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Recruitment and Selection of Festival Volunteers

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ABSTRACT

Volunteers are a vital human resource for events and this paper evaluates approaches to their recruitment and selection. Taking a comparative organisational methodology, data is presented from qualitative interviews with organisers of twelve reoccurring festivals in Victoria. The analysis demonstrates that event organisers need to encourage bounce-back from past episodic volunteers through a combination of appreciation and rewards. New operational volunteers come from two sources: individuals in the local community largely recruited informally through word of mouth; and outsourced recruitment of groups of volunteers. The latter can strengthen relationships with a festival's community and other stakeholders, including sponsors. Unlike mega-events, little selection of volunteers takes place at these reoccurring events. Any screening of individuals is largely informal, unless in roles working directly with children. Examples are included of events thinking creatively about ways of diversifying their volunteer base and increasing formalisation of their volunteer management.

INTRODUCTION

Volunteers play a vital role in the organisation and delivery of many events, the importance of which has only recently gained wide acknowledgement in the literature (Ralston, Lumsdon and Downward 2005). Volunteers contribute to the economic viability of events (Ralston et al. 2005), the quality of service delivery (Reeser, Berg, Rhea and Willick 2004) and the visitor experience and satisfaction (Karkatsoulis, Michalopoulos and Moustakatou 2005). Volunteers can become the public face of an event, with their enthusiasm, commitment and service drawing praise from organisers, spectators, participants, and the media. To date, events research has largely focused on volunteers once they are involved with a specific

event. In contrast, this paper focuses on how event organisers attempt to recruit volunteers to provide the human resources necessary to run events and festivals.

Recruitment is crucial for the success of a volunteer programme and often the sustainability of an event organisation. However, recruitment is a significant challenge for those managing volunteers (Hager and Brudney 2004; Zarinpoush, Barr and Moreton 2004; Volunteering Australia 2006). (Hall, McKechnie, Davidman and Leslie 2001) suggest that volunteers are becoming more selective in their choice of volunteering activities and are looking for new ways of volunteering. In response to changing demands and needs of volunteers, there is an acknowledged trend towards more flexible volunteering commitments (Gaskin 2003; Brudney 2005; Merrill 2006), including one-off and short-term volunteering. These can be referred to as 'episodic' volunteering, and increasingly this form of volunteering is being seen as distinct from the on-going or sustained commitment of many traditional volunteering situations (Bryen and Madden 2006). The volunteering literature often cite special events as a typical episodic volunteering arrangement (Borgiattino 2005; nfp Synergy 2005). Nevertheless, from the events literature it is evident that the event volunteering situation is more multifaceted. A number of studies make the distinction between core and non-core event volunteers (for example, (Saleh and Wood 1998; Handy, Brodeur and Cnann 2006). Core volunteers make greater time commitments, typically over a longer period, and often in organisational, managerial or governance roles within the event organisation. In contrast, non-core (or rank-and-file) volunteers largely work only during the delivery of the event. It is this latter group that can be classified as episodic, and these form the focus on this paper.

Increasingly, more complex typologies or continua of event volunteering are being proposed, recognising that while the volunteering activities may be short-term, the volunteers may return or re-engage with a single organisation in a series of episodic relationships. Bryen and Madden (2006) use the term 'bounce-back' to describe this situation. (Macduff 2005), (Bryen and Madden 2006) and (Handy et al. 2006) each offer multiple categories of episodic volunteers based on the time, duration, and bounce-back of service.

There is a growing body of literature examining volunteer workers at events, mainly, but not exclusively, at sporting and mega events. These works primarily consider volunteer motivations, expectations and satisfaction (Saleh and Wood 1998; Kemp 2002; Twynam, Farrell and Johnston 2002/03; Ralston, Downward

and Lumsdon 2004; Reeser et al. 2004; Monga 2006); and aspects of commitment (Elstad 2003; Cuskelly, Auld, Harrington and Coleman 2004; Green and Chalip 2004). Researchers have also considered particular volunteer management challenges for event organisers, including scheduling (Gordon and Erkut 2004), training (Kemp 2002), assessment of the economic value of volunteers' work (Solberg 2003), and recruitment and retention (Coyne and Coyne 2001).

