

Chapter Three

Recruiting Runners

for Your Team

If you plan to put together a full team to compete in a corporate track meet, you will soon discover you need more than fleet young sprinters or crusty old road racers. The structure of the events in a typical USCAA corporate track meet emphasizes teams over individual performance and includes virtually all age and gender combinations. There are even a few races where you will need to get some senior managers to huff and puff their way around the track. Therefore it is critical to recruit participants for your running team, not just from confirmed runners, but from across a broad representation of your employees. Here are some ideas on how to get started.

Where to Begin

If your company has no formalized fitness/recreation program, a good place to begin is to informally recruit runners in your company to join you for a lunch run or after-work “workout.” Word travels quickly about “brown bag” joggers in the company, and you will likely pick up new runners from this small bit of exposure.

Next, approach the Human Resources department with your desire to form a running club. Request help in advertising the club through in-house newsletters, bulletin boards, lunch-room table tents, and electronic mail. In your communication set up a convenient meeting time and place. In the case of a large company with three workforce shifts, you may want to set up a morning meeting to catch the graveyard shift and a late lunch meeting to catch the swing shift and office workers.

Once you have established an in-house running club you can identify key people in the club to assist in recruiting your corporate team’s runner needs. Normally speaking, the hardest runners to recruit are women. The majority of women in the workforce fall in the 30- to 50-year old bracket. Most of these women did not grow up competing in organized sports. You may have some female recreational runners in your club willing to enter a road race, but getting them to step foot on a track can be intimidating to them. A road race provides any recreational runner with the comfort of hundreds of fellow runners by their side, in front and behind. But on the track, a recreational runner feels like a one-act play performing alone in front of a stadium

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Wanted: Runner/Husband

In 1980 I captained the Coors running team to the Nationals at Stanford University. It was the first time Adolph Coors had entered a team, as it was for the Exxon team captained by Robert Radnoti. The Coors and Exxon teams were assigned to the same heat in the Pyramid Relay. I bet my Coors baton we would beat the Exxon team. I anchored the Coors team to victory over Exxon. Robert always says, “Jan stole my baton and my heart that weekend. She took the Coors team back to Colorado, but I persistently recruited her into marrying me in 1983.”

The national experience is more than a 2-day meet. It’s also about meeting hundreds of people and teams who share a common interest in life with you: wanting to be the best they can be and staying fit to achieve their best.

crowd glued to every stride. In recruiting all recreational runners to become track enthusiasts, go slowly. Hold informal club track meets as a friendly way to introduce a 400- or 800-meter run to these runners. Make it fun, and tell them their participation is important to the team’s overall capabilities of entering specific events. