Chapter 15
Motivation and retention

Learning objectives

After reading through this chapter you will be able to:

- **Discuss the topic of workforce retention**
- **Describe the differences between content and process theories of motivation**
- **Use the concept of psychological contract to analyse volunteer expectations**
- **Describe some approaches to reward and recognition**
- **Develop strategies for workforce retention**
- **Discuss issues relating to motivation of management personnel.**

Introduction

When an event is staffed primarily by volunteers, motivation is a significant concern for the organizing committee who are sometimes themselves volunteers. In the business world, staff turnover is measured by the human resource department as the number of staff leaving as a percentage of the workforce. In the event business the terms most often used are retention and attrition – attrition more commonly because many volunteers quit before they have started. For example, prior to the 2006 Commonwealth Games, there were reports that more than 1200 Commonwealth Games volunteers had resigned their posts in the ten weeks prior to the event (Phillips, 2006). These volunteers did not take up positions offered to them to participate in the 15 000 strong volunteer programme.

There have been numerous studies on volunteer motivation, some of which were mentioned in Chapter 4. These studies have mostly investigated the antecedent motives for volunteering (Coyne and Coyne, 2001; Strigas and Newton Jackson 2003). Essentially, the diversity of event type and scale is reflected in the diversity of motivations that volunteers put forward for volunteering. Other studies have looked at reasons why volunteers quit, Elstad (2003) finding that the top three reasons were workload, lack of appreciation, and poor event organization. Cuskelly *et al.* (2004) did an extensive study on the behavioural dependability of volunteers, arguing that a study of behaviour is more meaningful than a study of attitudes. One of the points they make is that many event organizers deal with retention problems by overrecruiting volunteers, but are then faced with increases in the cost of selection

and training, as well as the cost of uniforms, accreditation, etc. An oversupply of volunteers has the potential also to cause dissatisfaction when underutilization occurs. This is problematic as one of the highest level satisfiers is feeling skilled, useful and productive. Using the theory of planned behaviour, Cuskelly *et al.* (2004) found that the most consistent predictor variable was perceived behavioural control, measured as having the confidence and skills to be a volunteer.

Motivation and retention of volunteers is not however the only concern. From a risk management perspective, a much more significant concern is retention of event planning staff, those involved in the lead-up period to an event. When a key person quits at a crucial time, this can have a major effect on other members of the team, increasing their workload and impacting on goal achievement. For this reason, retention of management and other paid personnel is a significant consideration. One suggestion for retention of staff is to provide employment contracts with loyalty bonuses.

Hanlon and Jago (2004) have drawn up a schema for retention of both paid and seasonal event staff working for major sporting events, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Theories of motivation

There are two main groups of theories of motivation: *content* theories assume that all individuals possess the same set of needs and therefore prescribe the characteristics that ought to be present in jobs; *process* theories, in contrast, stress the differences in people's needs and focus on the cognitive processes that create these differences.

One example of a content theory is that of Frederick Hertzberg (1987) who proposes that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction appear to be caused by different factors (see Figure 15.1).

According to this theory, the factors listed as hygiene factors would lead to dissatisfaction if they were not up to standard. To support this concept, Elstad (2003) found that food had a significant effect on the volunteers' continuance commitment at a jazz festival. However, food is not a satisfier; if adequate, it is taken for granted and does not contribute to feelings of job satisfaction. The factors that do motivate

Hygiene factors (dissatisfiers)	Motivators (satisfiers)
Supervision	Goal achievement
Policy	Recognition
Work environment	Intrinsic nature of the work itself
Relationships with colleagues	Responsibility
Pay/reward	Advancement

Figure 15.1 Hertzberg's two factor theory

are goal achievement and recognition. For management personnel, the intrinsic nature of the work itself, particularly the creative development of the event concept and plans, is also highly satisfying. To sum up and simplify, motivators provide reasons to stay, while unsatisfactory hygiene factors can provide reasons to leave.

What all process theories have in common is an emphasis on cognitive processes in determining a person's level of motivation. For example, equity theory assumes that one important cognitive process involves people looking around and observing what effort other people are putting into their work and what rewards follow. This social comparison process is driven by a concern for fairness and equity.

Expectancy theory resulted from Vroom's (1973) work into motivation. His argument is that crucial to motivation at work is the perception of a link between effort and reward. Perceiving this link can be thought of as a process in which individuals calculate, first, whether there is a connection between effort and reward and, second, the probability that rewards (valences, as Vroom called them) will follow from high performance (instrumentality). The motivational force of a job can therefore be calculated if the expectancy, instrumentality and valence values are known (see Figure 15.2).

