

10

Finding and motivating talent

Learning objectives

On completion of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Appreciate the importance of acquiring talented employees and volunteers
- Discuss employee and volunteer recruitment strategies
- Appreciate the importance of a systematic approaches to induction and training
- Provide an overview of the various approaches to the empowerment of event employees and volunteers
- Understand the key differences between the motivations of employees and volunteers
- Discuss key human resource management issues in an event industry context
- Appreciate the difference between volunteerism and exploitation
- Explain the key principles associated with the promotion of employee well-being.

Finding and motivating talent is perhaps the most effective way that any business, including events businesses, can gain and sustain a competitive advantage. In fact, acquiring talent may be regarded as the most important investment that an events business can ever make. It therefore requires high levels of attention and consideration. The recruitment and selection of event staff and volunteers is followed by a range of human resource management functions and techniques aimed at introducing and orientating talent to the unique requirements of the events organisation, training and developing that talent and empowering individuals in a manner that maximises their potential contribution and promotes well-being.



Can you think of any examples of human resource management techniques that may facilitate the empowerment of event employees and volunteers?

Acquiring talent

Acquiring talented employees and volunteers is important because:

- 1 Particularly in the events industry, a strong and direct link exists between the quality of an organisation's talent and the quality of the service that it provides. A key determinant of success is the energy, creativity and expertise demonstrated by employees and volunteers, particularly during the staging of events.
- 2 While technology and other organisational assets and resources can be readily copied and duplicated by competitors, the quality of talent, the people that comprise the organisation, cannot. They are indeed the organisation's most important resources and the distinguishing feature that can provide attendees with memorable event experiences, and the event organisation with a sustainable competitive advantage.
- 3 Employees, and perhaps volunteers, may stay with one event organisation for several years and as with all longer-term investments, the quality of that investment decision will impact significantly on organisational success.



At events that you have attended, can you think of any ways in which employees or volunteers could have improved their performance and enhanced your event experience as a result?

The recruitment of employees and volunteers

Recruitment should be an on-going activity. Rather than waiting for people to leave and positions to become vacant, successful event organisation are constantly on the look-out for talented employees and enthusiastic volunteers. And for recruitment to be successful and effective, both the organisation and prospective employees and volunteers need to have a clear appreciation of what the job entails, what knowledge, skills and attitudes are required, and what constitutes effective job performance. In this regard, it's important to be realistic and while any potential employer will seek to create a good impression, creating unrealistic job expectations can only lead to disappointment and dissatisfaction. Hence, the need for transparency and honesty is paramount.

Event organisations can attract the interest of prospective employees in many ways, including specialist journals, recruitment agencies, and word-of-mouth, but e-recruitment has become the dominant approach, with a number of key advantages over more traditional methods, including:

- Reach that is virtually unlimited
- Speed
- Accessibility and convenience
- Interaction between candidates and employers
- Flexibility
- Relatively low cost.

In terms of acquiring talented event employees, adequate attention needs to be given to the accurate forecasting of future staff needs and the systematic planning of recruitment strategies. As part of that, the type of talent required, where and how it can be acquired, and most importantly, how potential employees can be attracted to the organisation, must be given due consideration. And for attracting potential employees, becoming an 'employer of choice' is possibly the most effective approach and involves:

- Developing and maintaining a positive, productive, and motivational work environment;
- Rewarding and compensating employees appropriately;
- Developing and implementing appropriate human resource management policies, particularly in terms of career progression, training and development, and equal employment opportunity;
- Developing and maintaining a reputation as a progressive employer, in terms of business ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability;
- Maintaining ongoing, positive employee engagement with a focus on employee health, safety, and well-being.

When forecasting future staff needs, the experience gained from previous events and other staffing needs provides the most reliable basis. In addition, however, there are a range of more sophisticated techniques including trend projection and multiple regression that can be incorporated into the process. When considering supply issues, both the internal labour supply, that is, current employees and volunteers that are used on a regular basis, as well as the external labour supply, must be considered.



What would you regard as key benefits of being able to recruit volunteers as permanent employees?