



The future of sports event volunteer programmes

How an engaged community elevates the guest and athlete experience

A guide to transforming your sports event programme, told through the real-world stories of some of the most engaged programmes in Europe and beyond

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Contents

1. Executive Summary: The Strategic Shift in Sport
2. The Four Critical Challenges in Modern Workforce Management
3. The Evolution of the Volunteer Experience
4. The Athlete and Guest Experience: Why an Engaged Community Matters
5. Empowering Volunteer Leaders: From Logistics to Engagement
6. Technical Insight for IT Leaders: Security and Integration
7. Strategic Insight for C-Suite Decision Makers
8. Quantifying the Impact: The ROI of Rosterfy
9. Case Study: Le Champion
10. Case Study: Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games
11. Case Study: UEFA
12. Conclusion: Future-Proofing Your Volunteer Workforce



Section 1

Executive Summary: The Strategic Shift in Sport

For sporting organisations and community sport bodies, volunteers are their lifeblood. However, as these organisations scale, the complexity of managing thousands of individuals often exceeds the capability of traditional manual tools. This white paper explores how transitioning to a digital-first strategy allows sporting bodies across the UK and Europe to move from reactive administration to strategic engagement that ensures a seamless and positive volunteer experience.



The state of volunteering

The sporting sector across the UK is showing renewed momentum in volunteering. Sport England's latest Active Lives data (November 2024 to November 2025) shows 22.3% of adults, roughly 10.5 million people, volunteered to support sport and physical activity, a further increase on the previous year.

Formal volunteering more broadly is showing the same direction. The government's Community Life Survey 2024/25 shows 17% of adults volunteered formally at least once a month, up from 16% the year before, with 28% volunteering formally at least once in the year.

Rosterfy's own State of UK Volunteer Management Report 2026, based on a survey of over 300 volunteer managers across the UK, found the same optimism on the ground: 72% of volunteer managers feel positive about the future of UK volunteering, 46% reported an increase in volunteer numbers over the past 12 months, and 88% say volunteers are mission-critical to their organisation. Only 44% have invested in a volunteer management system to match that demand.

The message for sporting bodies: volunteering is genuinely on the rise again, both in sport specifically and across the wider sector. The opportunity now is building the systems to convert that momentum into sustained, long-term participation.

Section 2

The Four Critical Challenges in Modern Workforce Management

In our analysis of major sporting events and community-based organisations across the UK and Europe, four recurring “pain points” threaten the sustainability of volunteer programmes:

- **The Time Barrier:** Time remains the single greatest hurdle to formal volunteering, and streamlining the application and scheduling process is key to giving that time back to the volunteer.
- **Manual administration:** Managers often handle high ratios of personnel manually, leading to excessive “desk time” that detracts from meaningful volunteer engagement and takes leaders away from connection and impact.
- **Uncertain attendance:** “Will they show up?” is a constant concern for event-day operations. Modern platforms use automated waiting lists and two-way communication systems to fill last-minute vacancies instantly.
- **The retention gap:** Starting recruitment from scratch for every season is unsustainable and costly. Keeping volunteers engaged through rewards and recognition modules is crucial to ensuring they return for future events.

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games saw over 99% of its 14,000 volunteers report feeling especially proud to have taken part.

[Read the case study](#)

At the elite end of the scale, UEFA's EURO 2024 volunteer programme, the largest in UEFA's history, shows the same pattern: a smooth, mobile-first experience matters just as much for major European sporting bodies as it does for community events.

[Listen to the podcast](#)



On community connection

Over 99% of volunteers felt especially proud to have volunteered, with the vast majority sharing they felt a greater connection to their local community following their involvement in the Games.

Andrew Newman
Director of Workforce and Operations
Birmingham 2022





Section 3

The Evolution of the Volunteer Experience

To compete for the time of passionate individuals, your digital journey must be seamless.

- **Seamless registration:** Intuitive registration portals ensure the process is quick and professional. With a single source of truth, organisations only have to get their volunteers to apply once in order to access multiple opportunities rather than redoing the process each time.
- **Personalised dashboards:** Volunteers benefit from a central hub where they can see upcoming shifts, manage their own availability, and apply for specific roles.
- **Autonomy and empowerment:** Providing tools for volunteers to manage their own journey leads to higher satisfaction and lower turnover rates.

UEFA's EURO 2024 volunteer programme, the largest in UEFA's history at 16,000 volunteers, is a strong example of this in practice at the elite end of European sport. A key priority was ensuring the experience felt simple and intuitive, particularly for younger audiences, roughly half of UEFA's applicants are aged 18 to 25.

