



TM

NETBALL NEW ZEALAND
Poitarawhiti Aotearoa

Volunteer Strategy for Netball in New Zealand 2009-2012

December 2009

Introduction



The definition of volunteering used by *Volunteering New Zealand* is “work done of one’s own free will, unpaid and for the common good”. Netball, quite simply, could not exist without those who volunteer.

Until now we have taken a somewhat ad hoc approach to managing our volunteers. Our efforts have been more effective in some places, in some settings and for some groups than for others. Our success has largely been dependent on the skill of the individuals organising volunteers (who are often volunteers themselves) and the willingness of those volunteering to be flexible and helpful. Our volunteers deserve better. This document is designed to bring more structure and rigor to how we recruit, retain and recognise our volunteers.

In developing this strategy we have reviewed SPARC research¹ on Netball Volunteers along with the responses of 60 volunteers to a survey on their experiences of volunteering for Netball. The key messages are that what works includes:

- a well-run organisation where direction and communication is clear;
- manageable volunteer roles that are tailored, as much as possible to suit the interests and needs of the volunteer;
- clear and transparent pathways so volunteers know how they can progress and develop;
- a positive, supportive and encouraging environment i.e. where volunteers are not subjected to abuse from players, parents, or spectators
- appropriate training, development and mentoring so volunteers feel confident they can perform their roles effectively;
- a forum where volunteer concerns are respected and listened to; and
- transparent and fair recognition, but mostly just players and others taking the time to say thank you and acknowledge the work done.

This strategy, together with the policy on volunteering on which we are currently working, is intended to address these key messages and provide clear direction on what we need to do to ensure a more satisfying experience for current and future volunteers. It is anticipated that Regions, Centres and Clubs will develop their own plans based on this strategy to ensure they too are more effective in responding to volunteer needs at a local level.

¹ SPARC Research: *Volunteers: the heart of sport*, 2007; *Finding and Keeping Volunteers* 2006, *Perceptions of Sports Officials* 2008

Current Landscape



What makes Netball distinctive?

We estimate that there are 8000 volunteers who are currently active in Netball in New Zealand as coaches, umpires, bench officials, administrators and occasional helpers.

Not surprisingly, unlike most sporting codes, Netball volunteers are predominantly women (78% as opposed to 34% in other sports). Our volunteers are also younger than those in other sports with more than 55% of netball volunteers being under 40 compared to 20% of volunteers in other sports. More of our volunteers are likely to be young and single or have young children.

Our volunteers are spread more evenly throughout the country between the main centres and smaller towns and rural areas than other sports. Netball also has a significantly higher percentage of volunteers who are Maori (22% compared with 9% for other sports) and Pacific (5% compared with 2% for other sports).

More Netball volunteers are likely to have been volunteering for less than a year (22% for Netball and 12% for other sports) and only 14% of netball volunteers have been volunteering between 5 and 10 years as opposed to others sports where 21% are in this group. Although, similar to other codes, we also have significant numbers of volunteers who have been with us for 15, 20 or even 30 years.

Factors impacting on our game

The environment for volunteering is changing. There is increasing competition for our volunteers' time from work, study and family commitments as well as the need to carve out time for themselves. They also need to choose between volunteering for Netball and all the other activities they could be involved in. This means that we need to be clear about what needs to be done by volunteers and thoughtful about tailoring roles and time commitments to suit the interests and availability of those who volunteer.

As Netball becomes increasingly professional the expectations on volunteers increase also. We need to ensure that the volunteering experience continues to be fun and worthwhile for those that give of their time and that our expectations of people are realistic.

Finally the increasing abuse of umpires and team officials from players and spectators, particularly parents and guardians, needs to be tackled head on so that the Netball environment continues to be a positive one for everyone involved. This strategy outlines what Netball will do to ensure the volunteer experience continues to be a positive one.

