

ONZ volunteering project

August 2021

Summary

Assessing the current situation of volunteering in orienteering clubs around New Zealand reveals a wide range of specific challenges. Current volunteers are engaged and passionate about the sport, however fatigue is evident in responses. Reviewing practices from around the country and from Australia yields some common themes that could be basis for addressing this fatigue in New Zealand. From these themes come some ideas for boosting volunteer recruitment and engagement. Some are already in practice around the country, while others are more untried and targeted at specific issues identified from the community.

What are some themes evident in this information?

1. Volunteering happens for many reasons, we should have roles in our clubs that reflect varied motivations and skills.
2. Orienteering is highly technical and we celebrate volunteers with orienteering specific skills. Other roles in our clubs are just as integral and need to be sized in a corresponding way, with recognition of their value.
3. Volunteering needs to be specific and defined. Positions should have defined responsibilities and clear limits, with training or guides available. It should be easy to see the various roles and who is completing them.
4. Value can be created in a variety of ways through volunteering. Clubs should consider a range of ways to reward and recognise volunteers.
5. Club growth can be built on novel orienteering based activities that engage members and develop skills useful to the club. These could be in person or utilise online tools.

How do these themes relate to how our clubs operate now and how they can operate in the future?

Each theme is described in more detail below, with some specific examples of how clubs could relate this to their specific situation. It is important to note that there is overlap between the themes, and interventions will ideally address multiple themes.

1. *Volunteering happens for many reasons, we should have roles in our clubs that reflect varied motivations and skills.*

In general terms our volunteer base, especially in relation to club administration, has been stable over multiple years. This has advantages, but it can also have negative effects. Some volunteers choose to volunteer for different reasons, this is explored well in the SportAus

document and is evident in the NZ survey responses. We need to structure and present some roles in a different way to appeal to these varied motivations.

- Consider how various club roles could be divided or framed to appeal to different motivations.
 - Need for someone to run accounts? Could be a great way for a club member to learn how to use xero/MYOB.
 - Especially useful for students or younger members
 - Rethink the traditional president, secretary, treasurer
 - Membership, finances, volunteers, fixtures, big events
 - Target members who have confidence in specific areas rather than having them put off by the breadth/negative connotations of some roles
 - Identify pinch points in club and event administration
 - Reframe these as projects and present accordingly
2. *Orienteering is highly technical and we celebrate volunteers with orienteering specific skills. Other roles in our clubs are just as integral and need to be sized in a corresponding way, with recognition of their value.*

Much of the emphasis in the year to year running of orienteering is in finding adequate setters/controllers/mappers, these roles are contingent on a variable base of orienteering skills. Even introducing newer orienteers to setting can be a daunting process, many more experienced orienteers may have forgotten what it is like to be a novice. We often forget that we need to reach our audience to have events and the importance of “keeping the lights on” for clubs. These roles relate to event promotion, club communications, finances and general administration. Often these are lumped in as one role and completed by an experienced club member. In better dividing these roles we may be able to find new club members who are interested in volunteering but neither wanting an “orienteering specific” nor a very large, ill-defined role.

- Many clubs identify individuals who take on a broad set of tasks. Identify these large roles within the club and aim to separate out elements that could ease load.
 - Membership, marketing/promotion, social media, volunteers, corresponding roles specifically for A level events.
- Clearly define these roles both in terms of responsibilities, duration and provide how-to information.
 - Targeting these roles to A level events will allow people to try roles with a limited timeframe
- Aim to find new volunteers who have skills that are not related to technical orienteering tasks.
 - Does the club have a young person wanting experience in marketing
 - Is there a great communicator in the club who wants to compile a newsletter or manage social media
 - A schools orienteering program provides opportunities to draft in parents to smaller, defined roles, rather than just a cover-all “administrator”. For example; set up, starts, results, and pack up could be roles assigned to schools on a roster.

3. *Volunteering needs to be specific and defined. Positions should have defined responsibilities and clear limits, with training or guides available. It should be easy to see the various roles and who is completing them.*

Both in information from Australia and survey results suggested that better clarity around what a job involves, how long it will run for and a method for feedback all enhance the volunteer experience. Orienteering events are the coming together of multiple complex tasks

- Clearly define what is required of specific jobs
 - If the description is too big, consider splitting role
- “Simple” roles can have large benefits
 - Uniforms, social media, newsletter,
- Run training sessions for new volunteers
 - Could be online or across multiple clubs
- Encourage experienced members to mentor new people rather than trying to streamline events by doing everything alone
 - Many experienced orienteers will organise map, courses, timing and setup on their own because it is faster than teaching others. This works short term but has major downsides.
- Have methods of providing feedback
 - Non-confrontational, constructive and timely.
 - Consider standardised event write ups
 - Setter, controller, organiser teams debrief post event
- Advertise who is completing roles and clearly show what is available
 - Volunteer calendar on google sheets e.g Parkrun

4. *Value can be created in a variety of ways through volunteering. Clubs should consider a range of ways to reward and recognise volunteers.*

Value for volunteers is not just in a monetary sense. For many respondents to the surveys reward comes from giving back and from being involved with like-minded people. At one end recognition can be as simple as acknowledging the work of volunteers. This can be complemented by some sort of reward system, a number of which already operate around the country.

- Develop a method of recognising volunteers
 - Post event messages to clubs that recognise volunteers on the day. E.g. Parkrun
 - “volunteer points” that can be used to pay for event entries or membership
 - Could consider no club membership fee if on committee
 - Recognition for those who complete multiple volunteer roles over a year

5. *Club growth can be built on novel orienteering based activities that engage members and develop skills useful to the club. These could be in person or utilise online tools.*

The complexity of an orienteering event can be daunting to any volunteer. Trying to remove some of the layers that an event involves can be a good way to introduce a few tasks to new volunteers without the worry of complex timing, high technical standards. This is not to say we should “dumb-down” orienteering, rather that we should be realistic about capabilities and acknowledge events which have high technical standards and those which are more around facilitating a good time orienteering in varied areas. Another possible change would relate to formal training and coaching. More widely in other sports codes, coaching is the area that engages the most volunteers. Orienteers in NZ self-report being involved in coaching often (42% of respondents to member survey), yet very few clubs have a set club coach and regular training activities are rare. Adjusting a club calendar to put resource into a series of regular training sessions in favour of 1-2 events may help engagement. These could be trainings focussed on orienteering specific skills or even include some training for club volunteer tasks. With technology this could even be delivered across multiple clubs simultaneously.

- Hold club training sessions, either outside and active, or inside/online
 - Orienteering technical skills
 - Orienteering planning/setting skills
 - Utilise coaching resources online
- Consider running some ‘no-frills’ events
 - Lower pressure for members to try out new skills e.g setters
 - Reduces the strain on club through increased yield of orienteering time from time spent organising
- Re-emphasise the badge system for major events
 - Potentially allow smaller clubs to host bigger events

What are the next steps?

Ultimately any development or changes within orienteering clubs requires enthusiastic volunteers to take the lead on change. It is important that any measures implemented by a club are relevant to the local situation of that club. Furthermore, club volunteers are the experts on this topic. It is therefore very important to discuss findings and seek comment and discussion from within the New Zealand orienteering community on the contents of this document.

Once ideas are developed further, the intent is to develop some club specific interventions that can be trialled in various ways around the country.

Some of these measures will likely be varied, some small others more around fundamental club structure. Time frames also need to be considered, short term benefits are great, but we also need to consider the longer term health of clubs. It would be useful for clubs to plan any changes with timeframes of implementation and effect in mind.

ONZ can assist with centralised resources and to facilitate information flow between clubs. There may also be a place for direct volunteer help for smaller clubs with specific needs.

Appendix

Where did this data come from?

Club President survey

Explored how clubs are structured. Answers were reviewed and summarised for key responses and themes, with some selected comments below.

Responses

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Club committee structure

- Generally clubs operate with a president, secretary and treasurer alongside a variable number of committee roles.
- Committee members may be assigned various portfolios/roles
 - Club captain (decides events)
 - Mapping, some clubs operate this as a sub-committee
 - Website / social media / Newsletter is a defined role in about half of clubs
 - Equipment, most clubs have an equipment officer
 - Sportident, a minority of clubs split this out into a separate role
 - Coaching, less than 3 clubs maintain this role
 - Landowner liaison, most clubs seem to maintain this
 - School liaison/Junior development, minority of clubs
 - Membership, split out in >3 clubs
 - Certificates, a specific role in at least 2 clubs
 - Statistician, maintained in two clubs
 - Uniforms, also in one club
 - Other:
 - Some clubs have more narrow roles defined which seem specific to that club environment (eg Dunedin OC)

Club committee vacancies

- 5 clubs stated no vacancies.
- Another group acknowledged no formal vacancies but either very long serving committee with no replacements in sight or have committee members doing multiple roles.

Systems for engaging club members in organisation of club or events

- Running “simple events” for new members
- Shoulder tapping for event registration like tasks
- Recognition via club social channels
- Club level beginner planner courses
 - Target of 1 new setter per year
- Google sheet for self identifying who can help with what (eg parkrun system)
- Structured process, new members have 1 year of no duties then can join either planning list or helpers (HBOC do this)
- Buddy systems

What is the most useful thing that you club does to support volunteering?

- Not enough...
- Reduction in fees for volunteers
- Running workshops
- Promote the satisfaction that comes with volunteering
- Learning gains from doing volunteer tasks

Biggest challenge that the club is facing in terms of volunteers?

- Pay to play approach
- People don't know how to help
- Time commitment involved in teaching new people/training for roles
- Building across generational gaps
- Other
 - Conflicting views on reimbursement/incentives
 - Some benefits for the club of having a more commercial model, as some members have been upskilled

Members survey

Explored attitudes to volunteering amongst members of orienteering clubs. Self-selected sample, recruited via email.. Answers were reviewed and summarised for key responses and themes, with some selected comments below.

Characteristics of those who provided feedback

- 65% orienteering for >10 years
- 1 person who has been orienteering for less than 1 year
- Replies biased by numbers to Auckland, Hawkes Bay and Canterbury
 - 31% PAPO, 16% HBOC, 13% AOC, 11% NWOC
- Roles that people have been involved with
 - 66% of respondents have been committee members
 - Membership and financial admin involved by least amount of people
 - 96% involved in event setup on the day
 - Other
 - Social media mentioned by a few
 - Insights
 - 42% said they had been involved with coaching despite few clubs having a coaching coordinator

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

- Word cloud – “giving back”, “people”, “enjoy”
- Other themes
 - Giving back (#1)
 - Sense of community, time with like-minded people
 - Satisfaction of seeing enjoyment in others
 - Doing things right (event standards)
 - Developing skills

- Specific ideas
 - Enjoy creative tasks

What is the hardest part about volunteering for an orienteering club?

- Word cloud – “time”, “people”,
- Other themes
 - Time (#1)
 - Technical elements (complexity of setting)
 - Strong opinions / conflict
 - Lack of recognition for some roles (eg under-recognition of marketing and promotion)
 - Travel time / lack of local events
- Specific ideas
 - “big jobs are tech based”
 - Organisational structure and technical structure makes it difficult for new comers to do as they want to
 - Hard to know where to sign up to volunteer

What would you want to be involved with in the future?

- Newer volunteers noted complexity of all tasks as a turnoff
- Technical aspects (O skills needed) of many tasks was also a turnoff for a few
- No clear leading answer, interest in mapping, setting, controlling, organisation, coaching, event running, ONZ/committee

What would make it easier for you to try this?

- Visibility of what volunteer jobs are available
- Constructive feedback
- How to guides for specific jobs

Are there any things you club does that makes volunteering easy

- In contrast to previous mentions, useful online how to guides
- Clubs being flexible is seen as a good thing
- VIP points/loyalty card to pay for future runs
- Google docs to give collaborative visibility of who can do what/when

Other comments

- A few comments citing the lack of technical skills being a barrier to volunteering
- Thinking about how we structure events to address barriers to volunteers (eg narrow start time windows)
- Some clubs had very heterogeneous responses. Some responses citing a lack of volunteers while others from same club commented on many volunteers and people to take on committee roles. There may be an issue of visibility.

Sport New Zealand

Reviewed available online resources related to volunteering. Much of this was dated (pre-2010) and clearly lacked relevance to current challenges (little mention of digital integration, more focussed on bricks and mortar clubs or formal volunteer recruitment processes).

Sport NZ has a 2015 volunteering in sports report with some insights

- coach/teacher most popular role
- more training/development cited as key reason to keep volunteering
- coaching qualifications can aid engagement

Can be found at:

http://www.srknowledge.org.nz/wpcontent/uploads/2016/09/Gemba_Sport-NZ-Volunteer-Report_260916_vUPDATEDFINAL.pdf

Orienteering Australia

Contact with GM via email. OA currently also looking at this, with SportAus having a similar focus, provided some of the current sport Australia documents related to volunteering. Keen to hear ONZ progress and to share information.

SportAus documents

The Future of Sport Volunteering, Sport Australia, April 2021

A much more contemporary document looking broadly at volunteering. Quite long and detailed at 72 pages, but definitely covers some issues raised in orienteering in New Zealand. Some selected points collected below.

- Quantitative research across Australian sports organisations
- Current perspectives divided into wider context (ecosystem), club and volunteer viewpoints
- Ecosystem
 - Duplication and fragmentation
 - Sports bodies and clubs have similar but not identical goals. Clubs run events, supported by organisations who are after broader outcomes. NSOs reliant on clubs to achieve outcomes, but the clubs actually want to deliver different things (is this a function of the bureaucratisation of sport?).
- Club
 - Culture can inhibit participation
 - Clubs do not have a complete understanding of what volunteers need
 - Lack of systems to coordinate volunteers
- Volunteer
 - Lack of casual or flexible opportunities
 - Volunteer roles not matched to the diversity of participants
 - Need functional and emotional support in roles
- Ideas for the future
 - Give 5 elements of a framework
 - Make it feel like I belong
 - For all types of people with all skills
 - Make it easy to get involved

- Easy to find how to get involved, no prior connection needing, easy to start/stop/change roles
 - Tailor roles to my needs
 - Fit roles to what people want to do, meet the need of volunteer as well as the club, project based roles with creative ways to leverage talent of volunteers
 - Support me
 - Define roles and teach people how to do tasks
 - Create value for me, the club and the community
 - Not just monetary value
- Three critical shifts in the way work is done
 - Work collaboratively
 - Try new things (occur at a club level rather than prescriptively)
 - Leverage data and insights
- Concept of archetypes in volunteers
 - Some applicable ideas to orienteering clubs in NZ
- Opportunities for action
 - Collaboration with other organisations or clubs
 - Reframe sport volunteering
 - Pitch to the target audience
 - Clear volunteer roles
 - Ongoing traditional structure and project based
 - Start small, match with resources/teaching
 - Innovation, creativity and new ways of working
 - Shared systems to streamline recruitment and support volunteer experience

British Orienteering

Have regional development officers who look after volunteer training.

Run centralised online learning modules, which are a recent addition and have been reasonably popular, especially on topics that abut legislation/health and safety.

BO is a larger, seemingly very well-resourced organisation.

Orienteering Canada

As yet no response