"The overall user experience was much smoother and more interactive... when you apply it's smooth, it's easy, you know exactly where to click and where to go."

Olivier Chovin, Event Workforce Specialist, UEFA. See the full case study in Section 12.

Section 4

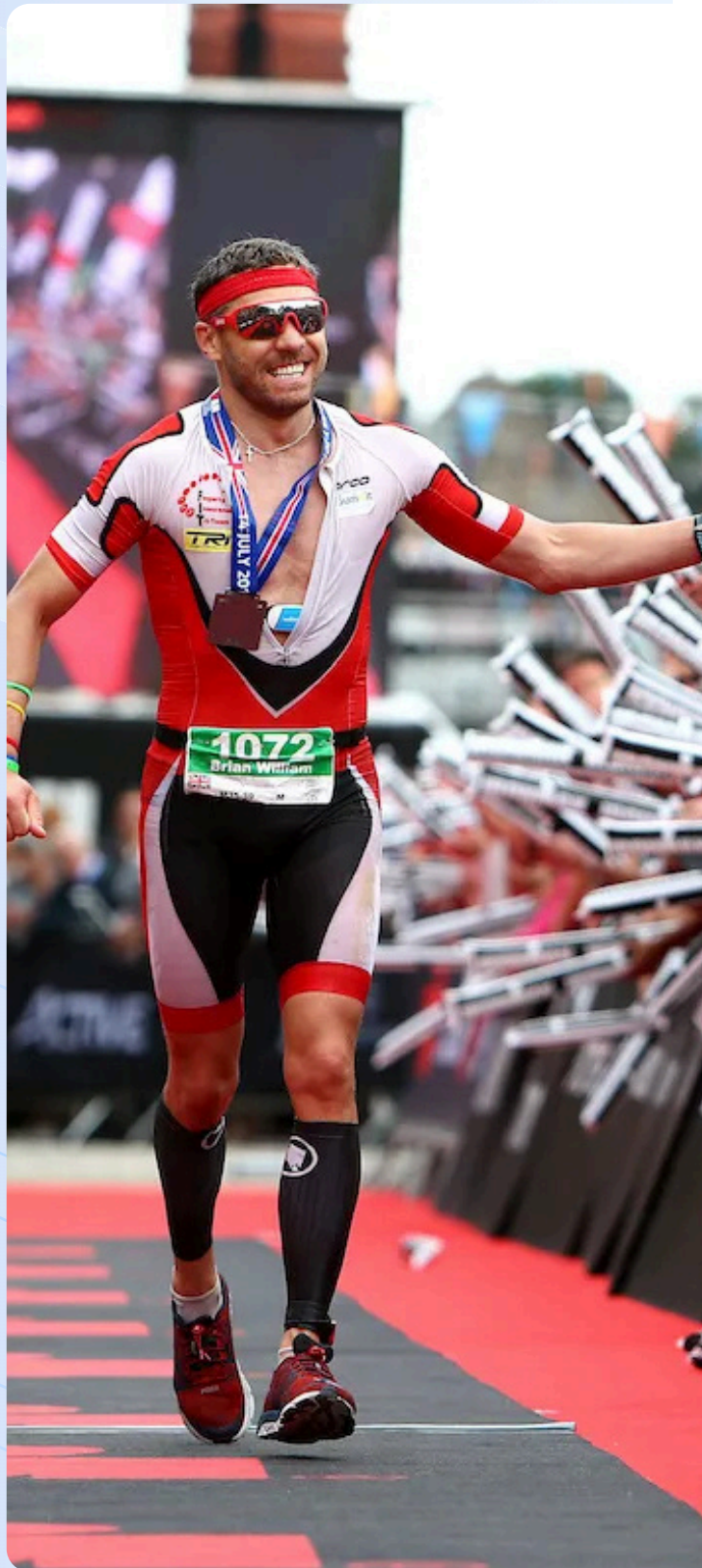
The Athlete and Guest Experience: Why an Engaged Community Matters

Volunteers are not a background function of a sporting event, they are frequently the event, as far as the athlete or guest is concerned.

The runner's first interaction is a marshal at the London Running Show. The swimmer's confidence in a well-run gala rests on a well-trained official. The parent at a youth games venue judges the whole organisation by how warmly their child is greeted at check-in.

From logistics-first to experience-first

- Seamless registration: When volunteers can register once and apply to multiple shifts or events without redoing paperwork, they arrive less frustrated and more ready to engage with guests.
- Personalised dashboards: A central hub where volunteers can see upcoming shifts, manage availability, and pick roles that suit their interests leads to higher satisfaction and materially lower turnover.
- Real-time, on-the-day coordination: QR-code check-in and real-time visibility mean coordinators know who is on-site and where, so gaps can be filled before a guest ever notices a station is short-staffed.
- Recognition that sticks: Reward modules that track and celebrate milestones, hours served, events completed, skills gained, give volunteers a reason to return year after year, building the kind of institutional memory that protects the guest experience during high-pressure moments.



