

**Session:** Managing Volunteers

**No.** of attendees: 25

**Presenters:** Rick Antonson, Jana Remikova, Stacy Ashton,

**Facilitator:** Muriel Honey

**Monitor:** Maureen Kaake

**Time:** 11.00am – 12.30pm

**Stacy Ashton;**

**'Alzheimer's Society'**

- Spoke to their vision/mission
- 400 volunteers
- 7 signature events
- Largest walk for Alzheimer's; 22 communities, \$650 000 raised, walk committee oversees everything with help from various coordinators (i.e. recruitment, registration, volunteer etc.) They go through 2 days of intense training to pull event off.

80 staff at Alzheimer's Society, each event coordinator recruits their own volunteers

7 months to prepare:

- **October** recruit
- **November** train
- **May** walk

Staff culture shift is a challenge, letting go of control and deferring to volunteers

- 150 walks across Canada
- 22 in BC (the largest no.)
- 22 Chairs
- 150 committee members
- use of diverse committee (historically, if committee is made up of people from the same community – if lead person leaves, most will follow. Also provides more resources, etc. networking.)
- Have a position description in place, which makes it easier if you need to relieve someone as a volunteer

**Jana Remisova;**

**'Experience Vancouver'**

Support for large events that come to Vancouver

- 200 local residents as volunteers
- create positive experience
- enhance ability to engage visitors
- promote local experiences

- community advocates
- diversity skills and knowledge
- link to visitor perspective
- Volunteers help to build relationships with the community
- Serve as ambassadors
- Serve as eyes and ears at events and gain valuable feedback from attendees
- Visitor centre downtown Vancouver
- Volunteer deployed in pedestrian corridors (mainly downtown Vancouver)
- Sent out in groups of 2
- Onsite event support for conventions; good place to eat, nice night spot, hiking & recreation
- Sometimes paired with a staff member for presentations as a spokesperson
- 40 different languages among the volunteers – can and have served as translators for guests/clients
- 2010 – 400 volunteers on tourism side, recruitment began 1 year out, outreach in schools and organizations, volunteers also recruited, rotated volunteers
- Kudos program (peer to peer write up of a job well done and a prize or reward – internally.)
- Important to acknowledge the volunteer when they arrive – check in throughout event and thanks upon leaving
- 1 formal sit down dinner per year, length of service award, volunteer award
- Volunteers are given free entry into events or attractions to gain 1<sup>st</sup> hand knowledge
- 2 full days of classroom training, could include scavenger hunt, tours of areas.

Ongoing training like walking tours

Pairs are often one newbie with one seasoned (mentorship)

Good retention of volunteers, mostly summer months, some do stay year round

If under 19 – parental permission required (Alzheimer’s Society)

19+ only – Tourism Vancouver

Training on destination knowledge and training on delivering/communication of info.

Also sales training (they are ‘selling’ Vancouver)

General liability insurance advice - talk to the insurer

#### **Q&A:**

**Q:** What about background checks?

**A:** Volunteers are interviewed, references checked, sign a document of duties and criminal ref checks when applicable (when dealing with clients, etc.)

Complaints are better than apathy.

When challenged by, or dealing with challenging volunteers – remind them why they are there. Make sure they see and understand the big picture/goal.

**Rick Antonson**

**'Former CEO Tourism Vancouver'**

4 quick markers

- 1) Find the proper volunteer for the task at hand
- 2) Make sure they understand the big picture, mission, goal
- 3) Make sure you manage, monitor and motivate
- 4) Get their commitment

I am not the cause, I am the tool for cause