

A person wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, red socks, and black and white sneakers is holding a green net over three soccer balls on a green field. The soccer balls are white with blue and red patterns. The background is a solid green color.

# MANAGING VOLUNTARY SPORT ORGANISATIONS

EDITED BY  
**LEIGH ROBINSON**  
AND **DICK PALMER**

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# MANAGING VOLUNTARY SPORT ORGANISATIONS

Contemporary sport could not function without the involvement of voluntary organisations, from local grass-roots clubs to international agencies such as the International Olympic Committee. Management of this sector continues to undergo profound change, largely in response to the challenges of professionalisation and increasing expectations in terms of transparency, accountability and ethical behaviour. This book fills a significant gap in the literature on sport management by setting out the principles and practices necessary for effective management of voluntary sport organisations around the world.

In addition to applying and adapting established management strategies and techniques to voluntary sport organisations, this book is the first to fully relate mainstream organisational theory to this important sector of sport management. With contributions from an international team of researchers and management practitioners, the book explores key functional areas such as:

- governance;
- strategy and planning;
- human resources;
- finance;
- managing change;
- marketing;
- event management;
- risk management.

Each chapter discusses best practice and some also include case study material, self-test questions and guides to further reading. As the only book to outline a professional, theoretically informed and practically focused curriculum for voluntary sport management, this book is essential reading for all students of sport management and all managers working in or alongside the voluntary sector.

**Leigh Robinson** is a Professor of Sport Management in the Department of Sport Studies, University of Stirling. She has carried out research with a wide range of organisations in the voluntary, commercial and public sectors, including Olympic Solidarity, British Olympic Association, Sport England, British Judo and the Amateur Swimming Association. She works extensively with the International Olympic Committee funded MEMOS network.

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ix

contributors

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## **PREFACE**

The voluntary sport sector underpins sport internationally and is responsible for the delivery of sport opportunities from grass-roots mass participation to elite performance across the globe. The organisations within this sector are extremely diverse, including local clubs and their leagues, national governing bodies of sport and international agencies, such as the International Olympic Committee.

The management of this sector has undergone, and is still undergoing, fundamental change. Members are becoming increasingly demanding of the services they require in exchange for their membership, professionalisation has led to the presence of paid human resources in many voluntary organisations previously run entirely by volunteers, and the delivery of sport has been challenged in terms of transparency, accountability and ethical behaviour. A key response to these changes has been the increasing adoption of management approaches and techniques, such as marketing, sponsorship and performance management, which have been traditionally associated with other sectors.

The adaptations made, and lessons learned, by those working and researching in the voluntary sector have been communicated in a piecemeal and haphazard fashion and information on possible management strategies is often a mixture of rhetoric and/or prescriptive information. There has been little attempt to systematically consider the application of techniques that are traditionally associated with the commercial sector to the voluntary sector.

This book aims to fill this gap and attempts to consider and analyse the issues facing the management of contemporary voluntary sport organisations. The book will also discuss and adapt traditionally commercial management strategies and techniques in order to present best practice in the management of voluntary sport services.

The book will be arranged in three parts containing 14 chapters. Part 1 will be an introductory section consisting of three chapters. Chapter 1 establishes what is meant by voluntary sport organisations and their management. It sets out the nature of the voluntary sport sector, the role of the main organisations that make up the sector and the characteristics common to all voluntary sport organisations.

It then provides a discussion of the context impacting on the management of voluntary sport organisations and the personal skills required for managers to be effective.

To understand how voluntary sport organisations can be managed effectively requires an understanding of their internal and external operating environment. This is the purpose of Chapter 2, which will firstly discuss the nature of organisations and then present and discuss factors in the operating environments that need to be taken into account when managing a voluntary sport organisation. It will go on to present structures for managers to use to analyse their operating contexts.

Chapter 3 will introduce the concept of governance that has emerged as being of importance to the voluntary sport sector. It will set out the development of the concept and will deal, in detail, with the role of boards in governance. Finally, it considers the aspects of organisations that might impact on governance activities.

Part 2 will contain seven chapters that consider key management dimensions, presenting perceived best practice and then applying and adapting this to the voluntary sport context. Chapter 4 will focus on the concepts of organisational strategy development and planning. The chapter sets out the rationale for strategic management and discusses the need to prepare for the strategy development process. It then describes the four phases needed to develop and implement a strategic plan.

