Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Team Canada Volunteers

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Introduction
For the past few Games, the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) recruited volunteers to support their Olympic team in the host city. These volunteers are being recruited within Canada and the host nation. They are referred to as “local volunteers” (LVs), because they operate on the Olympic Games’ premises. The LVs help alleviate pressure from the Mission Team by providing extra assistance in a variety of departments, such as: the Canada Olympic House, Corporate Operations, Communications, Digital, Health and Science, Outfitting, Performance Centre, and Performance Technology (Anon, 2016, March 28, personal communication). The support provided by the LVs is crucial because it allows the Mission Team to focus on the overall management of their functional areas and to oversee each phase of their “at-Games” tasks. With the presence of the LVs, the members of the Mission Team are able to complete their duties in a timely and effective manner. While the role of LVs is invaluable, the COC has seen a drop in applications of LVs in the past Games (Anon, 2016, January 20, personal communication). The COC recognizes the importance of enticing the exceptional volunteers to return for future Games. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to perform a deeper analysis of the LVs management methods employed by the COC, with specific emphasis on volunteer recruitment and retention, to strengthen Team Canada’s future strategies.

Literature Review
Successful recruitment of volunteers lies in the comprehension of volunteer motives and analyzing volunteer profiles. Being aware of volunteer motives is an intuitively attractive means of establishing management systems to recruit volunteers (Warner et al., 2011). Examples of volunteer motives include purposiveness, solidarity and material incentives (Fairley et al., 2007). Analyzing volunteer profiles would aid sport organizations in recruiting and selecting the right volunteers for the right roles. Doing so would help the organization enhance itself through social and human capital (Zhuang & Girginov, 2012).

Volunteer retention is important because it ensures the continuity of interpersonal relations between the volunteer and members of the organization that they are associated with (Kim, Chelladurai, & Trail, 2007). Volunteers will continue to donate their time and effort to an organization if their satisfaction levels are high (Kim, Hong, & Andrew, 2013). The satisfaction level of the volunteer would eventually dictate how committed he/she is to the organization (Park & Kim, 2013). Factors such as communicating with the volunteers, treating them as part of the team, providing them with rewards, and recognizing their hard work can contribute to long-term satisfaction and commitment (Chanavat & Ferrand, 2010).

Method
The proposed recruitment and retention strategies for the LVs program derived from a combination of what has been examined in existing literature and from responses via an online questionnaire provided by seven of the COC’s staff members. The online questionnaire was designed by the researcher through Google forms and consisted of 20 questions that were divided into five sections: (1) general information about the LVs program, (2) current recruitment strategies, (3) current retention strategies, (4) more general information about the LVs program, and (5) post-study results information.

Data was collected within a period of one month and the results were accessed the day after the questionnaire’s deadline. The responses were analyzed by grouping the answers with similar themes that pertained to current recruitment and retention strategies for the LVs program.

Results
The participants stated three methods of recruiting volunteers for the LVs program: emailing past volunteers, using
online mediums (e.g. COC website and social media), and offline mediums (e.g. via the Canadian Consulate in the host region and word of mouth). Regarding retention strategies, the participants stated three means of accomplishing this: utilizing an online volunteer database, providing tangible gifts, and creating feelings of belonging/inclusivity through constant communication.

Discussion
After reviewing the literature and analyzing the results, four phases are suggested to be used for the LVs program. Methods already employed will have an [E] beside them, and methods to be employed will have an [N] beside them.

Phase 1 - Preliminary: Form an ad-hoc LVs team [N] consisting of pioneer volunteers (Fairley et al., 2014) and the LVs coordinator to assist in the recruitment, engagement and retention phases. Also, establish reliable contacts with host region’s Canadian consulate [E].

Phase 2 - Recruitment: When recruiting LVs, the ad-hoc LVs team needs to use online and offline tactics [E] (e.g. COC website, newsletters) to entice prospective candidates to apply for a position. All tactics should emphasize the prestige of the Games [N] (Kim et al., 2013) while also targeting volunteer motives [N] (Treuren, 2014).

Phase 3 - Engagement during the Games: Ad-hoc LVs team, as well as the Mission Team, should create an environment where the LVs understand their role identity [N] (Fairley et al., 2014). This would be achieved by constantly communicating with the LVs and making them feel like part of the Canadian Olympic team.

Phase 4 - Retention: Organize a volunteer recognition party [E] to increase the LVs’ and pioneer volunteers’ feelings of belonging. Retrieve feedback [N] from the LVs and the pioneer volunteers to improve future LVs programs (Evenesis, 2015; Mauro, 2015; Jacobson, 2013; Ellis, 1998; WiredImpact, n.d.). Maintain the online volunteer database [E] and provide ongoing volunteer opportunities post-Games [N].

Limitations
The pool of participants for this study was quite small which meant that the information provided was not extensive. Furthermore, the use of online questionnaires to retrieve information meant that ambiguous answers were open to interpretation.

Conclusion
This study attempted to convey the notion that there is no one specific recruitment or retention strategy that applies to all organizations. Instead, each organization should implement different recruitment and retention tactics based on what has/has not worked in the past, the number of volunteers involved, and the type of event that the volunteers are required for.

Topics for future research may include comparing LV programs between Team Canada and other National Olympic Committees with similar programs, exploring perceptions of stakeholders that assist with the recruitment of volunteers, such as the Canadian Consulate of the host region, and addressing the importance of obtaining volunteer feedback.