

3. Rachel’s planning will be built from the information in the case appendices. What other information would it be useful for her to collect now? At upcoming tournaments? Explain how that information should be collected, and why it would be useful.

4. Clark’s dream is to transform the Committee Chair Volunteer Program into a leadership training program. How should he go about this task? What structures and/or programs should be put into place? Explain.

5. There is a strong subculture associated with tennis. What roles does subculture play in the recruitment and retention of volunteers for these events? How, then, could subculture be used to enhance volunteer recruitment and retention? Could subculture be used in between events to enhance volunteer recruitment and retention?

Appendix TN1: Recommended Resources

The case can be supported using a number of resources – some having to do with the case context, and some providing relevant conceptual background. Useful resources include:


Appendix TN2: Description of Survey

The data in this case study, presented in Appendix A, were collected from a random sampling of volunteers at a Midwestern ATP Tournament. Participants completed a survey comprised of the following three components: (1) The Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998); (2) Items from the Survey of Perceived Organisational Support (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990); and, (3) Items developed from the literature on event management.

The Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998) is a 28-item questionnaire with items relating to four main intrinsic or extrinsic benefits gained from volunteering. These four benefits are described as: (1) purposive motivations (11 items), (2) solidary motivations (6 items), (3) external traditions (6 items), and (4) commitments (5 items). In addition, the survey instrument contained three scales to measure volunteers’ level of satisfaction with the overall experience (8 items), tournament facilities (10 items), and organisation of tournament events (6 items). Respondents were asked, on a scale of 1 (“not at all important”) to 5 (“extremely important”), to indicate how important each motive was for their decision to volunteer and to their level of satisfaction. Perceived organisational support was measured using seven items from the Survey of Perceived Organisational Support (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). These items are related to the human resource management practices and perceived support a volunteer feels from his or her event supervisor. Perceived organisational support has been found to be negatively related to absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Respondents were asked, on a scale of 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”), to indicate their level of agreement with each item. The final section of the survey included the items related to the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, education, and income.

References