Section 5

Empowering Volunteer Leaders: From Logistics to Engagement

For those on the front lines of volunteer coordination, the goal is to spend less time on data entry and more time on people.

- **Automate the “heavy lifting”:** By automating administrative tasks, leaders can focus on building relationships and improving the on-the-ground volunteer experience.
- **Real-time communication:** Go beyond bulk SMS and emails and utilise tools like push notifications and two-way messaging to communicate with your volunteer groups in real time, specific to their role.
- **Recognition that sticks:** Use built-in reward modules to track and celebrate milestones, essential for maintaining a motivated and loyal community.

Section 6

Technical Insight for IT Leaders: Security and Integration

Adopting a VMS is not just about features, it's about how it fits into your broader digital ecosystem.

- **Seamless integrations:** Rosterfy offers over 50+ native integrations for background checks and existing tech stacks, ensuring a frictionless flow of data across your organisation.
- **Rigorous data security:** Our platform is built for organisations that require high-level data security, risk compliance, and auditable trails for all volunteer information, with ISO 27001 and SOC2 compliance.

For UK and European organisations, data sovereignty and compliance with GDPR are paramount. Systems must support a single source of truth while protecting sensitive volunteer data under these frameworks. Rosterfy's architecture is designed to integrate with existing organisational tech stacks, ensuring data integrity across multi-agency initiatives such as major event delivery.

- **Configurable scalability:** The system is designed to handle massive spikes in traffic during major event recruitment and onsite management without compromising performance or data integrity.



On preventing burnout

With formal volunteering rates under sustained pressure and time cited as the primary barrier to participation, leaders must pivot from manual data entry to strategic engagement to keep their workforces active. Automating the “heavy lifting” is no longer just about efficiency, it is a critical measure to prevent burnout among the staff managing our sporting events and community sport organisations.

Section 7

Strategic Insight for C-Suite Decision Makers

Executives need to ensure volunteer programmes are safe, compliant, and cost-effective.

- **Proven ROI:** Automation leads to significant labour value savings, as seen in Le Champion's shift to a single, centralised platform across 60+ events a year.
- **Data-driven decisions:** Extract every data point, from age demographics to total hours served, into visual dashboards to prove the social impact of your organisation to stakeholders.
- **Risk mitigation:** Ensure your brand is protected by enforcing 100% compliance on all safety certifications before any volunteer steps on-site, including auto-renewal prompts to ensure nothing slips through the cracks.

Section 8

Quantifying the Impact: The ROI of Rosterfy

Transforming your bottom line by moving away from “logistics-first” management, organisations can achieve:

- **Cost Savings:** Reduce onboarding time and unlock annual efficiency gains by replacing fragmented systems with a single platform, as seen across Rosterfy's sporting clients including Le Champion and London Youth Games.
- **Boosted Productivity:** On average, customers save 50% of their time by replacing manual processes with smart automations.
- **Scale with Confidence:** Automate end-to-end onboarding, allowing your team to manage significantly more volunteers without increasing headcount.

Discover your potential savings

Every sporting organisation has unique variables. Try our free ROI calculator to discover exactly how much time and cost savings you could achieve with Rosterfy.

[Try our ROI calculator](#)



On the value of centralised data

Le Champion coordinates 3,500+ volunteers across 60+ events a year from a single platform, replacing fragmented spreadsheets with one source of truth, exactly the kind of operational clarity that boards and leadership teams need to see.

Le Champion



Sector: Major Events

Volunteers managed: 3,500+

Events: Netherlands

Le Champion is a non-profit organisation delivering some of the Netherlands' most recognised running, cycling, and walking events, including the TCS Amsterdam Marathon. Le Champion serves as a strong European benchmark for how event organisers can centralise volunteer management across a busy annual calendar.

The challenge

Delivering approximately 60 events every year, across multiple disciplines, meant Le Champion needed to manage thousands of volunteers across a variety of operational roles: course marshalling, build-up and pack-down, water stations, traffic control, start and finish areas, clothing intake, and course safety. With many volunteers returning year after year, maintaining engagement and streamlining communication became increasingly important to long-term participation and operational efficiency.

The results

- 60+ sporting events are delivered successfully each year.
- 3,500+ volunteers coordinated and supported annually.
- Improved visibility into volunteer demand versus confirmed coverage across events.
- More targeted volunteer communications and recruitment planning.

