

# Coach Recruitment Program



**Becoming the kind of organization that people want to be affiliated with is the key to effective volunteer recruitment.**

This PDF, although it is focused on recruiting coaches, affects every aspect of an organization. Part 1 deals with the characteristics that make an organization attractive to volunteers. Part 2 addresses the specifics of a coach recruitment campaign.

## Part 1 - The Organizational Characteristics

To be able to establish a standard of quality in coaches, a youth sports organization (YSO) must have enough coaches so it does not have to beg people to coach. If a YSO must plead with people to get them to coach, it will be very difficult to ask them to go above and beyond simply coaching (e.g., attending a coaching workshop, use encouragement rather than fear to motivate players).

We believe that a YSO that aspires to be an outstanding educational-athletic organization needs to recruit more coaches than it will ultimately need. We recommend a goal of 110% of the coaches you think you will actually need. This provides the YSO with the power to set and enforce Positive Coaching standards, and in a few cases, to be able to tell a coach that he or she no longer can coach in this organization because of inappropriate behavior.

Many YSO leaders believe they cannot ask much of their coaches since they are volunteers. They are concerned that if they do establish requirements (e.g., required attendance at a workshop), the coaches will quit and the YSO will be unable to supply enough coaches for all the athletes that want to play.

It's useful to look at organizations that function mostly with volunteers. Some organizations are able to attract more volunteers than they need. What is it that makes a nonprofit organization attractive to potential volunteers? To answer that, let's first look at what motivates people to volunteer. Here is a list of some common reasons why people say they volunteer:

- The activity (what the organization does) is enjoyable.
- The people are fun to be around.
- They believe in the mission or cause.
- It provides them with a chance to learn a new skill or knowledge.
- They have a chance to make a difference, to build something valuable.

A YSO that gives volunteers many of these opportunities will be able to attract as many volunteers as it needs. Let's examine each of the five elements.

### 1. The activity (what the organization does) is enjoyable.

**Let Coaches Coach:** Most adults volunteer to coach because they love coaching their sport. That may seem obvious but it often gets lost when YSOs ask coaches to raise funds, provide game snacks, help maintain fields and facilities, etc. These activities can contribute to burnout and cause them to prematurely leave coaching, if they even start in the first place.

A YSO should organize to let coaches coach. It should recruit other volunteers to maintain fields. It should arrange for a "team parent" to be assigned to the coach, so he or she doesn't have to worry about providing the post-game snack. It can then let prospective coaches know in its recruiting material:

"This is an organization that lets coaches coach."

# Coach Recruitment Program



**The people are fun to be around.**

**Develop a Community of Coaches:** In most YSOs, coaches get together only in games where they are competing against each other and in meetings where they are passive listeners to directives from above.

A YSO should provide opportunities for coaches to get to know each other and have fun with each other. Here are some ways that "a community of coaches" can start to build:

1. Schedule games in which teams of coaches play each other. Games can be informal "whoever-shows-up" arrangements, or they can be scheduled and publicized so that the coaches' players can watch them play.
2. Schedule social activities (with food!) to get coaches mixing with each other.
3. Hold a Coaches' Appreciation Lunch (or dinner) each year.

**They believe in the mission or cause.**

**Promote Positive Coaching Mission Statement:** A YSO should develop a compelling mission statement (see # 1 above) that emphasizes the long-term impact it intends to have on its young athletes. It should promote this mission statement in its official documents and informally when its leaders talk to coaches and parents. Coaches, parents and athletes should be constantly reminded of it.

The message being communicated is that this is not just another youth sports organization that is only concerned about sports. This is an organization that cares about developing kids into successful adults. It provides them with a chance to learn new skills or knowledge.

**Become a "Learning Organization":** For-profit businesses spend billions of dollars annually training employees. They recognize that their success is dependent on the quality of their people. Many firms use their training programs as a recruitment tool. They tell prospective employees about the valuable training they will get as an employee of their company.

A YSO should develop a variety of different learning and growth opportunities for its coaches, including:

1. Annual training in Positive Coaching philosophy and techniques.
2. Skills Clinics featuring successful local college or high school coaches.
3. "Round-Table Discussions" that allow coaches to share best practices.