One Page Summary



1. Volunteering Structure & Organisational Culture	2. Recruitment	3. Retention	4. Recognition	5. Succession Planning & Review
<p>Ensure a positive environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Develop a Volunteer policy•Appoint Volunteer Coordinators•Audit Tool to assess environment for volunteers•Enforce guidelines on dealing with spectator abuse•Education on risk management practices•Ensure open forums for discussion and input•Provide suggestions for ensuring fun and celebration <p>Provide clear direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Undertake an inventory of activities•Develop position descriptions•Explore opportunities to volunteer for one-off events or short-term projects <p>Develop clear pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Develop a survey on Volunteer Aspirations•Develop a development planning process•Ensure fairness and transparency in appointment to positions that attract an honoraria	<p>Keep records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Maintain a database <p>Target youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Develop a relationship with schools•Develop targeted recruitment information•Identify and advertise short-term projects <p>Provide information for potential volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Develop an “offer” for volunteers•Develop a welcome pack•Dedicate space on the NNZ website•Develop a program to support National Volunteers Week <p>Adopt a more systematic approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Match recruits to appropriate roles•Develop a job description for “invitors”•Provide suggestions on alternative places to advertise volunteering opportunities•Trial alternative methods for recruitment e.g. “bring a friend campaign”	<p>Effective induction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Develop an induction process•Co-ordinate the development of standardised introductory training <p>Improve communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Utilise current publications•Provide suggestions for profiling volunteers <p>Offer more, and more relevant training and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Identify the training needs of different groups of volunteers•Co-ordinate the development of training materials•Review current delivery methods for training•Offer “train the trainer” workshops•Introduce a formal mentoring program and offer mentor training <p>Anticipate and manage burn-out effectively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Ensure volunteers have access to debriefing•Monitor workloads and regularly check in with individuals	<p>Create a culture of acknowledgement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Develop a volunteer acknowledgement pack•Increase the use of feedback•Include specific feedback with all gifts and vouchers•Provide guidelines for the use of petrol vouchers•Make full use of the New World scheme•Explore alternative forms of recognition <p>Proactively publicise and use recognition schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Document and publicise recognition•Create awards for first-time volunteers•Better use of award schemes outside Netball•Develop a closer relationship between Netball’s recognition program and SPARC’s <p>Use the media to promote the work of volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Develop a media kit on how to increase coverage•Provide a dedicated section on the NNZ website to highlight volunteer contributions	<p>Maintain accurate data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Conduct an annual survey to stay in touch with volunteer motivations and needs•Explore the possibility of using informal exit interviews•Establish a process for reviewing and updating volunteer projects and position descriptions•Systematic process of updating volunteer information <p>Ensure sufficient trained volunteers are available to succeed in key positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Encourage shared responsibility for key tasks•Develop Assistant Roles for key positions•Use clear and transparent application and selection processes for the appointment of key positions•Guidelines for the reimbursement of expenses <p>Monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of the national volunteering strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Undertake an annual review of this strategy

1. Volunteer Structures & Organisational Culture

From our research we know that, like others sports, the overwhelming reason people volunteer for Netball is because they have a passion for the game – either because they have played it or have daughters or other family members playing. Interestingly though netball, volunteers are more likely to volunteer just because they love the game not just because they have a child playing.

According to our survey the major reason volunteers believe that others don't get involved is because of the time commitment required. This is consistent with SPARC research which indicated that 43% of Netball volunteers would consider not continuing as a volunteer because of time and work commitments (compared to 38% for other sports). In addition, a further 13% would consider not volunteering because they did not feel valued (as opposed to 8% for other sports). In response to our survey, respondents also mentioned, "organisational politics" and "treatment by supporters" as being reasons they would stop volunteering or factors that would put potential volunteers off:

Organisational politics:

"Unfortunately often there is too much in the way of internal politics that puts people off" – Club Administrator

"Feeling you are banging your head against a brick wall because of long serving volunteers who are not prepared to change or understand that netball is a changing game in a modern era" – Centre Administrator, Coach and Umpire

"Negative attitudes of a minority." – Centre Administrator

Treatment by supporters:

According to SPARC research Netball volunteers are significantly more likely than volunteers from other sports to agree that "parents and other people who come to watch the sport can be quite abusive of coaches and umpires" (28 % for Netball compared to 18% for other sports).

"I feel supporters really off putting when umpiring" – Club Coach and Umpire

"Abuse from players and supporters - some sort of rule for supporters – there is one but many umpires do not know it and won't say anything to players/supporters. Implement Fair Play for supporters at all levels" – Regional Umpire

Regardless of their reasons all volunteers are looking to participate in a positive, supportive and encouraging environment where it is easy and enjoyable for them to do what they've volunteered to do. We can help create this by ensuring that we offer a positive environment, clear direction by way of detailed job descriptions that are tailored to meet the time availability of would-be volunteers and clear pathways so that those that wish to can easily progress in our sport.

