

# The 5 Secrets of Success for Efficient & Sustainable Volunteer Programs



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## Good volunteer program design -

- Decreases administrative costs by reducing volunteer turnover and re-training needs
- Engages members in ways that increase their satisfaction and retention
- Increases program support and a sense of team across the organization
- Shares the workload across a variety of people and their diverse talents
- Improves support for coaches so that they can devote more time and energy to players on the field

*“At the heart of any successful program, especially a volunteer program, is a strong, visionary, and grounded leadership corps that knows how to recruit, seek funds, train volunteers, and implement an ongoing monitoring system that ensures quality of the product.” - R.D. Nicholson*

## Volunteers are Not Free

- In 2013, the value of a volunteer hour in the United States was \$22.55. ([www.independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time))

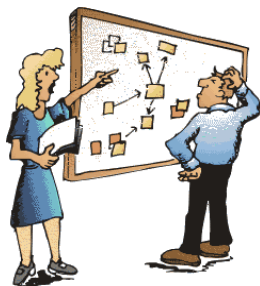


## The Road Map - 5 Steps to Success



1. Know what you need
2. If you don't ask, they can't say "YES!"
3. Train and Prepare
4. Get stuff done
5. Say "THANK YOU!"

## Step #1 - Know what you need



How is the organization put together?

What volunteer jobs need to be filled?

### Develop written job descriptions for all volunteer jobs

- ❑ *Skills and Abilities*
  - What skills and abilities are required to do the job?
- ❑ *Tasks and Time*
  - What are the responsibilities of the position?
  - What specific activities and tasks need to be performed in what place and time?
  - How many hours will it take to complete the work?
- ❑ *Communications and Reporting*
  - To whom does this job report? Who is the supervisor or coordinator?
  - With what other people and positions does this volunteer need to communicate and coordinate activities and tasks?
  - Who should the volunteer contact for more information or help?
- ❑ *Supplies and Equipment*
  - What supplies and equipment are needed to do the job?
  - Who provides the supplies and equipment?



## Step #2 - If you don't ask, they can't say "YES!"



### Be specific about the help you are requesting

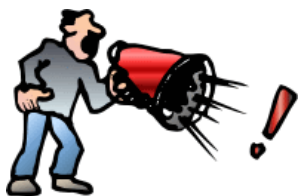
- How does the job benefit the volunteer?
- How does the job benefit the organization?
- Use the job description to inform the volunteer and make yourself and the organization look good



### What is in it for the volunteer?

- It is OK for volunteers to say "yes" for their own reasons which may be different than your reasons for asking for their help

### Make it manageable - avoid burnout and the loss of institutional memory



### CAUTION

*If your volunteer job requires more than an average of 10 hours a week, you are setting up a situation for volunteer burn-out and turnover!*

## Step #3 - Train and Prepare



### What do your volunteers need to know to do the job?

- Let your volunteers in on your organization’s “secret handshakes” and institutional knowledge and history
- What kinds of instructions are needed?
  - Written instructions with diagrams or pictures
  - Oral explanations
  - A physical demonstration of how to accomplish a task

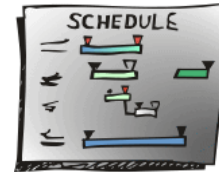
### What supplies do your volunteers need to do the job?

- Who provides the supplies?
- How are supplies acquired, paid for, and delivered to the volunteers or the job site?
- What happens to leftover supplies after the job is done?

## Step #4 - Get Stuff Done

Who will support and supervise volunteers while the work is being done?

Set the priorities. Know the back-up plan.



**HINT** - Volunteer engagement is often more important than job perfection.

## Step #5 - Say “THANK YOU!”

Express gratitude in ways that reflect how your volunteers see and value themselves



Technically competent - Experts in their areas of skill and knowledge

Team builders and peacemakers - Looking out for everyone on the team



Connected and resourceful - Know who to call and how to mobilize to get things done

## The 6th Secret - Preparation Payoff for your Volunteer Team

What is the ratio of your coach's and players' preparation and practice to game time?

- How much time do your coaches spend -
  - Designing team training sessions?
  - Leading team practices?
  - Planning for games?
- How much time do your coaches and players spend competing in games?

What is the ratio of the time your organization spends preparing for success in your volunteer programs?

*The recipe for the 5 secrets of success for efficient and sustainable volunteer programs is:*

**3 parts + 1 part + 1 part**

Planning & Preparation	Volunteers Working	Gratitude
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Know what you need</li><li>2. If you don't ask, they can't say "YES!"</li><li>3. Train and Prepare</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Get stuff done</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Say "THANK YOU!"</li></ol>

**Ruth E. Nicholson, CPF, MPA** is the Founding Partner of the Club Development Network, a pioneering project to strengthen youth soccer programs by providing custom consulting and training to improve volunteer programs, streamline administrative work, increase program funding, and enhance coaching effectiveness to enable clubs and coaches to devote more time to players on the field. She is an internationally certified facilitator and instructor who has worked in soccer governance and administration for over 25 years. Ruth offers a portfolio in soccer operations which includes strategic planning, volunteer program development and management, board operations and governance, club administration, and tournament, camp, and stadium management. She has also worked as a coach and referee. In addition, Ruth is the principal of Nicholson Facilitation & Associates, LLC, a 12-year old consultancy offering services in organizational development, facilitation, conflict resolution, training, and professional assessment in North America, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Europe.



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