

# Making Time

## Getting to GIVERS

**Making Time provides a comprehensive new look at the behavioural science around volunteering and in particular volunteering in sport, the UK's biggest sector. This handout provides a summary of the findings from our extensive review and new regression analysis of UK data sets of both volunteering and sport volunteering. In addition we introduce GIVERS – a practical new tool for everyone with an interest in recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers both within sport and beyond it.**

Since the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Join In's role has been to put more volunteers into community sport. Join In was set up to do this because:

- 1 Volunteering makes you healthier and happier.
- 2 Volunteering is a key link to increasing sports participation and a healthier UK.
- 3 Sports volunteers are hugely valuable to the UK, to sport and to our communities.
- 4 A new, innovative approach could contribute to recruiting and retaining sports volunteers.

In 2014 Join In presented our 'Hidden Diamonds' research on point 3 above, revealing the huge economic and social value of volunteers in sport. Our figure of £53bn a year was in sync with those of Andrew Haldane the Chief Economist at the Bank of England, who said all volunteering activity in the UK could be worth up to £200bn to the UK economy.

These figures were produced using the latest 'economics of wellbeing' techniques, a discipline pioneered by economist Lord Gus O'Donnell who presented our findings with us. We found that volunteering in sport increased your wellbeing scores by 2.5 times and the more volunteering in sport you did, the higher those scores became. The wider benefits of sports volunteering to social inclusion and community cohesion have also been explicitly recognised in the Government's 2015 paper 'Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation'.

As a campaigning organisation, Join In's next question was whether this learning could be put to practical use – could communicating the benefits of volunteering help to recruit and retain more volunteers in sport?

### A role for behavioural science

Join In has, since 2013, successfully recruited and retained over 100,000 volunteers in sport. Our campaigns drew on audience research, marketing experience, common sense and creative intuition. Our numbers revealed we were doing something right, but we hadn't before used behavioural science to uncover precisely what made our campaigns effective or determine what could make them even more so. Behavioural science is relatively new and at Join In we are not experts, so we worked with the research consultancy Simetrica and with economist Daniel Fujiwara, who most definitely are.

### What we did

We began by analysing extensive UK data sets on volunteering as a whole and volunteering in sport. We looked at who volunteers, how often and why they do it (the benefits and motivations) as well as the reasons why people don't (the barriers). We then considered how behavioural science principles might be used to play up these benefits and motivations and overcome these barriers.

Here we present six practical behavioural principles that apply to volunteering as a whole, a toolkit we call GIVERS. It is an evidence-based approach to increasing the number of, and retaining more volunteers, developed from core findings and from behavioural science as well as our in-depth review and analysis of the volunteering literature and data.

# G

Opportunities for personal growth and improved wellbeing as part of the volunteering process and experience will significantly increase the attractiveness of volunteering to people. Volunteering has been shown to have a positive association with wellbeing, so whatever your organisation or project does, you can communicate this as a benefit. As well as the general benefits to wellbeing, specific opportunities for personal growth through volunteering which you could promote take the form of:

- ▶ Training and the opportunity for volunteers to learn new skills as well as developing existing ones.

- ▶ Communicating the opportunity to grow in confidence and develop pride in themselves.

- ▶ Enabling people to apply their existing skills in new environments and settings.

- ▶ Setting challenging tasks that require problem solving to nurture a sense of achievement.

# Growth

# I

A large part of the wellbeing experienced by volunteering comes from an increased sense of purpose. Volunteers want to see that their work has made a difference to people, communities and society. The more directly they can link their individual contribution to helping others and to making an impact, the stronger their motivation is likely to be: seeing the difference you have made can be a powerful emotional experience and as such it sticks in the memory. This influences how volunteers recall their experience overall and potentially their decision to keep volunteering. You can leverage the effect of communicating impact by:

- ▶ Providing opportunities for volunteers to interact and connect directly with beneficiaries.

- ▶ Allowing volunteers the opportunity to provide suggestions for improving the effectiveness and impact of voluntary work.

- ▶ Giving volunteers a voice in the management and evaluation of projects. Often the focus is limited to beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

- ▶ Communicating impact to volunteers before they start volunteering, whilst they are involved and after a project finishes – work it into your thank you's.

# Impact

# V

When someone asks you to volunteer, the way they ask and who that message comes from, influences your decision to get involved or not. Although not yet employed much in volunteering, behavioural science shows that the following techniques can be effective:

- ▶ The call to volunteer is more effective if it comes from a person rather than being made anonymously on behalf of an organisation. The messenger should be someone the prospective volunteer will trust, who could be a peer (someone 'like them') or an expert with knowledge and credibility.