OPERATIONAL FUNCTION	TYPICAL MANUAL ORGANIZATION	WITH ROSTERFY
 DATA INTEGRITY	Spreadsheet chaos and silos	One "source of truth" across 60+ events
 ADMIN WORKLOAD	Heavy manual data entry	Centralised planning, communications and reporting in one platform
 RETENTION	High "one-and-done" rates	Many volunteers returning year after year across events
 COMPLIANCE	High risk of expired certifications	100% compliant via automation

Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

Sector: Major Events

Volunteers managed: 14,000

Events: Birmingham, UK

Elite sporting events like the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games demonstrate how advanced strategies can mobilise massive workforces while creating a permanent volunteer culture.

- **The challenge of scale** - Birmingham 2022 was delivered in exceptional circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a hugely challenging environment to attract, recruit, retain, and train the workforce required to deliver the Games.
- **The digital solution** - Using Rosterfy, the Games team recruited, onboarded and scheduled 14,000 volunteers, the "Commonwealth Collective", through a comprehensive sifting process. Every local applicant was invited to the Volunteer Selection Centre at the Library of Birmingham, creating a memorable first in-person contact point for over 21,000 people interviewed.
- **Creating impact** - Over 99% of volunteers felt especially proud to have volunteered for the Games, with the vast majority reporting a greater connection to their local community following their involvement.
- **Building a lasting legacy** - Once the Games concluded, the volunteer database and infrastructure were not disbanded. The Volunteers Collective launched afterwards as an open door for new volunteers, including near-miss applicants and young people who weren't old enough to take part in 2022, developed with backing from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, a grant from Spirit of 2012, the London 2012 Olympics legacy charity, and technical development support from Rosterfy.

On Birmingham's volunteer legacy

"We implemented never before seen approaches to help overcome and deliver what's been recognised as the best Volunteer Programme in Commonwealth Games history."

Andy Newman
Director of Workforce and Operations



This creates a permanent, professionalised volunteer culture that strengthens the local economy and society for years to come.

See [Birmingham 2022](#) case study.

UEFA



Sector: Football

Volunteers managed: 16,000

Events: Europe

UEFA's men's EURO 2024 in Germany was the largest volunteer programme UEFA has ever delivered, recruiting 16,000 volunteers across 10 host cities, coordinated by a core staff of approximately 40 people.

The challenge of scale

Coordinating a volunteer workforce of this size, spread across 10 venues, required a genuinely joined-up approach. For the first time in UEFA's history, the tournament merged its stadium-based and city-centre volunteer programmes into a single pool, giving every volunteer the same uniform, briefing and experience, rather than running fragmented, separately branded programmes side by side.

The digital solution

Applications opened exactly one year before the opening match, and around half of all applicants applied within the first week alone. Using Rosterfy, UEFA built a single Volunteer Global Community platform, giving volunteers one account they can reuse across tournaments, track their own volunteering history, and reapply without starting from scratch each time. The platform also supported a four-month interview process, split roughly 50/50 between in-person and online interviews, a first for UEFA at this scale.

Creating impact

By the later stages of recruitment, 98% of role offers had been accepted. Historically, UEFA's post-event surveys show 98 to 99% of volunteers say they would volunteer again. Roughly half of UEFA's applicants are aged 18 to 25, reflecting the programme's success in engaging a younger generation of volunteers alongside long-standing supporters.



'The overall user experience was much smoother and more interactive, which is super important for our target group. When you apply to volunteer it's smooth, it's easy, you know exactly where to click and where to go. It's the same with the mobile app, which we were very happy to implement because the new generation is very connected, we're all using smartphones.'

Olivier Chovin
Event Workforce Specialist, UEFA

[Listen to the Podcast](#)



Future-Proofing Your Volunteer Workforce

Scalability is not about having "more" staff, it is about having the digital infrastructure to manage them effectively. By removing the "manual ceiling", you empower your people and protect your programme's future.

Ready to unlock the potential of your volunteer programme?

[Book a demo with a Rosterfy specialist](#)

Footnotes and resources:

- Sport England, Active Lives Adult Survey: November 2024-25 Report (published April 2026)
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Community Life Survey 2024/25: Volunteering and Charitable Giving (published 10 December 2025)
- Rosterfy Case Study: Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games
- Rosterfy Case Study: Le Champion
- Rosterfy Podcast: Lessons from the largest volunteer programme in UEFA history, featuring Olivier Chovin, Event Workforce Specialist, UEFA
- Rosterfy, State of UK Volunteer Management Report 2026 (published July 2026)