1 Goal: To make it easy to volunteer by providing a positive environment, clear direction and easy to follow pathways i.e. coaches, umpires, bench officials and administrators .



Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Ensure a positive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a volunteer policy outlining the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and their role in the organisation • Appoint, train and support additional volunteer co-ordinators at Centre and Regional levels and for one off national events • Develop an audit tool by way of a survey or questionnaire for Centres to assess the current environment for volunteers including information on aspirations and training needs if appropriate • Review and enforce guidelines on dealing with abusive behaviour from players and spectators • Be proactive in encouraging positive behaviour from those on the sidelines e.g. rewarding positive behaviour with spot prizes • Ensure all volunteers are aware of relevant risk management practices and confident in acting in line with these • Ensure that there are open forums at all levels for volunteers to have the opportunity to contribute ideas and suggestions and have input into policy and planning • Provide suggestions, based on what is currently working for making fun and celebration a key part of the work 	<p>NNZ</p> <p>NNZ, Regions & Centres</p> <p>NNZ</p> <p>NNZ, Regions & Centres</p> <p>Centres</p> <p>Regions, Centres & Clubs</p> <p>NNZ, Regions, Centres & Clubs</p> <p>NNZ</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Years 1-2</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p>
Provide clear direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an inventory of activities or projects that need doing to achieve organisational goals and agree the priorities • Develop templates for position descriptions that include the requirements of the position, the personal attributes or skills needed and the time commitment required • Include opportunities to volunteer for one-off events or short-term projects 	<p>Regions & Centres</p> <p>NNZ</p> <p>NNZ, Regions & Centres</p>	<p>Years 2-3</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 3</p>
Develop clear pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map the pathways available for volunteers and make this widely available • Create a development planning process for those that are interested to help volunteers to increase their skill and level of responsibility in line with their aspirations e.g. as a coach or umpire • Ensure appointment to positions that attract an honoraria are fair and transparent 	<p>NNZ</p> <p>NNZ</p> <p>Regions & Centres</p>	<p>Year 1-2</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p>

2. Recruitment

Overwhelmingly respondents to our survey said there was a need for more volunteers in all areas of the game but most significantly in coaching and umpiring. Those surveyed said they had become involved because someone “dragged them along” or asked them to be involved. They believed that continuing to make personal approaches and asking people to become involved was the best way to get more people involved. This is consistent with SPARC research which indicates that the personal approach is the most effective strategy for recruiting volunteers. That said, a number of respondents offered the following caution:

(Use the) personal approach – but don’t ask for too much too soon!” – Centre Administrator, Coach and Umpire

“How to get more people involved?: “Give them a small specific job to begin with to get them involved and hopefully it will grow from there.” – Centre Administrator

“They’re scared of how big the job might be. People need to be approached and reassured they won’t be dropped in the deep end.” – Regional Administrator, Coach and Umpire

According to SPARC research Netball volunteers are more likely than volunteers from other sports, to agree that “volunteering is a great way for people to gain the skills they can use in the future”. Despite this, to date we have not been systematic about highlighting this or other benefits of volunteering for Netball, such as making friends, having fun and helping others succeed.

In this day and age we are not only competing with other sports codes for our volunteers but for volunteers available time, which with work, family and personal commitments is increasingly scarce. To compete effectively we need to develop and market a volunteer offer that highlights what Netball has to offer and the benefits of volunteering to the individual as well as the impact they can have in a volunteering role.

Becoming more effective at recruiting volunteers will mean keeping accurate records of member interests, targeting specific groups such as players and young people, providing relevant, useful and inspiring information to potential volunteers and utilising the media and other channels to get the word out. In particular we need to get more systematic and consistent about approaching people to volunteer for Netball.