- ▶ Phrase your ask in terms of losses. So for example, 'without your help people will go hungry', is more powerful than 'with your help more people will receive food'. The impact of a loss on the psyche has been proven to be greater than a gain in absolute terms.

- ▶ Alternatively, phrase your ask as a challenge – this also has a good success rate. "Have you got what it takes...?" proved successful in recruiting the Games Makers for London 2012.

- ▶ People are heavily influenced by social acceptance and how others perceive them (social norms). So asking people to volunteer when they are surrounded by people they know might increase the chance they will say yes. Encouraging people who already volunteer to promote this fact, for example on social media, can make their friends more likely to get involved too. Asking people to make a public commitment to volunteer also means they're more likely to follow through with it.

- ▶ If you can make a volunteering ask at a time when people are thinking about helping others anyway, it is more likely to work. This is called 'priming', and an example is asking people to volunteer after they've watched a film on or thought about superheroes – surprising as it sounds this has been found to have a positive effect on volunteering rates. Asking people when they're in a good mood also increases the chances they'll say yes. You could pick the moment after delivering some good news to make the ask.

- ▶ People tend to reciprocate good deeds. If people know others in their community are helping already, this may lead them to return the favour. At an individual level, there is no better time to ask for a favour than when someone has just thanked you. So if a beneficiary thanks a volunteer, this is a great opportunity for that volunteer to ask them if they'd like to help out themselves.

# Voice

# E

It may seem obvious but the research shows that making volunteering as straightforward, positive and convenient as possible will help you attract volunteers and hold on to them. Volunteering requires effort and it involves foregoing other activities – your volunteers could always be doing something else with their spare time. Poor planning and management can make getting involved difficult and lead to a negative overall impression of the volunteering experience, even if the volunteer generally enjoyed the work. Ways to smooth and improve the volunteer experience include:

- ▶ Finding, enrolling and participating in volunteer programmes should be easy and hassle-free and volunteers should be given maximum flexibility to fit voluntary work around their busy lives. Our findings have shown volunteers are seeking opportunities online, so ensure your digital experiences reflect the quality of real life ones.

- ▶ Ensuring all your communications to volunteers are easy to understand, and that instructions on tasks are clear.

- ▶ Making travelling to activity sites easy and speedy. Things like purchasing volunteers' tickets and working out their journeys for them make things easier.

- ▶ Making sure volunteers always have an assigned contact person who can help them.

- ▶ Giving volunteers as much flexibility and control as possible over when and where they volunteer, including what role they undertake. If someone can volunteer remotely and would prefer to do so, then why not? You should bear in mind though that many volunteers have strong social motives for getting involved, and they may enjoy a lone working less as a result.

- ▶ Studies have shown that people evaluate an event on the basis of the peak and end experiences. Make sure that the peak experience is positive (e.g. seeing the impact of their work, making friends, solving a problem), rather than negative (e.g. trouble getting to the activity) and give volunteers a good memory to leave with at the end of the activity, such as with a big 'thank you'. This will increase their likelihood of wanting to repeat the activity.

- ▶ To help make all this possible, do you need a volunteer coordinator? Most organisations have HR managers or at least a 'people-person', stepping up to make things happen – perhaps you know just the right person?

# Experience

# R

Recognition is about volunteers being rewarded for their work. It also encapsulates the knowledge that volunteering not only benefits others but it also benefits the individual who helps out – these health and wellbeing benefits are worth emphasising when recruiting. And whilst volunteering by its very definition excludes the possibility of financial reward, there are other tangible benefits that are proven to make volunteering more attractive and increase the likelihood your volunteers will stay the course:

- ▶ Volunteering is hugely rewarding and potential volunteers should be informed of its capacity to change their lives for the better.

- ▶ Short term rewards for volunteering might include things like the chance to watch a sporting event whilst volunteering, or to visit another country. These are unique experiences that will stand out in a volunteer's memory as a peak experience – a highlight in the volunteering journey that will impact on how they later perceive the experience as a whole.

- ▶ Long term rewards often include the opportunity for volunteers to gain skills and experience. The chance to gain a qualification and improve career opportunities can persuade people to volunteer, particularly younger volunteers, unemployed people and women.

- ▶ Recognition is hugely important – both on an ongoing basis and at the end of a project. Thanking volunteers every time they contribute makes a difference, as does saying thank you at the end of a piece of work. The end experience makes it more likely your volunteers will sign up for the next project and ensuring they are properly thanked is part of this.

- ▶ A simple verbal thank you is really effective, but most people also like public praise and recognition. Making an announcement, holding an award ceremony or recognising your volunteers on a plaque acknowledges volunteers' contributions whilst nurturing common desires for social recognition and social status.

