

20 SIMPLE IDEAS TO HELP YOU

CELEBRATE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers need to be recognised and it is important that you consider how this is done at your club. There is no one answer, so we have provided you with a selection of ideas for you to take back to your club. We hope that these ideas will help you to determine how you will celebrate and recognise the volunteers at your club.

Remember, recognition doesn't always have to have a cost aligned to it. There are lots of examples of how you can recognise and thank volunteers without having to source additional funding or allocate funds from the club account.



1. Explore a reduced membership fee for those volunteers who have a child / children in their care within your club.
2. If you manage your own car park, why not have dedicated parking for your volunteers so they can easily park before training and fixtures.
3. Work with your current sponsors to see if there are opportunities to offer your volunteers exclusive discounts which are different to those that are offered to all club members.
4. Take a group volunteer photo at the start or end of every season. It may seem like an unachievable task getting everyone together at the same time but think about events where everyone will be in one place, for example a volunteer induction or a summer festival. Whatever the event, try to capture that team photo that everyone can cherish for years to come. If it proves too difficult to get everyone together, try capturing volunteers in action throughout the season. This will enable you to create an album which in addition to volunteers reliving their volunteering memories with your club, will also be a great image bank to use on your website or social media accounts.



5.

Make volunteers feel part of the bigger picture. This could be by keeping them in the loop with club communications or involving them in decision making. By connecting your volunteers with club activity, you may find that new ideas are shared with you, or people step forward to lend a hand in different ways.

Remember not to overwhelm them with communications and ensure that what you share with them is relevant, interesting and informative.

6.

Provide volunteers with club kit. There is nothing more inclusive than wearing the same club kit and feeling part of the family. Not only will it make sure everyone is looking the part, it can also help volunteers to feel valued. This applies to all volunteers and not just the coaches, managers or team helpers.

7.

Everyone loves a freebie so why not try gifting seasonal merchandise. It could be a water bottle in the summer or gloves in the winter. A small gesture like this will keep your volunteers feeling like they are being looked after, as well as promoting the club and generating some extra merchandise sales too!





VOLUNTEERS NEED TO BE
RECOGNISED



8.

Don't wait for annual awards schemes to recognise your volunteers. You may want to organise your own 'Volunteer of the Month' initiative or for smaller clubs a 'Volunteer of the Term'. Remember, regular recognition is key!

9.

Be bold and have your own volunteer recognition event. This could be the clubs own 'Volunteers Week' or 'Make a Difference Day'. These are events which focus on having a dedicated time where the club will commit to recognising and celebrating their volunteers. However, these events shouldn't replace regular recognition, they should amplify recognition during a specific set period.

10.

Social events are a great way to gather everyone together and thank them for all that they do. It is also important to remember that some of your volunteers may have got involved to meet new people, so events like these can help you to support the needs of your volunteers. Of course, it can be challenging to get everyone together but never underestimate the power of a free tea or coffee.

**11.**

Surprise your volunteers. When your volunteer registers with you, you are likely to capture their DOB. This could enable you to show your appreciation on their birthday, by hand delivering them a card either in person or sending it via the post. Better still, if your club is aiming to be more environmentally friendly you may want to send an e-card instead.

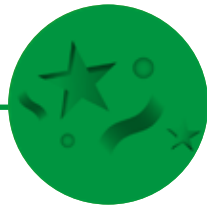


12.

Recognition doesn't always have to be in a physical format, it can be in other ways such as having meaningful engagement. This could be by finding out more about them, their family, what they do as a job etc. The more time you take to get to know your volunteers and understand them, the more they will feel appreciated. It also shows that the club understand that away from football, everyone has other priorities and interests. Taking the time to understand the people around you and your club is key.

13.

Never underestimate the power of listening. Again, recognition doesn't have to be an exchange of a gift or a tailored event, it can be the application of a soft skills such as listening. By listening to your volunteers, whether its directly regarding their role at the club or about them way from the club, taking time out to listen to them will show that you care.