If the individual perceives that no matter how much they try they will never reach the work performance level indicated, they will not make an effort. For example, a goal may be to serve 300 banquet guests within 15 minutes. This may be regarded as unachievable due to the number of floor staff available and delays in kitchen production. However, the floor staff may also be thinking about the promise of a reward. Perhaps they were promised an early finish once and instead had to stay back to set up for breakfast the next day. The promised reward has to have a high valence, or value, and there needs to be a level of trust that rewards will be delivered.

The main contribution of process theory has been to highlight the effects of cognitive and perceptual processes on objective work conditions.

A different theory of motivation involving goal setting has been proposed by Locke and Latham (1984). This theory states that goals direct effort and provide guidelines for deciding how much effort to put into each activity when multiple goals exist, and that participation in goal setting increases the individual's sense of control.

This theory is well suited to the project management environment of event planning where goals such as audience size, throughput at turnstiles, food service during intermission, delivery times and scoring accuracy can be measured and communicated to event personnel. At a more personal level, control systems such as safety checklists, cash balancing and voucher reconciliation can provide a level of satisfaction when such goals are achieved.
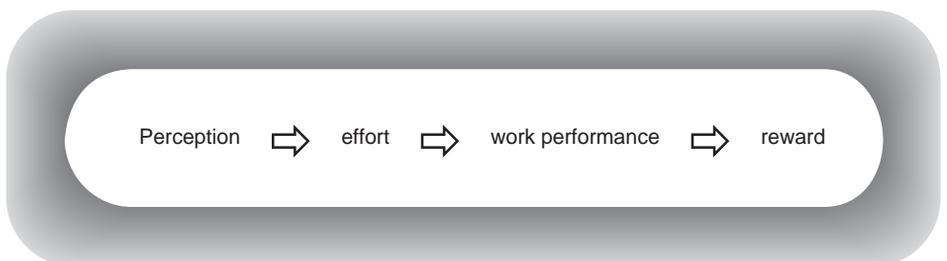

Perception ⇨ effort ⇨ work performance ⇨ reward

Figure 15.2   Expectancy theory of motivation

Workforce expectations

Guest and Conway (2002) talk about the psychological contract in terms of perceived promises and commitments in the employment relationship, which is usually discussed in the literature in terms of *employee* expectations. These authors look instead at *employer* views on this topic. Ultimately, of course, the psychological contract works both ways, each party making promises and commitments and having certain expectations. Indeed, managing expectations is also crucial to the management of volunteers, so this concept of the psychological contract is a very useful one to use in the event context. The following quote talks about psychological contracts in the context of event volunteering:

> First, it seems that regardless of previous experience, volunteer background and reason for participating, volunteers are seeking fulfillment of a psychological contract from the outset and not simply during the period of volunteer engagement during the event. As the early stages of the psychological contract are based largely on trust, then any early contact or activities are essential in validating this trust that expectations will be fulfilled. In this case, the welcome afforded to all volunteers had an impact on expectations.
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> Secondly, there appears to be an ideal set of expected outcomes regarding planning, recruitment, training and communications but also a realism that expectations are not always met. Thus, there appears to be a degree of compensation afforded in circumstances where expectations are met but barely. However, it is clear that if expectations are not met with a degree of adequacy then the level of concern and in some cases withdrawal from the process can be expected. This happened for many volunteers in relation to the lack of communication between management and volunteers and in relation to transport. There is a fine line between perceptions of breach of the psychological contract and violation. Although some volunteers have more tolerance of uncertainty and unmet expectations, it would be unwise for management to become complacent. The desire to be part of a special or unique event may attract volunteers in the first place, but it may not be strong enough to influence their attitudinal or behavioural responses to management reneging on expectations and perceived promises.
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> The third key issue the research raises is that such events seem to arouse optimism and positive word-of-mouth marketing not at a level expected given the perceived lack of planning. This optimism extended into expectations regarding long-term outcomes. Thus, if effectively managed, volunteers can generate a positive wave of expectation and citizenship in the period leading up to the Games. The challenge is for managers to plan these outcomes well in advance of such an event to reap the benefits of a highly charged, if temporal, volunteer workforce.
>
> (Ralston *et al.*, 2004)

Guest and Conway (2002) also look at the psychological contract in three phases, at initial entry, in day-to-day work and in more future-oriented, top-down communication. These three phases will be discussed here, where we look further at workforce expectations.