# Recognition

# S

Volunteering is often an inherently social activity. It enables you to meet new people and for some people this is a key motivation for getting involved. Whether your volunteers have signed up for social reasons or not, the chances are they will enjoy this aspect of being involved, so the more you can do to create social opportunities within the volunteering offer, the better:

- ▶ Make sure volunteers feel part of the team and have chances to socialise with other volunteers as well as staff and beneficiaries during and after the activity. If possible, set aside time for this. This could well be the most enjoyable part of the session, another 'peak experience' that affects how the volunteer sees their involvement overall.

- ▶ Many people feel a civic duty to help others and contribute to society, so it is important to provide meaningful roles to volunteers that align with their sense of social duty.

- ▶ A party or celebration at the end of the project ends things on a high, cements relationships and ensures volunteers feel recognised and valued – all of which hopefully means they'll be back.

- ▶ Bear in mind that some volunteers get involved out of a sense of social duty or commitment to the cause. Recognising who amongst your volunteers are in this camp will help you emphasise different aspects of the programme to them and assign meaningful roles, they are less likely to be influenced by extrinsic factors and rewards.

# Social



# Making Time

## Applying GIVERS to sport

What became clear as we went through the research was that while the same general principles of GIVERS were relevant to both general and sport volunteering, there were also significant differences. We hope to factor these differences into the design of future behavioural science experiments, especially targeted at volunteering in sport.

Sport volunteers are, it seems, more transactional in their approach to volunteering, explicitly giving their time in anticipation of the social benefits, the health benefits and the general happiness and life satisfaction they get in return. The good news is that those benefits are available in abundance – sport volunteering contributes more to wellbeing than any other type of volunteering.

However, the research clearly shows that sports organisations need to do a much better job of recognising, communicating, structuring and managing the volunteer experience so that volunteers do actually feel these intangible benefits. Our hope is that GIVERS can be implemented from the top to bottom of the sport infrastructure. From Join In and BBC Get Inspired's #BigThankYou at BBC Sports Personality of the Year down to the club email to coaches that bigs up the results of the U8s rugby team – recognising and communicating the happiness, impact, contribution, friendships and community benefits of the volunteer-led sports clubs and teams across the UK is vital if we are to help grow this incredibly valuable resource.

## Demographic and wellbeing benefits

It's long been known that the demography of sports volunteers and volunteers in other sectors is different. For example, there is a male bias in sports volunteering whereas volunteering in other sectors has a female bias. Our research found sports volunteers are more likely to be male, divorced, smokers who come from the North West and can drive!

These differences are important because what we also learnt is that different groups of people get different benefits from volunteering in sport. Our 2014 Hidden Diamonds research uncovered a host of gains such as higher self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and resilience, but different groups benefitted to different extents. For example, women from the lowest socio-economic groups have the most to gain from volunteering in sport and are also more keen to develop and use existing skills.

## Myths, motivations and barriers

### A huge misunderstanding

Sport faces a major hurdle in volunteer recruitment. People don't know that the majority of grassroots sport is volunteer run – they don't think about helping out in sport because they don't realise that they can. Join In's previous research had identified that 55% of the general public don't realise community sports clubs are run by unpaid people. This is despite the fact that sports volunteering is the largest single area of voluntary activity in the UK – 17% of volunteers within the latest Taking Part survey – volunteered in sport.

### An enormous opportunity

When people do know about volunteering in sport there are also some misconceptions. Commonly people cite a lack of physical fitness as a major barrier (26%) to getting involved. There's a perception that you have to be fit and sporty to volunteer in sport, but the reality is that the roles that clubs need most need don't only require this support: fundraising and digital roles come out high in the list of sought after skills.

### Don't ask, don't get

While most hear about their opportunity via word of mouth (always the best form of marketing), almost as many (36%) looked for opportunities in sport online and on social media, compared with only 21% of those who looked for general volunteer opportunities. Surprisingly only 15% of people who do volunteer found out through their club directly asking them, despite there being significant overlap between sports volunteers and participants. In addition, 16% of people say the reason they don't volunteer is, very simply, that they have not been asked.

### Sport volunteers do more volunteering and enjoy it more

Once people are involved they'll most likely have a great time volunteering: 60% say they help out in sport because they enjoy it, which is 7% more than volunteers overall. They are also more likely to say they would volunteer more if they had more time: 46% of sports volunteers vs 31% of volunteers overall, even though sports volunteers already volunteer more frequently and already give more time per week than the average volunteer.