The majority of this research focuses on collecting data from the volunteers themselves, rather than an organisational perspective. Case-studies of individual events dominate, with a few exceptions where multiple events are compared, for example, (Monga and Treuren 2001; Cuskelly et al. 2004; Handy et al. 2006). This paper study also takes a multi-event approach, and attempts to contribute to the understanding of the organisational approaches to volunteer management. Previous studies considering the recruitment and selection of event volunteers are discussed before the presentation of findings from twelve festivals involving volunteers. The findings discuss the ways in which event organisers can encourage volunteers to return, or bounce-back, and then consider the dominant approaches to the recruitment, selection and screening of new volunteers.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF EVENT VOLUNTEERS

Notwithstanding an increased desire for episodic volunteering opportunities, recruitment is a particular challenge for events (Saleh and Wood 1998). The pulsating nature of event organisations creates challenges in retaining personnel throughout the event operating cycle; (Hanlon and Jago 2004) consider this in relation to paid employees, however similar concerns may exist in retaining a pool of volunteers from year to year.

The recruitment process is important for inspiring volunteers whilst creating realistic expectations regarding workload commitments, responsibilities, organisational support, and the overall volunteer event experience (Williams, Dossa and Tompkins 1995; Ralston et al. 2004). During recruitment, the core values of the organization (Karkatsoulis et al. 2005) and the benefits of volunteering can be communicated (Downward, Lumsdon and Ralston 2005). The recruitment process can also be a source of dissatisfaction which can influence other expectations of the event volunteering experience (Ralston et al. 2004).

For those recruiting episodic volunteers, it also has to be considered that the retention or re-enlistment rate of 'veteran', or repeat, volunteers will partly determine how many new volunteers need to be recruited (Coyne and Coyne 2001). (Bryen and Madden 2006) conceptualise this as 'bounce-back', the re-engagement or return of episodic volunteers, although the extent to which this is incorporated into recruitment policies is not clear. Event organisations can use a range of methods to recruit volunteers, and previous research indicates the importance of informal word-of-mouth recruitment (Williams et al. 1995; Coyne and Coyne 2001; Monga and Treuren 2001). While case studies and post-event evaluation reports (for example, (Manchester 2002 2002; SOCOG 2002) detail the recruitment methods events have used to attract volunteers, there is little work exploring the range of options available to the event organiser, or how organisers perceived the value of different recruitment methods.

Once attracted to volunteer at an event, how are individuals then selected to fill the available volunteering roles? Selection and screening for the most suitable, competent and motivated candidates is important for the success of the event, the quality of service delivery (Reeser et al. 2004) and also contributes to a volunteer's evaluation of their experience (Ralston et al. 2004). Data suggest that sporting mega-events suggest receive many more applications than there are volunteer positions and post-event reports (for example (Manchester 2002 2002; SOCOG 2002; Walker 2002; Karkatsoulis et al. 2005) contain descriptive details of the selection process and sometimes the selection criteria. Many events have application forms, variously submitted by post or online, and even at large scale events, interviews are a commonly used selection tool. However, the event organiser's rationale for adopting particular selection procedures (for example, interviews), and the perceived value and usefulness of these strategies, has not been explicitly considered in previous research.

At reoccurring events, retaining volunteers reduces the requirement for future recruitment, and builds a core of experienced and competent volunteers (Saleh and Wood 1998; Coyne and Coyne 2001; Downward et al. 2005). While the desirability of retaining past volunteers is widespread, it is not clear in studies (for example (Coyne and Coyne 2001) whether previous volunteers who are interested in return are automatically taken on, undergo any additional screening or assessment of their past performance, or perhaps have to re-apply with other new applicants.