Initial entry – planning phase

The hype that is often a feature of the lead-up period of an event is likely to develop a strong sense of ownership on the part of employees and volunteers (Hanlon and Jago, 2004). However, as Ralston *et al.* (2004) point out in their study of volunteers for the 2002 Commonwealth Games, early communication with volunteers is vital. These authors also found that volunteers were motivated primarily by altruism, involvement and the uniqueness of the special event. Events of this scale have the added advantage of positive publicity contributing to building relationship between volunteer and event organization. Negative press can result in reduced enthusiasm and lower than expected numbers of volunteers committing to work from the recruitment pool. In fact, prior to the 2006 Commonwealth Games the organizers

were forced to contact volunteers who had been rejected to compensate for the 1200 who had pulled out two months before the Games.

Positive publicity is even more important for organizers who carry responsibility for the infrastructure and the programme. These external forces (often uncontrollable) have considerable impact on those in the hot seat at the time. It takes a seasoned operator to withstand this type of pressure. Thus motivation of paid staff is something that needs considerable attention. Stress and burn-out are common, some people 'falling over' just before the event and others totally exhausted before the execution phase when the highest levels of energy are needed. It is also possible that some members of the team are looking for alternative post-event employment during the final phases of planning. This, too, has implications for the organization, some of which have post-event placement programmes to assist the transition.

Retention strategies for this phase should focus on internal communication, regular and efficient meeting updates, and celebration of targets and achievements. Well-facilitated training and change management can also contribute to perceptions that the train is on track and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Daily event operations

Motivation and retention of staff and volunteers day to day during the event operational period are essential components of the human resources plan. Such strategies can take the following forms.

Tickets

Many event volunteers expect to watch part of the performance and are provided with tickets for periods when they are not working. For many mega events this is a ticket to the rehearsal of the opening or closing ceremony. However, according to one study, volunteers' satisfaction with the opportunity to use free tickets had no impact on volunteers' continuance commitment (Elstad, 2003, p. 107).

Sponsor products

Quite often sponsors are prepared to provide their products as rewards for volunteers. However, good intentions can have serious repercussions if it is perceived that these rewards are distributed inequitably. As an example, Swatch provided Sydney Olympic Games volunteers with commemorative watches. However, the logistics of distribution were less than adequate and some volunteers missed out, including ceremonies volunteers who were not included in the headcount (Webb, 2001).

Loyalty schemes

Loyalty schemes have been used to assist retention of employees and volunteers. This may be a passport which is stamped for each shift and qualifies the volunteer or worker for entry in a draw for a major prize, such as a motor car. These have been used in hotels and by Games organizing committees (Byrne *et al.*, 2002). However, the odds of winning seem slim to most and it is doubtful that the link between shift attendance and the prize is strong.

Loyalty bonuses

A loyalty bonus, as an addition to an hourly rate, may be paid on completion of all allocated shifts. This requires careful planning to ensure that work times are recorded and payroll systems modified accordingly.

Celebrity meetings

Inviting high-profile people from the events committee, charity, sponsor organization or government to address the workforce can raise morale. Everyone wants to meet celebrities and this brush with fame can be accompanied by permission for large group photos with athletes and/or entertainers.

Photo boards

While many codes of conduct preclude the use of cameras at events, volunteers in particular love to have their photographs taken on site, and these can be displayed on notice boards (with permission, of course).

Briefings and debriefings

A pre-shift briefing is one of the most important communication strategies for the event workforce, enabling everyone to have the latest information. Likewise, debriefings allow people to contribute their concerns and suggestions. No amount of extrinsic rewards such as pins and caps can solve the frustrations of a member of a team who is bombarded with questions from the event audience and cannot answer them.

Daily newsletters

Staff newsletters, highlighting milestones and achievements, can be distributed at the start of shifts or be kept in the staff canteen area. Notice boards can be used for the same purpose. Production of the newsletter requires a budget and plan and distribution needs to cover all venues.

Posters

Posters highlighting goal achievement, such as the size of the crowd, media stories or television coverage all contribute to a sense of satisfaction that the event concept is being realized.

Food and beverage surprises

Ladies carrying bags of boiled sweets appear to be appreciated, particularly if they have a sunny personality and can visit staff members at remote sites. More exciting are donut days, cappuccino days and ice-cream treats. When these come as a surprise they are much appreciated. Once again a budget and planning are required.