2

Goal: To recruit sufficient volunteers to meet the needs of the game



Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Keep records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and maintain a database of member interests and/or professional skills including information on previous and current players 	NNZ, Regions, Centre & Clubs	Year 1
Target youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a relationship with schools to encourage younger players to volunteer Develop targeted recruitment information for this group using appropriate media Identify and advertise a series of short-term skills-based volunteering projects aimed at youth and promoted throughout Netball 	Centres & Clubs NNZ NNZ & Centres	Years 2-3 Year 2 Year 3
Provide information for potential volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an “offer” for volunteers outlining what is involved, and what’s in it for them, and the impact it has, utilising stories of current volunteers to illustrate Develop a welcome pack that can be downloaded from the NNZ website that includes information on volunteer rights and responsibilities, the law, insurance, health and safety etc that can be adapted by Centres and Clubs and targeted to specific groups e.g. past players Dedicate space on the NNZ website providing good practice examples and information for Clubs and volunteers to download on volunteering Develop a program of media and support activities to link to National Volunteers Week 	NNZ, Regions & Centres NNZ NNZ NNZ, Regions & Centres	Year 1 Year 1 Year 1 Years 2-3
Adopt a more systematic approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a systematic process for matching recruits to appropriate roles Develop a job description of “invitors” to work with volunteer coordinators who are tasked with approaching people individually and actively recruit to these roles Research best practice and offer suggestions for Centres and Regions of additional or alternative places to advertise volunteering opportunities Trial alternative methods for recruiting volunteers and share successes e.g. “bring a friend campaign 	NNZ, Regions & Centres NNZ NNZ Regions & Centres	Year 2 Year 2 Year 3 Year3

3. Retention

SPARC research across all sports indicates that there are sufficient numbers of volunteers but that those who are volunteering are only able to commit a small amount of time. The research recommends that the emphasis should be on retaining existing volunteers by finding ways to enhance volunteers experience so sports are able to compete for potential volunteer's available time. One Coach and Umpire who responded to our survey summed it up saying: *"It's about getting the right people, not necessarily more."* Our survey indicated that the factors that would make volunteers roles easier, and therefore encourage them to stay were:

Improved Communication

36% of respondents to our survey said that improved communication would make their role easier. This fits with SPARC research that indicated that communication was seen as the predominant reason that would make volunteers stay.

"Communicating to everyone via email contact list rather than fragments of info going to key people who then are required to pass it on. This process is not time efficient and can lead to some filtering of the information resulting in certain people "knowing more" for some reason than others." – Club Administrator

Further Training and Support

A further 19% said more training would help.

"Currently we are setting Clubs, Centres and Regions up to fail or struggle because the people involved do not have the relevant experience required to do efficient jobs and the support is not offered at all levels." – Centre Administrator and Coach

"Keep offering new initiatives and inviting attendance." – Club Board Member, Administrator, Coach and Umpire

Because time is such an issue for so many volunteers training that was short and informal was favoured, for example one-off workshops, web-based resources, written resources and in-house training, although many were quick to point out that any training opportunities were good.

Managing Burn-out

Interestingly of those who responded to the survey, 47% were only doing one volunteer role, while 20% were doing 2 and 33% were doing 3 or more roles as a volunteer. This would indicate that there is likely to be the risk of burn-out amongst those contributing in numerous volunteer roles.

"People stop volunteering because they get burnt out – the reality is that the voluntary tasks fall on the willing few who are expected to do more and more until they reach tipping point." – Regional Bench Official

Becoming more effective at retaining existing volunteers means ensuring that those we do recruit are effectively inducted and addressing the issues identified above by existing volunteers.

3 Goal: To retain existing volunteers

Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Effective induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an induction process that ensures that all volunteers are supported to make a smooth transition into their roles e.g. introduce a buddy system Co-ordinate the development of standardised introductory training for specific groups of volunteers where it is lacking, based on examples of existing best practice e.g. administrators 	NNZ, Regions & Centres	Year 1
		NNZ, Regions & Centres	Years 2-3
Improve communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise current publications (paper and electronic) to improve communication and highlight the contribution of volunteers Provide suggestions for Clubs and Centres on how to profile volunteer contributions in in-house publications and local media 	NNZ, Regions & Centres	Year 2
		NNZ	Year 2
Offer more, and more relevant training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include specific questions in the survey on Volunteer Aspirations specific questions to identify the training needs of different groups of volunteers Provide national co-ordination for the development of training materials to address common gaps in knowledge and skills for specific groups of volunteers Review current delivery methods for training and consider how this might be repackaged to better meet the needs of volunteers e.g. “bite-sized” and home-study options Identify best practice and put together a “train the trainer” workshop for those who will be delivering training Introduce a formal mentoring program and offer mentor training to potential mentors 	NNZ	Year 1
		NNZ	Year 3
		NNZ, Regions & Centres	Years 2-3
		NNZ	Years 2-3
		NNZ, Regions & Centres	Year 3
Anticipate and manage burn-out effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure volunteers have access to debriefing Utilise volunteer coordinators to monitor workloads and regularly check in with individuals 	Regions, Centres	Years 2-3
		Regions, Centres	Years 2-3

4. Recognition



Most of those volunteers who responded to our survey said they felt valued. Although those in Clubs were more likely to feel valued by their Clubs and less likely to feel valued by Netball New Zealand. Most said that they weren't looking for thanks and that they do it "for the love of the game" or that just seeing the results when others succeeded was sufficient.

According to research this attitude is likely to be particularly common amongst Maori volunteers for whom working together for the benefit of whanau, hapu and iwi is considered simply to be about "knowing your place and doing your bit", and not voluntary in the sense of being self-chosen.

At present the most common ways volunteers are recognised is through verbal thanks and prize-giving or gifts. When asked how they would like to be recognised the majority felt that they would just like to be thanked or have their contribution recognized in some way. This is consistent with others who felt that one of the reasons people stop volunteering is because they don't feel appreciated.

Lack of appreciation:

"The attitude and lack of appreciation of people who don't volunteer but expect a lot from us (that do)!" Club Administrator and Coach

"In Netball it is very disheartening for a coach when Mothers or supporters complain about something. You need to be a strong person to get through that" Club Coach

Those that wanted some explicit recognition felt that some kind of token such as petrol vouchers, particularly for those having to travel long distances, or a small gift would be sufficient.

In reality volunteers are not looking for payment or payment in kind. For the majority simply having their efforts appreciated and recognised is sufficient. As with much of this strategy we need to become more systematic at ensuring that our volunteers efforts are rewarded and appreciated. To do this we need to create a culture of acknowledgement, proactively develop and use rewards schemes and utilise the media to showcase the work of our volunteers.

4 Goal: To ensure that volunteers feel valued and appreciated.

Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
Create a culture of acknowledgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a volunteer acknowledgement pack for Clubs that includes certificates, thank you cards, recognition awards encouraging the principle of "little, often and unexpected" Increase the use of verbal and handwritten feedback to highlight individual's qualities, skills, achievements and contributions Include specific verbal or hand-written feedback with all gifts and vouchers Make guidelines transparent for the use of petrol vouchers and the like to reimburse volunteers Make full use of the New World Volunteer Recognition Scheme Explore alternative forms of recognition for those who feel no thanks is needed e.g. Maori 	NNZ	Year 2
		Regions, Centres & Clubs	Years 2-3
		Regions, Centres & Clubs	Years 2-3
		NNZ, Regions Centres & Clubs	Year 3
		NNZ	Years 1-3
		NNZ	Year 3
Proactively publicize and use reward schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document and publicise the recognition program for volunteers that includes: Annual Volunteer Awards, merchandise that can be purchased by volunteers at a reduced rate, concession offers on events and volunteer badges. Create a nationally recognised programme of awards for first-time volunteers Better utilize local and national volunteer award schemes and ensure Netball is active and effective in putting forward nominations to local and national voluntary awards Work with SPARC to ensure greater transparency and a closer relationship between Netball's recognition program and SPARC's 	NNZ, Regions & Centres	Year 2
		NNZ	Year 3
		NNZ, Regions & Centres	Years 2-3
		NNZ	Years 2-3
Use the media to promote the work of volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a media kit that can be adapted by Clubs and Centres outlining how to increase coverage of volunteer contributions in local media Provide a dedicated section on the NNZ website to highlight volunteer contributions 	NNZ	Year 1
		NNZ	Year 1

5. Succession Planning & Review



Of those we surveyed 35% indicated they would like to progress in their volunteer role with Netball, 40% however, said they did not know how to go about this. What we don't know from our information is what volunteers consider progressing means for them or what their aspirations are. Respondents did indicate that other than lack of knowledge, the major factors that would prevent them from progressing further were time constraints and personal circumstances.

Obviously there is a desire amongst existing volunteers to progress further in their roles. Our role is to ensure they know what pathways are available and provide the training and support to enable them to do so. Given time constraints are such a significant issue it will be important to ensure that the higher level roles volunteers step up to continue to be well defined and as time-efficient for them as is feasible.

In order to continue to grow and develop our volunteer base we also need to continually review our practices to ensure that what we offer meets the needs and interests of volunteers. This means staying in touch with volunteers motivations and needs and responding to these by regularly reviewing the initiatives put forward in this strategy to ensure they are getting the desired results.