METHODOLOGY

This paper addresses two aspects of the involvement of event volunteers. First, which methods are used to recruit event volunteers and what factors influence an organiser's choice of recruitment methods? Second, how, if at all, does the screening and selection of potential volunteers occur and what is the perceived value of the different methods?

In contrast to the dominant approach of event volunteering research to date, with its emphasis on case studies of single events and collecting data from the volunteers themselves, this study takes a comparative organisational perspective. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews with the person, or persons, responsible for the management, specifically the recruitment, of volunteers at twelve special events across the Australian state of Victoria. Interviews lasted between forty minutes and two hours, and covered the role of volunteers in the organisation, the rationale for their involvement, approaches to recruitment and selection, including the reasons for using particular recruitment, selection and screening methods. This qualitative approach produced rich data and enabled themes to be explored in depth with participants. All twelve events are cultural festivals, and are large enough (in size or profile) to attract both local and non-local attendees. The sample includes arts, music, food and wine, and annual celebrations (Christmas, Easter, etc.); originally sporting events were included in the study, but those approached declined to participate. The events were selected purposefully to obtain a mix of locations (metropolitan, regional centres, country). Five events were managed by local councils, the remainder were voluntary organisations, ranging from volunteer-run festivals to those employing a year-round staff. All events reoccur on an annual basis. Selected direct quotes and case studies are used to support the discussion, although not all respondents agreed to the attribution of data and for confidentiality reasons, the events are referred to anonymously. A profile of the festivals is given in table 1.

Table 1: Profile of Events

ID	Type of festival	Type of Governance	Location	Approx no. of volunteers involved in most recent event	Length of event
A	Community	Council	Metropolitan	100	1 day
B	Arts	Voluntary	Metropolitan	30	17 days
C	Community arts	Council	Metropolitan	1,000+	4 days
D	Floral	Council	Regional centre	100	3 days
E	Community	Council	Regional centre	400	4 days
F	Children's	Council	Regional centre	1,100	8 days
G	Music	Voluntary	Regional centre	33	3 days
H	Arts	Voluntary	Regional centre	220	3 months
I	Wine & Food	Voluntary	Country	30	2 days
J	Music	Voluntary	Country	80	3 days
K	Community	Voluntary	Country	67	5 weeks
L	Music	Voluntary	Country	1,000	4 days

FINDINGS

This analysis focuses on the involvement of non-core or rank-and-file volunteers (classified as episodic), those working in operational roles, primarily during the event but also in the immediate build-up and shut-down periods. It excludes those volunteers working primarily in managerial and governance positions, although it is important to acknowledge that they may also give their time in operational roles during the event. Many events rely on returning volunteers, therefore firstly, the ways that organisations encourage volunteers to bounce-back are considered. Second, the recruitment, selection and screening of new volunteers is discussed. Examples are used to illustrate best practice of events that have moved beyond the dominant word of mouth approach to recruitment and have been innovative in their approach to involving new volunteer workers.

Encouraging Volunteers to Bounce-back

All but one of the events heavily rely on returning, or bounce-back, volunteers; having three-quarters of volunteers returning each year is not unusual. The main

advantage to the event of bounce-back volunteers is they bring their past experience and knowledge of the event and tasks; for example: “[They] understand the culture of how the Festival operates” [Festival B]. Often volunteers return to the same role, and over time build up confidence, expertise and ownership. Repeat volunteers often require less training and involvement from management. One organiser suggested that as volunteers “become more regular they become more reliable” [Festival L] and experienced volunteers can also be more flexible and open to last minute requests.

In general, past volunteers are contacted first to ascertain how many want to return; other recruitment methods will then be considered to fill the gaps. Organisers did reflect on a volunteer’s past performance, and if they were judged to have been unsuitable, they may be invited back but in a different role, or simply not contacted again. In general, returning volunteers did not have to formally reapply; an exception was the children’s event which requires an annual police check, so past volunteers have to re-submit an application.

