

New South Wales YPS best practice: Recruitment and succession planning

If you're struggling with ideas for recruiting volunteers, and finding the time to prepare them for a position on your committee, please read this case study to find out how the New South Wales YPS are making this work.

We first interviewed James Dowzard, YPS Committee member, to get an overview of their recruitment initiatives:

How do you recruit volunteers through your events?

At events we make sure we go around and engage with the participants by asking them how they are finding the event. We frequently get asked questions about the IET and in our responses we will usually mention that if they would like to get more involved we can add them to the 'Volunteer Squad' so they can help out at future events. We also add a question on the registration form for the event which asks "Do you want to get more involved with the IET?". Positive responses are then followed up by the Volunteer Squad Manager.

How do you build meaningful relationships with new volunteers?

We hold monthly drinks events which are aimed at involving our volunteers in a less formal way than the committee meetings. This usually leads to good conversation in a relaxed setting and gets them keen to participate in future events, or even become a committee member via the Shadow Committee

How does the Shadow Committee work?

Out of our brainstorming session in November a key action was succession planning. The goal is to advertise the roles on social media, running a sort of recruitment drive for the shadow positions, with applications sent in so we can get the best people into the roles. The shadow member will then act as a committee member, who will learn how to perform their position without any responsibility initially, as there is already a person in the position. However responsibility over the year will be given to them, they are encouraged to take on as much as they wish. If they are extremely keen, the existing position holder can even just act as an advisor, letting the shadow member work in the role. We saw this as a great way to get more people involved in the committee, as well as to ensure everyone is contributing in their role. If the shadow member does not take on responsibility and complete their tasks, they will not receive the role the next year.

We then spoke to Ken Muir, Volunteer Squad Manager, to find out more about the results:

How successful is the Volunteer Squad?

The Volunteer Squad has been successful in filling out volunteer shortages when running an event. This has been helpful time and time again when we needed those extra hands for tasks such as: recording attendance; taking photos; taking notes; promoting the IET; helping set up the event; and inviting their peers to events etc. Engaged volunteers generally move into committee positions, so it's a great way to ease them into the way we do things at the IET.

What feedback have you received from the participants?

In general, those who are there to help out on the day are energetic university students or graduates. Here is some feedback from one of the student volunteers, Jeff Chen:

"One of my highlights was attending the Design Led Thinking workshop. Meeting other young professionals and learning a new design thinking skill was a wonderful experience. There are a wide variety of monthly events, from self-development to socialising, so I can always choose the one that suits me. The IET has good contacts within the industry. This initiative is good for keeping university students in the loop about future events. It will also help to establish stronger links between the IET, universities, and volunteering. I will surely bring more friends along with me next time!"

What challenges have you faced?

One main challenge I found was keeping some of the volunteers in the Volunteer Squad continuously engaged throughout the year. This is because they are not invited to our monthly committee meetings and are not usually involved with the organising of events. The only time we really saw them was during events when they helped with the logistical tasks. To work on this, we began to organise monthly drinks sessions where the Volunteer Squad had the opportunity to network and socialise with the committee and other IET members.

How many people have participated in the Volunteer squad so far?

We currently have 10 people in the Volunteer Squad, approximately half of which actively help out.