Parade of volunteers

While some mega events have a parade of volunteers after the event, there is nothing to prevent this happening at some stage during the event so that the audience can express their appreciation.

Media support for volunteers

To obtain media support, the public relations department needs to find stories and write press releases. As with previous recognition strategies, this needs pre-planning.

Games

Games are used as ice-breakers and for stress relief. The choice of games and timing are crucial. They can be simple things like competitions to guess the outcomes of matches or spectator numbers. The higher the relevance, the greater the value the game is perceived to have.

Entertainment

Entertainment in the staff area is much appreciated, although for a sporting event the link to work performance is tenuous. However, at a folk festival, volunteers would love to watch musicians jamming.

Concluding party for staff

Little needs to be said about the traditional post-event party. However, decisions do need to be made about when to hold the party – even pre-event is a possibility – and whether to make it a family or adult affair.

Certificates of appreciation

References and certificates of appreciation are highly valued, particularly if they are specific to the individual and to the role they played in making the event a success. A computer printout with a floral border and no individualization has little value.

Careful consideration must be given to the cost of all recognition and reward programmes. These strategies need to be planned on a day-to-day schedule for the event as it progresses with, for example, templates in readiness for staff newsletters and people allocated to writing and printing them. A budget is needed for all such activities. The budget for the Melbourne Commonwealth Games volunteer programme was A$3 million for 5000 volunteers. This included the cost of meals and uniforms, which are significant.

All smiles and hugs when it's over

Case study 15.1

Annual Summer Solstice Folk Music, Dance and Storytelling Festival

Volunteering to work at the Annual Summer Solstice Folk Music, Dance and Storytelling Festival is a **GREAT** *way to experience a wide range of folk art styles and modes. One of the BEST parts about volunteering is that YOU GET INTO THE FESTIVAL FOR FREE! In addition, you get to be part of the 'back-stage scene' of the festival, including having the chance to listen to and even jam with the festival artists in the evenings at the festival hotel.*

(Reproduced with permission of Annual Summer Solstice Folk Music, Dance and Storytelling Festival, www.ctmsfolkmusic.org/volunteer/festival/default.asp)

Reflective practice 15.1
1 Many music festivals offer their volunteers free tickets to performances. How would you ensure that they do not take advantage of this offer and abandon their posts?
2 Why might some volunteers not value free tickets but look for other rewards?

Future-oriented expectations

At management level, the event personnel are ever mindful of their future careers. Being associated with a successful event will enhance their reputation, while an event that fails to reach expectations or is exposed to media criticism can be irredeemably harmful to their career prospects. In traditional business environments, lack of job satisfaction is the primary antecedent to resignation. Holtom *et al.* (2005) show from their research that precipitating events, or shocks, are more often the immediate cause of turnover. This is a most interesting perspective and, as the authors suggest, the organization should look at strategies to manage shocks and thus improve retention. Many mega events are subjected to intense criticism in the lead-up to the event: for example, for the ticketing fiasco in Sydney and in Athens for the incompletion of the infrastructure for the Games not long before the opening ceremony.

Tactics are needed to help staff weather such storms, which affect morale across the board. An understanding of the patterns of a mega event – the positive honeymoon period following the successful bid, then the ever-growing concern about the budget and negative reports – should be linked to the employee communications strategy. Negative press, even when 'par for the course', can be demoralizing. Some individuals don't have the stamina to deal with the lows and thus miss out on the buzz of the final, dramatic success that ensues.

To further illustrate the variables impacting on retention of staff in event management, Hanlon and Jago (2004) show from research into two major annual events that the period immediately following the event is typically flat in contrast to the adrenalin rush of the previous weeks. It is during this period that a number of retention strategies should be considered for permanent staff. Additionally, for organizations running annual events such as the Australian Open, efforts need to be made to maintain contact with seasonal workers who return annually to the event.

Table 15.1 is a guide to retaining both full-time and seasonal staff at two major annual events.