Event organisers were asked why they thought volunteers returned to volunteer at their event, and how they encourage bounce-back. From the organisation’s perspective, this was related to how they treat volunteers during their volunteering, and how they reward them; summarised by one respondent as: “Because we look after them during and after the event” [D]. During the event, organisers focus on the intangibles: enjoyment, atmosphere, making the volunteers feel welcome and involved: “they’re all acknowledged by name and they feel like they’re actually part of it, [that] they are an important part” [F]. Following the event, the focus is on thanking the volunteers (in person and by letter), showing appreciation, and giving opportunities for socialising, including post-event functions. Acknowledgement can also come from and via other external stakeholders. Those offering free tickets in return for volunteering felt that while this might attract first-time applicants, it wasn’t a significant factor in retaining bounce-back volunteers.

Most event organisers maintain a volunteer database and use this to target previous volunteers. In addition, occasional, but on-going, communication with these volunteers has a role in maintaining their involvement, and commitment to, the event: “touching base with volunteers, not just disappearing from their lives” [D]. The notion of a being part of the festival ‘family’ was referred to on a number of occasions.

Encouraging bounce-back is not without its challenges, not least making volunteers feel involved in the event. Other commitments mean volunteers are often not available every year. The only event without a strong returning cohort of volunteers observed that they found it “difficult sometimes to keep up with volunteers because we find sometimes some of the younger ones, they move on, they disappear, [...] we lose contact with them” [E]. Relying on returning volunteers also means they age with the event and it can be a challenge to involve new and younger people.

Recruiting New Volunteers

While relying on bounce-back volunteers can bring benefits, all events require at least some new volunteers each year to replace those who have left or are unavailable, or to grow the volunteer pool. The remainder of this discussion focuses on the ways event organisers attempt to attract new volunteers to their festival. While each event has a different strategy, they all use a combination of multiple recruitment methods. Evidence from these festivals is that event organisers recruit new rank-and-file volunteers from two main sources: individuals from the local community; and groups of volunteers from local clubs and associations, educational institutions, and other event stakeholders.

The first source of volunteers is to recruit individuals from within the local community, and occasionally beyond. The main way of getting individuals involved is through word of mouth with potential volunteers suggested by existing volunteers, committee members, and the organisers themselves. This has a number of advantages: “...they know the festival and they know someone who works [here], so they know what the work entails” [L]. Consequently, “because of the way we recruit people, word of mouth, it’s very unusual for people come and say look I don’t like this” [H]. The willingness to suggest friends as volunteers also indicates that the current volunteers feel satisfied and appreciated. Personal contacts are also often used when there is a last-minute need for additional volunteers, and whilst they may be “doing it as a personal commitment to you”, rather than a commitment to the event, you “know them and know them to be reliable” [G]. This ability to judge reliability and trust via word of mouth was a reoccurring theme. The notion of community, and knowing everyone within a community, was strong not just in the country settings but also in the larger regional centres; indeed, this was mentioned everywhere except Melbourne.

Event organisers place recruitment advertisements for volunteers in a range of outlets, including print media (particularly local newspapers and council newsletters), the event's own publications (programmes and website), and occasionally on general volunteering websites (for example, www.govolunteer.com.au). While most event organisers noted a limited response to adverts, one festival [B] had previously been overwhelmed with applicants following an advert in *The Age*. Overall, adverts were mainly seen as a way of raising awareness of the event and its need for volunteers, with other recruitment methods also required.

Most events primarily recruit from their local community, however there are cases, particularly arts and music festivals, where volunteers are sourced from a special-interest community that can be spread over a wider geographical area, potentially including overseas. For these festivals, the Internet is a key recruitment tool. In comparison, most of the other festivals use their website primarily for information about the event, rather than as an active volunteer recruitment tool. Where events attract non-locals to volunteer, there is scope to recruit individuals from the volunteer pools of other similar events; this cross-fertilisation was evident at the two music festivals.

A perceived disadvantage of some recruitment methods, particularly advertisements and responding to unsolicited applications, was they attract the 'wrong' volunteers. To overcome some of the concerns over recruitment methods, some events out-source elements of their volunteer recruitment and selection. While there were mixed attitudes towards using job or employment networking organisations, there were generally more positive experiences of volunteer resource centres.

