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Scotland's
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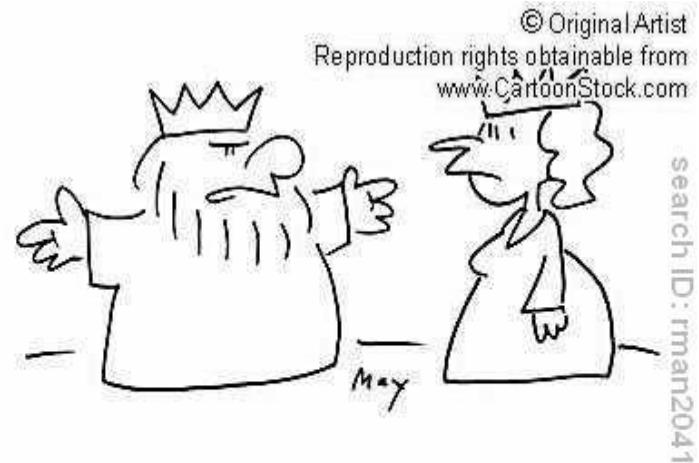
The trouble with volunteers



Leigh Robinson

Presentation content

- The volunteers
 - ‘Life blood’
 - ‘Can’t let go’
 - ‘We’ve never had to do that before’
 - ‘I can’t help with that’
 - ‘That’s not who I represent’



"The deficit is at an all-time high, and you want to do *volunteer* work?"

- Management and research challenges

'Life blood'

- 'Just ask Alice, she will know'
 - Obstructs new volunteers from taking on key jobs
 - Likely to be resistant to new challenges
 - Likely to be resistant to passing on tacit knowledge
 - Organisation may fail after exit

- Olympic Council of Asia
- British Water Polo

'Can't let go'

- 'I'll do one more term...and then I'll go'
 - Prevents new volunteers from taking on new roles/succession planning
 - Causes 'blockages' which leads to the loss of good talent
 - Often difficult to change working patterns and behaviours
 - May entrench poor systems
 - Makes culture change slow
 - IOC/ANOC

'We've never had to do that before'

- 'I don't know how to do that'
 - Organisation can only grow to the capacity of the skills and abilities of those in post
 - Can be destructive and undermining
 - Limited organisational function
 - Threatens survival
 - Tonga National Olympic Committee

'I can't help with that'

- 'We're better sticking with what we know'
 - Limited vision beyond abilities
 - Lack of responsibility for the organisation
 - May cause problems in meeting legislative requirements
 - I don't know about it, therefore we don't need it'
- Fiji Volleyball
- T&T National Olympic Committee

'That's not who I represent'

- 'My region/discipline/sport won't want that'
 - Inability to work for the organisation as a whole
 - Poor commitment to governance
 - Poor planning

 - USA Taekwondo
 - Dutch Swimming Federation

The voluntary system

– Electoral

- Often voting from a limited range of candidates that are available because of time served

– Formalisation

- Increasing procedures lead to increased time required which isn't attractive and reinforces the 'life blood' volunteer
- It also highlights those who don't want things to be different

The voluntary system

– Professionalisation

- Helps to create the governance debate, reinforces the positions of those with existing knowledge, highlights the skills gap

– Creation of perceived rewards

- The trip/conference/council/blazer become the reward for years of slog...and therefore only those who have done it should be in a position to get the reward

The voluntary system

– Pressure of demands

- Volunteering in sport is time consuming, often expensive and requires levels of responsibility that many do not expect or want. This prevents people from becoming involved, leads many good volunteers to drop out, creates inequities due to income and time constraints and is simply not that attractive.

The voluntary system



The challenges

- Electoral processes are exclusionary
- Resistance to skill based appointments
- Can't overcome the need for income, thus not all people are able to volunteer
- Need to address perception that the biggest rewards come from 'hanging in' there

The challenges

- Biggest challenge is to continue to value volunteers but also to get the best value out of them
- There are many aspects of the culture of volunteering that makes this difficult

The trouble with volunteers

Questions?

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