### But, are sports volunteers taken for granted and burned out?

Despite loving what they do and doing more, sports volunteers are far more likely than other volunteers to stop volunteering. A massive 32% stopped or reduced their volunteering in the last year compared with 17% of general volunteers. If applied to the national level, based on the 5.6 million sports volunteers in the UK, this is a potential loss of 1.79 million annually. We have some clues as to why: 18% who dropped out or reduced their volunteering said they felt their club was badly organised, compared with 4% of volunteers in general. 19% felt it was someone else's turn to step in vs 11% of volunteers generally.

Sports volunteers are under recognised and under appreciated, and the results show in the high rate of attrition.

## The concept of time

Some people volunteer in sport to fill spare time: 42% cite this as a reason for volunteering. Others when asked say they don't volunteer because they don't have time. Time is both one of the biggest motivations but also one of the biggest barriers.

'I don't have time' needs careful consideration as a response. We're all gifted the same number of hours in a day – really it's about what we need to or choose to do with them. Around a third of respondents said they do other things with their spare time, so clearly they are prioritising other things they enjoy. Although we know sports volunteers enjoy what they do, others are unlikely to realise just how much they could get from giving their time, and perhaps it doesn't appeal as much as it could because of this. Could recruitment messaging shift to focus more on volunteer gains?

## Making Time and how to apply GIVERS to sport volunteering

As we've seen, time is often cited as one of the strongest barriers or motivations to volunteering for different demographics – people make time for activities they believe are important to them. By using the tailored 'GIVERS in sport', each of us working in sport can encourage more people to 'make time' for volunteering. And increase the nation's recruitment, retention and recognition of the most valuable resource we have.

### Thank you

Join In are grateful for the continued support of Founding Partner BT whose long-term commitment to sport and volunteering is evident through its own initiatives such as the Supporters Club as well as through the partnership with Join In.

### Sources

- Andrew Haldane quoting ONS 'Household Satellite Accounts: valuing volunteering in the UK'
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation>.
- Taking Part survey (DCMS).
- NCVO and the UK Voluntary Sector Workforce Almanac 2013.
- Third Sector Research Centre.
- British Household Panel Survey.
- Community Life (Cabinet Office).

For further details, please see full academic report by Simetrica, published May 2106. You can download this handout from [www.joininuk.org/making-time](http://www.joininuk.org/making-time)

## Join in\*

How behavioural science can persuade more people to give their time and volunteer, with a focus on sport.

# Making Time



Founding Partner



Research Partner

SIMETRICA

## G Growth (and wellbeing)

One of the biggest motivations for and benefits from sport volunteering is its impact on happiness, life satisfaction and sense of purpose – both Hidden Diamonds and this new research proves this is more so in sport than in other sectors. We even found that volunteering in sport brought 25% of the happiness and wellbeing benefits of being married. This is a fact but not well known and with 13% of people saying they would volunteer in sport if it was proven to improve happiness, messaging around volunteering should start to emphasise these benefits.

## I Impact

A large part of the wellbeing gains from volunteering are in feeling a greater sense of purpose. National-level data shows that regular, formal volunteering has a more significant and positive effect on wellbeing than other types of volunteering. Quite possibly the regularity enables the volunteer to see the impact of their volunteering as the club or project develops – older age groups in particular want to see this. Making sure that the volunteers see, feel and understand the impact of their volunteering is vital to retaining their services.

## V Voice (and messaging)

Some of the key messages to come out of this research are – 'you don't have to be fit or sporty to help out in sport' and that 'volunteering in sport makes you happier'. Reflecting this in who makes the ask and what they say, should lead to more people responding to recruitment drives.

## E Experience (and ease)

One of the major findings from this research is the importance of improving the 'delivery gap' on sports volunteers. They are overworked and feel under-appreciated by the clubs, groups and organisations to which they give their time. The 'peak experience' for any volunteer is crucial.

The other finding is that online recruitment is even more important for sports volunteers and those interested in volunteering in sport – a simple digital volunteer opportunity finder, like Join In's and as identified by the new DCMS sport strategy, is vital for channelling the UK's volunteering potential to the right places.

## R Recognition (in order to retain)

Volunteers in sport need to be better recognised and rewarded. We need to communicate the impact of their work, especially to men, as a huge 32% of sports volunteers report stopping or reducing their volunteering in the last 12 months – based on the 5.6 million sports volunteers in the UK, this is a potential loss of 1.79 million annually. Providing exclusive opportunities not available to the general public can also prove successful as a reward.

## S (Sport is...) Social

Volunteers in sport are up to six times more likely than general volunteers to be motivated by the social benefits of volunteering (meet new people, make new friends, share experience with friends). 13% of sports volunteers would volunteer more if they thought it would help them to meet new people. We can also link this to the Growth and Wellbeing element of GIVERS in sport as those social connections are a crucial part of emotional wellbeing.