In Chapter 5 the issues and procedures involved in the effective management of staff (paid and unpaid) are considered. The chapter examines the topics of recruitment, selection, development and discipline in the context of people management. The chapter also considers the issues involved in managing and working with volunteers and discusses the 'paid/unpaid' barrier that affects many voluntary sport organisations.

Chapter 6 is concerned with providing readers with an overview of the key financial skills required to manage sport organisations. It will consider financial management conventions from a voluntary sport organisation perspective and present the principles of good financial management and define key terms. The chapter will then go on to address aspects of financial planning, budgeting and financial reporting.

Chapter 7 discusses the need for performance management and its role in the delivery of voluntary sport organisations. It will consider the terminology associated with performance management, methods of managing performance and will focus, in detail, on performance indicators as these are essential to voluntary sport organisations.

The multifaceted nature of change within voluntary sport organisations will be explored in Chapter 8. It will begin by considering what is meant by organisational change, presenting key approaches to the understanding and management of

change. The chapter will also consider the barriers to change in these organisations and will end with a discussion of the methods of successfully introducing changes into the management of voluntary sport organisations.

Marketing of voluntary sport organisations has recently become significant as these organisations have looked for ways of decreasing their reliance on external funding. The purpose of Chapter 9 is to set out the principles of marketing and consider what can be marketed, how it can be marketed and strategies for communication and sponsorship.

At some stage all voluntary sport organisations stage an event, ranging from small club championships to the Olympic Games and World Championships. Chapter 10 sets out the operational principles that a voluntary sport organisation should use to successfully stage a sport event. It will consider the design of the event and then move on to look at how to develop the event to ensure successful implementation.

Finally, Part 3 will comprise four chapters that will consider specific issues that impact on, or are important to, the management of these organisations. The purpose of Chapter 11 is to provide a basic understanding and application of aspects of law and how it might apply to the voluntary sport sector. From a club perspective, it will examine a number of general legal principles affecting factors such as governance, employment, data protection and child safeguarding.

Chapter 12 sets out the principles associated with the management of risk within a sporting context. It begins by defining what risk is and how it can impact on voluntary sport organisations and then moves on to set out a risk management strategy. Finally, it discusses how VSOs can protect themselves from risk.

In Chapter 13, a review of information and communication technologies (ICT) as they apply or might apply to managing voluntary sport organisations is presented. The chapter discusses the use of information and how it might be communicated and then highlights several of the ICT solutions that have been used by voluntary sport organisations.

The final chapter, Chapter 14, will offer an overall evaluation of the usefulness to voluntary sport organisations of the techniques reviewed. It will discuss the key points and trends that emerge from the adaptation of best practice to the voluntary sector and will conclude with issues that are likely to impact on the future management of these organisations.

# CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
<i>Contributors</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xii

<b>PART I INTRODUCING THE VOLUNTARY SPORT SECTOR</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 THE VOLUNTARY SPORT SECTOR</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Leigh Robinson</i>	
<b>2 THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT OF VOLUNTARY SPORT ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Leigh Robinson</i>	
<b>3 GOVERNANCE OF VOLUNTARY SPORT ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>Dick Palmer</i>	
<b>PART II THE MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTARY SPORT ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>4 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING</b>	<b>51</b>
<i>Jean-Loup Chappelet</i>	
<b>5 MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	<b>70</b>
<i>Tracy Taylor and Peter McGraw</i>	
<b>6 MANAGING FINANCES</b>	<b>99</b>
<i>Simon Shibli</i>	
<b>7 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>121</b>
<i>Leigh Robinson</i>	



<b>8 THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE</b> <i>Leigh Robinson</i>	<b>139</b>
<b>9 MANAGING MARKETING</b> <i>Guillaume Bodet</i>	<b>156</b>
<b>10 EVENT MANAGEMENT</b> <i>Eleni Theodoraki</i>	<b>177</b>
<b>PART III ISSUES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTARY SPORT ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>11 THE LEGAL DIMENSION</b> <i>Andy Gray and Sarah James</i>	<b>199</b>
<b>12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION</b> <i>Leigh Robinson and Dick Palmer</i>	<b>228</b>
<b>13 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND VOLUNTARY SPORT ORGANISATIONS</b> <i>Brian Minikin</i>	<b>239</b>
<b>14 THE FUTURE OF MANAGEMENT IN VOLUNTARY SPORT ORGANISATIONS</b> <i>Leigh Robinson, Brian Minikin and Dick Palmer</i>	<b>257</b>
References	265
Index	271