CASE STUDY: Event E is an annual community celebration managed within the city council. Previously they relied on a range of recruitment methods, including advertisements and responding to enquiries, however, they now source most new volunteers through the local Volunteer Resource Centre. The event organisers provide the Centre with job specs and the Centre access their database of potential volunteers and also advertise the roles in the Centre and via their publications and website. The Centre takes on co-ordination for recruitment and screening, both time consuming activities; this leaves the event staff able to focus on other responsibilities. The Centre "act as a filter", and have enabled the event to formalise its

approach to volunteers and feel more confident about the suitability of the individuals recruited to volunteer.

Targeting those who already have links with the event is also an option. For example, previous visitors have both witnessed the roles volunteers undertake, and may also see volunteering as a way of giving back to the festival as an acknowledgment of previous enjoyment at the event, often with an element of nostalgia or personal heritage attached to the event. At events with competitors or other participants, their friends and relatives can be recruited as volunteers, particularly when they can benefit from free tickets to other elements of the event.

The second source of volunteers is through various established groups within the community. This can work in two ways. First, groups are seen as a source of individual volunteers, for example, advertising for volunteers through a group's newsletter where interested members contact the event direct. Second, and more common, events work with particular groups who then access their membership to provide the event with volunteers. The event focuses on recruiting the groups, and the groups then recruit the volunteers, and may also manage them during the event. Those interviewed work with a diverse range of community groups and associations, including scouts, sports clubs, churches, Rotary, Lions, Probus clubs, and specialist groups such as woodwork clubs. Often the event already has a link to the group, either historically or typically an event committee member will also be involved in the group.

Out-sourcing volunteer recruitment and, potentially co-ordination, to established groups brings a number of benefits to the event organiser. There is one contact point within the group and the event's relationship can focus on that person, which makes communication more effective. The volunteers already know each other and hopefully work well as a team: "We don't have to worry about breaking down boundaries as far as people not being comfortable around each other" [A]. The contact person will have a better knowledge of each person and their capabilities and how best to manage them. Normally, events will allocate a particular duty or area to each group (for example, car parking, stewarding, or the children's area); importantly, this can give the group and members a sense ownership.

Successful group arrangements involve building on-going, long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with a group and their key contact, and having clear lines of communication. This creates a situation of trust and reliability. There are suggestions that in this model, individuals may feel more commitment towards their club or group rather than the event, and while this is not necessarily a problem, it is an area that warrants further investigation.

Many council-run events tap into other volunteering groups within their council, most notably, visitor information centre or city ambassador programmes. These have a large pool of available volunteers, and their experience and knowledge mean that training often involves only a briefing about the specifics of the event. They often undertake tourist information-based responsibilities at the events, which is "fantastic as that's their usual volunteering role" [C]. These volunteers may be integrated into the general pool of volunteers or, more commonly, co-ordinated by their usual visitor information centre volunteer manager.

Two events have looked beyond community groups for their volunteers and work with local businesses who provide staff, either through an organised employee volunteer programme, or as part of a sponsorship arrangement with the event.

CASE STUDY: Event D, has been concerned about the ageing profile of their current volunteers and the organisers have attempted to attract younger volunteers. Most successful has been linking with a bank's employee volunteering scheme. As part of their commitment to community involvement, the bank provides staff with two days of paid volunteer leave each year. The festival participates in the scheme and these bank employees are brought into the main volunteering pool during the event and individual's details are entered into the volunteer database for future contacts. A relationship is also maintained directly with the bank and a separate information session is run for these volunteers.

CASE STUDY: The council events team [A] run events and celebrations throughout the year and work with a range of community groups who provide their members' services as volunteers. In particular, they have encouraged local businesses who sponsor the events to get their staff involved: "A lot of organisations are looking for staff to donate their time in a way that's fun" and it also gives them more involvement and ownership over the events. In addition, each year a charity benefits from

funds raised at the Christmas event, and as part of this agreement the charity supply volunteers to work at the festival, either drawn from their existing volunteer supporters, or recruited by the charity to volunteer specifically at the event. This festival has successfully tapped into their network of stakeholders to expand their supporters' contributions to the event.

The final established group of volunteers that can be accessed are students, usually on degree or TAFE courses, but also at secondary school. Recognising the need to gain experience for future employment, some events work with institutions offering event management, tourism and hospitality qualifications, and involve students in event planning and behind-the-scenes: "we try and make it so as their volunteering can actually complement the study that they're doing" [F]. Organisers stress the need for aspirant event professionals to understand the realities of the industry: "get out there and see what it's all about because it is an incredibly rewarding experience but it's also a lot of hard work" [A]. Particular courses can be targeted to recruit students with specific skills, for example, those on early education courses to run children's activities. As with community groups, the initial, and often ongoing, contact is with one person, the lecturers and teachers.

A fundamental element of volunteering definitions is a lack of payment, however, two of the voluntary organisations in this study paid their volunteer groups for their services [I and L]. For these voluntary events, both in rural locations with small resident populations, paying the contributing groups is a means to recognising the community's commitment and ownership of the event, and a way of investing the proceedings of the event back into the community and local economy. Payments, or fees, are calculated on the number of volunteers hours required for a particular task. Despite the payment, these are still perceived as volunteers, "because you're not giving each individual person money" [I].

Selection and screening

While most event organisers are happy with the current number of volunteers, they would also be willing to take more. Only two [B and J] had to turn excess volunteers away, and in one case this was people approaching them just before the event. Others expressed a desire for additional volunteers in particular roles, or to be able to get volunteers to commit earlier. Only one event felt it had a serious recruitment problem, largely due to the late organisation of volunteering

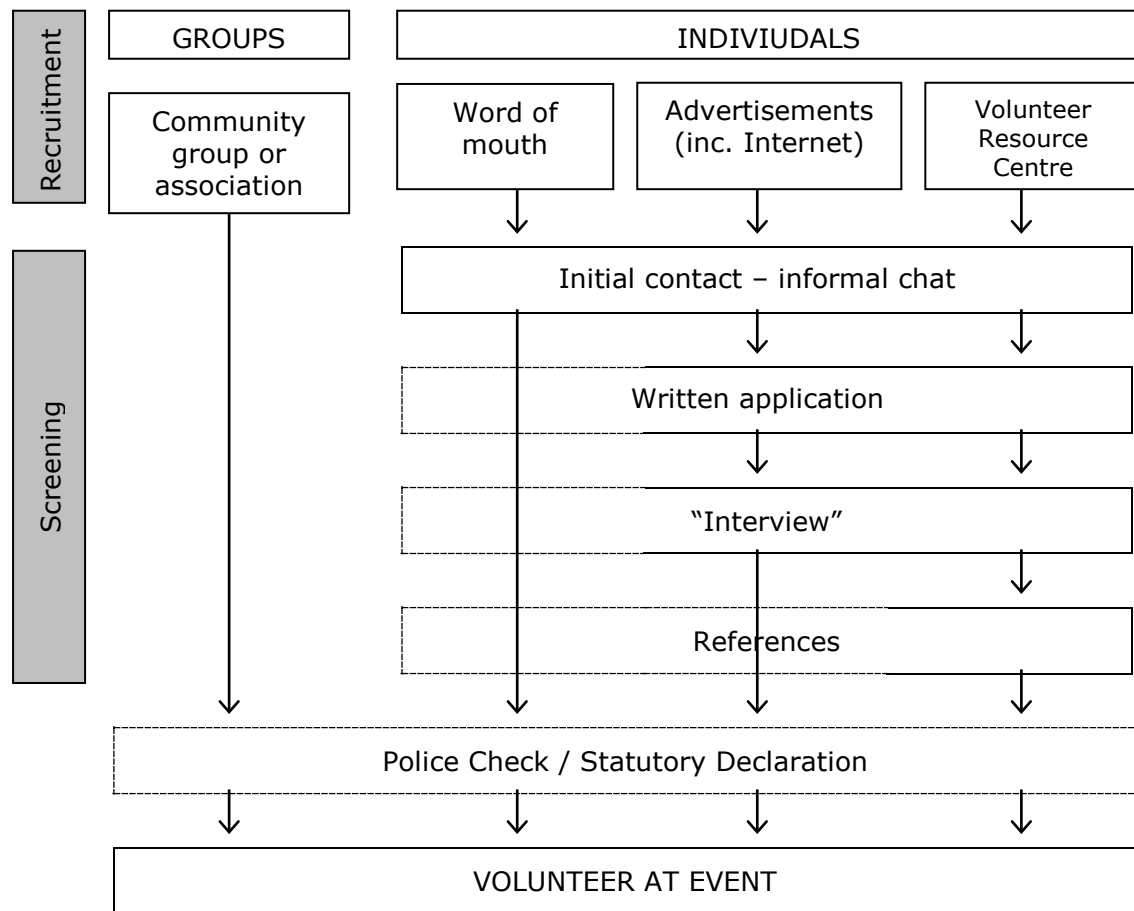
at the festival. However, few were in the position to turn down prospective volunteers due to an over-supply of applicants. Given this situation, organisers take a relatively open approach to selection, wanting to encourage participation, and are willing to give people a chance. For example:

“The Festival really does embrace the volunteers. We’re very open to whoever wants to come along and if there are issues with volunteers we try and manage those issues rather than turn them away from the event and put them in positions that would be suitable.” [F]

Although selection, or choosing between candidates, was not a requirement for the majority of these events, there was a general recognition of the need to screen applicants; this was seen as a duty of care: “to the audience as well as to ourselves and the volunteers themselves, that it has to be done in a formal way” [E], screening can also be a “safeguard” for the event organisers [H]. Nevertheless, overall, screening of volunteers is kept relatively informal. More formalisation is avoided for a range of reasons: it would put people off applying, particularly some younger and older applicants; screening “is not that big a deal for people, because they are recruited through word of mouth” [G]; and the volunteer-run nature of an event, and its small scale, does not fit with a highly formalised approach. Even those adopting more formalised screening methods, typically council-managed events, mentioned “people often judge their own suitability for a role” [D].

Broadly, there could be five stages in the screen of event volunteers: the initial contact, written application, interview, references, and police check (figure 1). In practice, screening may be confined to a single conversation with a prospective volunteer, particularly when recruited through word of mouth channels.

Figure 1: Main recruitment and screening methods for festival volunteers



Screening begins at the first contact point, and organisers use this to get an initial impression of the applicant. Less than half of events in this study had a formal application form; those that did generally used it to collect contact information, availability, and an indication of the role or area applicants wanted to volunteer in. Subsequently, an interview of some kind may take place, although organisers stress that this is very informal and may be face to face or by telephone or email. This interview is usually focused around finding out more about the applicant and their motivations or interest in volunteering, and matching them to a suitable role. This informal nature suits many organisations, because of their small size, their informal working culture, and the nature of the volunteering relationship. References may be asked for on an application form; however these are often not taken up unless doubts are raised during other parts of the screening process. Recruiting via word of mouth often means that organisers feel additional more formalised screening methods are not required. Organisers usually ask the person who recommended the prospective volunteer

or “we know them and what they are able to do, and in [this city] everyone knows everyone, especially within communities such as the music community, or if we don’t know someone, we know someone who does” [G].

