

Volunteers 2000 - The Recruitment Process

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Introduction

The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) and the Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee (SPOC) will need the assistance of 50,000 volunteers to successfully stage the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sydney in 2000.

This article traces the background to this massive recruitment project.

The Bid

As part of the bid process, it was necessary to show that Australia could support a large volunteer program. There were a number of opportunities for volunteers to register expressions of interest and show their support for the event.

As well as 28 sports, SOCOG and SPOC, like any other organisation, have a number of departments, or 'functional areas' as they are known. Each one of these sports and functional areas went through a scoping process to determine the numbers of volunteers that would be needed to support their operations. The exercise established that 40,000 volunteers will be needed for the Olympic Games and 10,000 for the Paralympic Games.

The Pioneers

These are a special group of volunteers who have been with SOCOG and SPOC since the beginning. Now numbering about 500, the Pioneer Volunteers have been involved in all aspects of the day to day running of the organisation. With the move into 'event mode' during late 1999, many Pioneers took on their Games time roles.

Specialist and General Volunteers

In determining the roles of volunteers, two categories are used: Specialist and General Volunteers

Specialist Volunteers are people with specific skills taking on very specific roles; for example, Technology, Sport Languages, Medical, Media, Communications etc. General Volunteers are those involved in areas such as Spectator Services, Transport, Villages, Accreditation and logistics.

In sourcing specialist volunteers targeted approaches were made to groups such as sporting bodies, professional associations, industry, sponsors, schools and tertiary institutions. A good example of the far reaching benefits of specialist volunteering is that of the response of tertiary institutions and their students.

SOCOG established relationships with 21 Australian Universities and NSW TAFE to provide volunteers in specialist roles directly related to the practical component of the students' courses. In this way, students receive practical experience in a project, and in many cases gain course credit for it. It is estimated that approximately 5,000 students are taking part in volunteer roles directly related to their courses.

The Selection Process

The official launch of Volunteers 2000 took place in October 1998. This was the first mass call to the public to take part in the event and expressions of interest were lodged and the application process began.

To date, over 35,000 interviews have been carried out. Approximately 15,000 of these have been carried out by senior undergraduate and postgraduate Human Resource Management students from 6 universities and TAFE, as well as Volunteer Associations. These students have taken on this work as the practical component of their courses, once again providing work experience for tertiary students.

While volunteers are selected for availability, flexibility and skill levels, their enthusiasm and commitment to the success of the Games is the driving point of the selection process. Because of this, the acceptance rate is very high.

Training Plans and Test Events

Training plans are underway and ready for delivery in June and July 2000. A good test of the recruitment process has been the staging of Test Events. SOCOG is staging 40 world class sporting events prior to the Games. These allow the organisation to trial venues, procedures and systems, as well as provide an opportunity to test recruitment, management and retention processes for volunteers. About 10,000 volunteers will take part in test events.

Where are we today?

At the beginning of 2000, the bulk of the interviewing process is complete. Official job offers began towards the end of 1999. This task will be completed substantially by the end of March 2000. The recruitment process should then become one of topping up, replacing those who pull out, and development of Games time contingency plans.

The focus shifts to training, retention and most importantly, recognition.

Conclusion

As the biggest peacetime recruitment of volunteers nears its conclusion, it is important to recognise all those who have supported Volunteers 2000: Community groups, service clubs, volunteering associations, sponsors, sporting associations, councils and local government, schools and tertiary institutions, industry, and most importantly the Australian public; the individuals who came to us because they want to be part of a successful Games.

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