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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 the best talent, and keeping them motivated and productive, are essential elements in establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage. The capacity of an event enterprise to consistently stage successful events, and consistently provide attendees with positive and memorable experiences, is generally a reflection of the quality of their employees and volunteers. Over the longer term, concerted efforts to acquire and motivate the best talent available can lead to greater levels of organisational creativity and innovation, as well as long term survival in a dynamic, turbulent, and uncertain industry environment. Furthermore, a talented and productive workforce is generally one in which individual employees and volunteers can thrive and grow, promoting empowerment and well-being.



What approach to human resource management is likely to facilitate the empowerment of event employees and volunteers?

Employee and volunteer recruitment strategies

Acquiring the best talent is more important for events than for most industries. Success in the staging of an event can only ever be achieved at the so-called 'moment of truth' and is facilitated at that time by the efforts and expertise of event employees and volunteers. Most successful event enterprises are constantly on the look-out for outstanding talent that can take their events from good to exceptional. However, there are obvious differences between the recruitment of employees, people that are seeking full or part-time employment in the events industry, and that of volunteers, whose relationship with the events organisation is more flexible, more open-ended, and probably more short term.

Employee recruitment

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, needs to be considered.



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

Event employees want to be proud of the organisation they work for and hence, the best way to ensure the capacity of an event enterprise to attract talented employees is through successful employer branding, or in other words, becoming an 'employer of choice'. Employer branding can be regarded as the way in which an organisation is able to proactively influence and manage the perceptions of job seekers, potential employees, and other key stakeholders, about its reputation as an employer. It can be expensive and time consuming but in a highly competitive labour market, is well worth the investment.



What would you regard as the key attributes of the type of employer that you would like to work for?

Possible approaches that can be adopted to employer branding include:

- 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, particularly in terms of business ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability.
- Maintaining ongoing, positive employee engagement with a focus on employee health, safety, and well-being.

Other approaches that can be utilised to operationalise and enhance the effectiveness of employee recruitment include:

- Social recruiting or the utilisation of a broad range of social networks to find and attract potential employees.
- The volunteers that have been utilised for a number of events may also be a potential source of new employees.
- Proactive recruitment strategies in which, rather than waiting for prospective employees to apply, talent is sourced directly from external talent pools such as LinkedIn.
- All of these approaches acknowledge the fact that the best talent is less likely to be looking for a new job and hence, the emphasis needs to be on actively seeking and finding talent rather than passively waiting for talent to respond to advertisements. This should be an on-going process.

Recruitment of employees may also be facilitated through:

- The use of data driven metrics to facilitate a better understanding of how well current recruitment strategies are working and how they can be improved.
- The use of applicant tracking software aimed at making the recruitment process more systematic, more data driven, and more structured.

Did you know? Motivating volunteers is important in order to secure engagement throughout the event. Ensure little touch points such as checking in how they are going, providing food, frequent breaks and ensuring their wellbeing. Failure to maintain volunteer motivation may result in quitting. Read about volunteer dropout rates at the 2016 Rio games: www.independent.co.uk/sport/olympics/rio-2016-thousands-olympic-volunteers-quit-over-long-hours-and-lack-food-a7194776.html

Selection

While the selection process for event volunteers is relatively straight forward, involving the development of a match between the characteristics of prospective volunteers and event needs, the selection process for event employees is, and should be, far more involved. The selection of event employees is an important investment decision that requires adequate time, consideration, and effort. When selecting the most appropriate candidate, the final decision should be based on:

- The candidate's cognitive and thinking ability, their affective ability or emotional intelligence, and their behavioural qualities.
- Their motivation to learn, to acquire knowledge and expertise, to effectively handle their emotions, and to maximise performance through the demonstration of appropriate behaviours.
- The extent to which their personal characteristics can match or perhaps enhance, the organisation's culture

An array of techniques and methods are available when making selection decisions. These include a range of different types of interviews, the conduct of reference checks, consideration of other information including applications and resumes, and a range of employment tests.



Have you recently been for a job interview? If so, what were your impressions of the interview process?

In traditional interviews, interviewees are generally asked a range of questions that may relate to:

- Previous relevant experience
- The applicant's skills, knowledge, and attitudes
- How the applicant would handle various job-related situations
- How they would cope with various job-related problems and difficulties
- What they currently know about key aspects of the industry, the organisation, and the job