Managing Volunteers at Mega Sport Events: Case Studies in Spain

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The Davis Cup is the biggest, annually returning Team-Competition of the world. In 2010, 125 countries entered this tennis tournament. In 2008 the semi-final between Spain and the USA happened in Madrid. In 2009 the quarter-final between Spain and Germany took place in Marbella. In each case the organizers had to recruit 80 volunteers to organize and stage the tournament. The aim of the research is, to determine which factors in the work environment cause satisfaction and dissatisfaction for the volunteers at the Davis Cup tournaments in Spain 2008 and 2009. A questionnaire ran among all volunteers (n=160) detected intrinsic and extrinsic motivational patterns of the temporary employees. This research provides important information for all (Spanish) organizers of events in order to improve their motivation program to ensure enough volunteers.

Theoretically the volunteer recruitment process and incentives at the Davis Cup is similar to that of the recruitment and incentives at other sport events. The challenge of motivating volunteers has long been recognized as an integral part of managing sport events. According to Edginton, Hudson, and Lankford (2001), motivation plays an exceedingly important role in moving an organisation towards excellence. Yet despite the agreement over the significance of work motivation, there's considerable controversy over which of multiple factors motivates volunteers at events to work. The complexity of work motivation is evident in the interaction of the forces among an individual, the job and the work environment that account for the level, direction and persistence of effort expended at work (Steers & Porter, 1991). Pinder (1998) has described work motivation as the set of forces, internal (individual needs and motives) and external (environmental forces), that initiate work-related behaviour and determine its form, direction, intensity and duration. Given the relative intricacy of work motivation, it’s not surprising that numerous theories have been developed to explain this phenomenon. These approaches include motivation and hygienic factors (Herzberg’s two factor theory) and Deci’s theory that extrinsic motivation spoils intrinsic motivation (Krech & Crutchfield, 1985). Finally Bruggemann’s (1975) theory of “satisfaction with work” is to be considered.

A questionnaire was dealt to the 160 volunteers of both tennis events. In total n=123 (60 of Madrid and 63 of Marbella) of the questionnaire, which would returned from the volunteers, passed the inter-individual consistence tests. The sample is representative for the volunteers of the 2008 and 2009 Davis Cup in Spain. The questionnaire consists of 25 questions. The research design is based on a socio-economic, theoretical foundation. It was pre-tested at the Olympic Games volunteers in Athens 2004 and the FIFA World Cup in Germany 2006. A regression analysis and other statistical methods will be used to explain the importance of several intrinsic and extrinsic factors describing the work motivation and satisfaction of the volunteers. As the most important motives for applying as a Davis Cup Volunteer in Spain the volunteers opted for “I want to have fun”, “I want to see behind the curtain of the event-organization” and “I want to extent my knowledge and experience”. On the other hand, the most unimportant motivations for applying are “to see VIPs” and “It is good auxiliary income”. The results are important to learn more about (Spanish) volunteer motivation. As a matter of fact, they need to be satisfied with their work in order to offer their voluntary work for other events. Knowledge on their motivational pattern can provide practitioners a better recruitment strategy and enables them to avoid promising “wrong” incentives to potential volunteers.