Table 15.1   A recommended guide for retaining full-time and seasonal personnel at the Australian Open Tennis Championship and the Australian Formula One Grand Prix

	Retention strategies for personnel categories	
Event cycle	*Full-time*	*Seasonal*
Lead-up	Event's status Recognition Ownership	Event's status Recognition Ownership Timing of the event
During an event	Team debrief Team activities	Team debrief Team activities
After an event	Team debrief Thank-you function Performance appraisal Remuneration Career management programmes Updated job descriptions Re-establishing teams Positive direction from management Exit interviews Loyalty payments	Team debrief Thank-you function
During the year	Team meetings Remuneration	Continuous contact (i.e. Christmas cards, birthday cards, organization's newsletter, team meetings) Career opportunities Survey needs Employed for additional events

(From Hanlon, C. and Jago, L. (2004). The challenge of retaining personnel in major sport event organizations. *Event Management*, **9**, 47. Reproduced with permission.)

This area is undoubtedly ripe for investigation. Research into changing expectations and workforce motivation would be most valuable for human resource practitioners in this field given the rapidly changing scale of the workforce and the diversity of employment and volunteer options. No doubt as technology progresses and people working at events are able to check in and out electronically, more reliable data will be available on the level of retention of both full-time employees and volunteers.

Performance appraisal

Large event organizations that employ a permanent workforce usually have a performance appraisal programme, although for many others performance management is largely informal. A formal performance review session is an opportunity to discuss

present performance and future aspirations with an employee. The elements of this programme include:

- Assessing performance against goals, objectives, target and outcomes
- Providing feedback on performance, particularly positive feedback and constructive advice
- Providing an opportunity for the employee to provide feedback on their level of motivation and satisfaction
- Reaching agreement regarding action plans or learning programmes.

Ongoing performance feedback, both formal and informal, contributes significantly to clear expectations for all concerned. Long-term volunteers also require performance feedback. Performance management contributes in constructive ways to a positive organizational culture, which was discussed in Chapter 12, and in turn the event organizational culture affects volunteer retention and motivation. Some of the elements of this culture include:

- *Feedback* – encouragement and a sense of direction
- *Cohesion* – everyone wants to feel part of a team that has a positive dynamic, as dysfunctional teams fall apart very quickly. Shared goals contribute to a sense of cohesion
- *Resources* – lack of resources to do the job efficiently or correctly frustrates volunteers, while being well equipped assists productivity
- *Support* – being neglected by team members or supervisors makes volunteers most unhappy, particularly those left isolated at remote spots without relief or encouragement
- *Fairness* – like permanent employees, volunteers get extremely upset by inequitable treatment
- *Improvement* – in the ongoing event operational environment, suggestions for improvements need to be taken seriously and acted upon
- *Information provision* – to provide good service, volunteers need to be in the information loop. This also contributes to a sense of collaborative teamwork.

Performance management is a vital component of the human resource strategy. Whether the event organization is a long-life or short-life concern, everyone needs to be working at an optimal level. This involves meeting expectations, providing motivational opportunities and managing performance that is below par. For the most part, there are many intrinsic elements in the event environment that can be relied upon to maintain motivational momentum.

Case study 15.2

Staging a Shakespeare Festival

You are the organizer of a Shakespeare Festival. There will be four week-long plays performed over the summer holidays with matinee and evening performances. The event will be preceded by a main street procession. The production of the plays will be professionally managed by a theatre team using amateur performers. A number of volunteers will be assigned to minor roles in costumes, set and lighting. The administrative team will be a core of event

management paid staff with support from volunteers in the ticket office, at information and on merchandising. Volunteers will also assist with ushering. You will need to suggest a naming rights sponsor and some minor sponsors. Marketing and promotions volunteers will need to be appointed early. Overall, your paid staff to volunteer ratio will be 1:4.

Reflective practice 15.2
1 Identify the phases of this project, and allocate timings to the workforce appointments (paid and volunteer).
2 Develop a simple organization chart for the planning of the event and another for the production period.
3 Describe ideas for motivating the core team of senior staff during the pre-event phase.
4 Develop strategies for motivating the workforce during the event production phase.

Chapter summary and key points

This chapter has covered some of the research pertaining to motivation, looking mainly at longer term paid staff and volunteers. Theories of motivation fit mainly into two categories: content theories prescribe a series of characteristics that should be present in jobs, while process theories stress differences in people's needs and their perceptions of the circumstances in which they find themselves. Motivation and retention strategies were considered at different points in the event cycle, from initial entry to final celebration. The concept of the psychological contract was used to analyse the relationship between the event organization and the volunteer.

Revision questions

1 What are the implications if there is poor retention of management/planning staff?
2 What are the implications of overrecruitment of volunteers?
3 Explain the idea of the psychological contract.
4 Discuss the following statement, 'to understand motivation you need to understand the planning cycle for the event'.

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