# ILLUSTRATIONS

## FIGURES

1.1	Structure of voluntary sport	5
2.1	Dimensions of performance of Olympic sport organisations	29
2.2	Assessment of capability to run level one coaching course	30
3.1	The personal commitments of a board member	41
3.2	A partnership model of governance	43
4.1	The IOC's approach to strategic planning	52
4.2	Strategic management process	54
4.3	The vision and mission of the IOC	55
4.4	The core values and principles of the IOC	56
4.5	Stakeholders of the IOC administration department	59
4.6	2009 IOC SWOT Matrix	61
4.7	Medium-term goals for the IOC (2009–2012)	63
4.8	The corporate programmes to meet IOC goals	64
4.9	Breakdown of the OGKM Corporate Programme objective	66
4.10	The review process followed by the IOC	67
5.1	The human resources management model	73
5.2	Coach Job Description Template	76
5.3	Job Specification for a sport events manager	79
5.4	Working with children background check consent form	84
5.5	Volunteers rights	87
6.1	The ASA Income and expenditure account	103
6.2	The ASA Balance sheet	104
6.3	Income and expenditure account: vertical analysis for the ASA	108
6.4	Income and expenditure account: horizontal analysis for the ASA	110
6.5	Rugby club expenditure	115
6.6	Rugby club income	117
6.7	Operating budget for the rugby club	118
7.1	The performance management process	122
7.2	The performance management process for qualifying for the Olympics	123

7.3	Success criteria for performance management	135
8.1	Force Field Diagram for introducing objective team selection criteria	147
9.1	Promotional poster	169
10.1	Staging an event	188
10.2	Gantt chart for organising an event	189
13.1	ICT continuum for voluntary sport organisations	242
13.2	Transferring data from one location to another using the World Wide Web	247
13.3	OceaniaSport	252

## **TABLES**

2.1	Contextual influences on a UK National Governing Body	27
3.1	The management areas associated with good governance	42
4.1	Power-interest matrix for stakeholders	60
5.1	Sourcing considerations	80
5.2	Selection techniques	81
7.1	Performance dimensions of voluntary sport organisations	130
9.1	The competitive market of a basketball club	161
12.1	An example of a risk register for a club	232
13.1	The evolution of technology and its impact on communication in VSOs	239
13.2	Information needs of VSOs	244

# **PART I**

## **INTRODUCING THE VOLUNTARY SPORT SECTOR**



# CHAPTER 1

## THE VOLUNTARY SPORT SECTOR

Leigh Robinson

The delivery of sporting opportunities tends to fall into three main sectors. The first sector is the public or state sector, which mainly encompasses the work of local authorities and schools. The second is the private or commercial sector primarily consisting of the health and fitness industry and professional sport leagues. The third, the focus of this book, is the voluntary sector, which, in the UK and many other countries, is primarily made up of clubs and national federations. It is, however, more complex than this as it is often difficult to determine what sector an organisation operates within. For example, many sport leagues operate on a commercial basis, although the teams that participate within them are usually part of the voluntary sector. The Olympic Games is a commercial event; however, some of the sports in the Games are professional, while others are still considered to be amateur. All athletes compete under the banner of their National Olympic Committee (NOC), which is part of the voluntary sector.

As a consequence, in order to make sense of this mixed economy of sport, it is necessary to be clear about the characteristics that lead an organisation to being part of a particular sector and thus this chapter begins with a definition of what a voluntary sport organisation (VSO) is, setting out the main organisations in this sector and the characteristics that they have in common. It then goes on to discuss the concept of managing within the voluntary sport sector and the skills associated with doing so.

### DEFINING THE VOLUNTARY SPORT SECTOR

What is a voluntary sport organisation? Wilson and Butler (1986) have suggested two characteristics that characterise a VSO. These are that:

- a considerable proportion of the labour force is voluntary, rather than paid. Such organisations are still voluntary even if some of their members are paid, as is the case in many national federations, or if they receive financial aid from government agencies, such as Sport England
- the organisation does not seek profit from the selling of goods or services, although many set up profit-seeking subsidiary trading companies with the