It is acknowledged that some volunteers may find overt checking a sensitive topic and its can go against a desire to “embrace community spirit” [D], and some volunteers, particularly those previously involved, may feel insulted. Nevertheless, “people are mostly okay with police checks as they understand they are required” [D]. Events and roles working directly with children require police checks or a statutory declaration that they have no police record. None of the events reported having to reject any one on the basis of a police check, but two noted that if volunteers are not happy with being asked they are likely to place themselves in other roles not with children or “if they know that they’ve got history then you just don’t hear from them again” [F]. When volunteer recruitment is outsourced, to either a Volunteer Resource Centre or other groups, the responsibility for screening individuals is also passed on, with the exception of the children’s festival who, given the focus of their event, process all police checks themselves.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

By focusing on reoccurring events and cultural festivals, this study offers a counterbalance to the dominance of research on volunteering at sporting and mega events. It moves away from a focus on the volunteers themselves and the single case study event, and takes a comparative approach, drawing on the experiences and opinions of event organisers responsible for volunteer management. Although the sample size is restricted to twelve festivals, the qualitative approach has produced rich, in-depth data and goes beyond just detailing research and selection methods to start identifying the perceived value of different recruitment strategies.

This research gives weight to the observation that event volunteering is not just once-off, rather episodic volunteering can incorporate bounce-back, and this can be related to motivation, satisfaction and commitment. It is evident that involving volunteers in reoccurring events brings different challenges to one-off mega events, and there is scope for the application of work on pulsating organisations (Hanlon and Jago 2004) to include the implications for the management of volunteers as well as paid staff. The reality for reoccurring events is they come to rely on a returning cohort of volunteers, so recruitment is as much about

retention: satisfying volunteers by offering them a rewarding experience and acknowledging their input, in an effort to encourage their return. Future research should explore, from the volunteer's perspective, what encourages them to bounce-back, and include a more overt consideration of repeat volunteering in the established areas of volunteer motivation and commitment.

For new volunteers, there are two main sources of operational volunteers: individuals and groups. Choice of recruitment methods is linked to whether organisers believe they are able to attract reliable and trustworthy volunteers. An informal approach to recruitment relies on a sense and knowledge of community and, as suggested in previous research (Williams et al. 1995; Coyne and Coyne 2001; Monga and Treuren 2001), for individuals, word of mouth recruitment dominates. Advertisements also play a role in raising awareness of event volunteering opportunities, and festivals which can tap into an established special-interest community are also using the internet for recruitment. Outsourcing recruitment and co-ordination to a trusted third party, such as a Volunteer Resource Centre, can increase the formalisation and rigour of an event's recruitment processes and free event staff from this time-consuming role. The benefits of outsourcing also lie behind the recruitment of groups of volunteers, where the event organiser can focus on building relationships with the key contact, and the group can take ownership of the event, or an element of it. While the focus is on local community groups, the case studies in this paper demonstrate the scope to use volunteering to strengthen relationships and involvement of the local business community through employee volunteering schemes and sponsorship arrangements.

Unlike once-off mega events whose volunteer programmes are typically hugely over-subscribed (Manchester 2002 2002; SOCOG 2002; Walker 2002; Karkatsoulis et al. 2005), reoccurring events are rarely in a position to choose between various applicants to fill a limited number of roles. Rather, selection focuses on screening volunteers to assess their individual suitability. An informal approach to selection and screening, along with a focus on word of mouth recruitment, fits with the organisational cultures of these festivals. Screening may be confined to an informal discussion with a potential volunteer, although some events, particularly those run by councils, have procedures for more structured written applications, interviews, and reference checks. The only standardised step is for volunteer roles that involve working directly with children, when police checks or statutory declarations are sought. Further analysis will be undertaken

to explore what makes a suitable, or unsuitable, candidate, but the overwhelming evidence is that few, if any, applicants are rejected. Future research should contrast this organisational perspective with the opinions of newly recruited and veteran volunteers and their subsequent volunteering experiences. This could explore the relationship between the means of recruitment and retention rates, or the extent of selection and screening and the subsequent performance of volunteers.

By taking a comparative methodology, it is evident that while each festival has its own approach to recruitment and selection, there are commonalities in the event sectors' involvement of volunteers, but also innovation and examples of events thinking creatively about ways of diversifying their volunteer base and increasing formalisation of their volunteer management.

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