14.

Recognise your volunteers on your website (if you have one) or social media channels. Shine a spotlight on them. Make a feature of what they do individually and collectively. Showcase their hard work and the impact they make.

15.

Personally thank volunteers. Think about who you want to thank and what their preferred method of communications are. It could be via a letter, email, a simple phone call or it could be through social media. Remember, reference the individual's name, role at the club and maybe even a quote from someone that has been supported by them such as a child, their parent or another volunteer.

16.

Training and development. Despite this being its own pillar within our volunteering ecosystem, it's important to remember that training and development is continuous and supporting a volunteer to explore a training or development opportunity is a great way of showing your appreciation. It positively demonstrates that you value their aspirations for personal growth and development. If, as a byproduct it means that your club grows in knowledge, resources and information then why would you not consider recognising your volunteers in this way.



17.

Look at how your club could have its own recognition scheme, acknowledging volunteers for reaching certain milestones within your club. Try not to wait until regional or national awards as you may just miss the opportunity. A report by LOVS 2019 suggests that a volunteer in sport lasts for an average of 5.9 years¹. You may only have your volunteers for a 'short period' of time, so being able to reward them within that time period is key. The below guide may help you determine the milestones in terms of length of support.

0-1 YEARS

Take the time to thank the new volunteers for getting involved and lending a hand.

Reward suggestion – a social media post/website recognition.

3-4 YEARS

Many of your volunteers would have made connections with others throughout their time at your club. How can your club recognise this and get everyone together to say a big thank you?

Reward suggestion – a 'thank you' social event.

If volunteers wish to continue beyond this time that is brilliant. How can you keep them interested and excited in continuing to help out.

1-2 YEARS

Try and understand how you can help them with their role. Is there appropriate training or development opportunities that you could reward them with?

Reward suggestion – FA Coach education course/other course.

5-6 YEARS

Take the time to recognise personal achievements and positive contributions to the clubs aims and ambitions.

Reward suggestion – a special, personalised recognition.

This is only a guide, and you shouldn't stop there if a volunteer supports the club for more than 6 years. This should help you to identify what / how you can keep them involved and give that much needed recognition during certain pinch points of a volunteer's journey.

Remember, this should also not be in replacement of the opportunity to regularly say thank you, it is just a guide on which milestones may require more recognition than others.



18.

Nominate your volunteers for local, regional, or national awards. Of course, the end goal would be that the individual you nominate progresses through to the relevant stages of the competition and wins! However, if this doesn't happen, let them know you have put them forward for the award. You may even want to share snippets of the completed nomination form with them. Try not to share everything as you may have an opportunity to nominate them for other awards schemes in the future.

19.

Impact reports are a great way of showing volunteers the impression they have had or are collectively contributing towards. The report doesn't have to be too fancy or corporate, simplicity here is key. Areas you may want to highlight could include;

- How many hours players (children or adults) have been active for at the club?
- How many volunteers have gained an additional skill i.e., coaching qualification or attendance at a leadership course?
- How many members (including players, parents/carers, spectators etc.) have accessed football as a result of the volunteers?

Don't forget volunteers are everyone from within your club not just the coaches and managers on the pitch during matchdays.

20.

Throughout the season capture thank you clips from players, parents and other volunteers with the aim to turn it into a small appreciation video which can be shared at the end of the season. The video doesn't have to be Oscar worthy and the clips can be captured via a mobile phone (check consent and your club policy on storing of filming & photography) then by utilising free software editing platforms you can merge all your clips into one great short video. Before you get stuck in, why not ask your members if anyone has the skill set to create short videos. You never know who may be able to help.

Surprised that some of the suggestions above require no finances? Well don't be! Recognition doesn't have to be in the form of an award or an exchanging of a gift, a simple thank you and recognising an individual for their efforts will make much more of an impact and will leave your volunteers with a long lasting and positive impression.

Supporting resources

¹Lifecycle of Volunteering Survey 2019 – LOVS