These regular educational opportunities can be used in the recruitment of coaches. The message is that this is an organization that values good coaching and is doing things to help coaches learn and improve so they can be the best coaches possible. They have a chance to make a difference, to build something valuable.

**An Organization That Values Coaches as Mentors:** Many coaches get started in coaching because they are excited about helping kids develop their potential. Often they get caught up in a win-at-all-cost mentality, and their original motivation gets clouded. They begin to see their job as simply building a winning team and focus exclusively on their win/loss record. This limited goal is not nearly as satisfying as coaching to win and to help young people develop into successful citizens.

A YSO should advertise itself as a place where coaches who want to help shape young people can find a home. The message: We have an important mission to help young people become successful adults. We recognize coaches as the key to accomplishing that mission, and we place a priority on the educational development of our coaches. We do everything we can to put coaches in a position to be successful.

For-profit businesses put a lot of energy into retaining outstanding employees because they recognize that experience usually means better performance and that it is expensive to train new people. The suggestions in this section can help attract new coaches, and they can make it more likely that current coaches who come into the organization will stay longer. This means that fewer coaches need to be recruited each year.

# Coach Recruitment Program



## Part 2 - The Recruitment Campaign

Now that we've considered what it takes to develop an organization that people want to be affiliated with, how does an organization implement an effective recruitment campaign? Here are some elements.

**Appoint a Recruitment Manager:** The person in charge of recruiting coaches ideally will be an out-going, sales-oriented individual who is not bashful about selling the organization to prospective coaches. However, the most important assets this person brings to the job are determination and persistence. He or she will simply not stop until the YSO has the coaches it needs.

**Develop Your Message:** Using the ideas from Part 1 of this section, develop the message that you want to use in your recruitment campaign. The general idea: "This is not just another sports organization. This is an organization that is developing young people on the field and off. We're looking for people that care about kids and love this sport and want to be part of an exciting organization."

Emphasize the benefits your YSO brings to coaches (e.g., coaching clinics, your embracing of Positive Coaching Alliance principles, the chance to make a difference, etc.) in your written materials. If your YSO is formally aligned with Positive Coaching Alliance as a PCA Partner, stress that in your materials, as it may give local journalists an angle for writing a story.

**Advertise:** Research the options for getting the word out in your area. Newspapers, parent magazines, and radio public service announcements (PSAs) are potential targets for announcements. Many newspapers have a weekly section on physical activity opportunities. Find out what is possible and write a notice that can appear in each.

**Start Early:** Get recruiting notices out well before you will need coaches. For example, if your season starts in September, you will want to start getting notices out by May.

**Follow-up:** There are many ways that notices can get lost on the way to print. After the notices are sent to the local media, follow up with phone calls to make sure they were received and will run, and to see if there is anything else needed.

**Keep It Up:** They say in advertising, "They have to hear the jingle 7 times before they buy the toothpaste." Resubmit notices every week until you have the coaches you need.

**Information Sessions:** Consider holding one or more informational sessions for prospective coaches. This can be a hook for your media notices and a way for individuals to check you out before they have to decide.

**Target High-Potential Areas:** Focus on local institutions where potential coaches congregate. Local colleges are filled with undergraduates who played varsity sports in high school but are not competing at the collegiate level. Many of them would love to stay in contact with the sport through coaching. Community colleges often have physical education or coaching education courses or programs. High school athletes might be interested in becoming assistant coaches.

**Enlist Current Coaches as Recruiters:** Ask your current coaches to bring a friend into the organization to coach. Many youth coaches get started because a friend asked them to help coach. They then go on to coach their own team. You might even experiment with a "bounty" in which a current coach would receive some kind of reward (a cap, etc.), if they successfully recruit additional coaches.

**Seek Out Mothers as Coaches:** Often the father coaches, even for girls' teams. You can encourage mothers to consider coaching, perhaps initially as an assistant coach, if they feel unprepared to be a head coach. Many women have an intuitive understanding of the elements of Positive Coaching but may not believe they know enough about the technical aspects of the sport. By offering clinics and giving the option of starting as an assistant coach, you may be able to tap into a much larger pool of potential coaches.

**Evaluate:** At the end of the season, pull together a focus group of coaches and ask them how the season went, what they appreciated about the organization, what could be improved, and what ideas they have for getting more coaches. Also solicit testimonials from coaches that can be used in the next season's marketing materials.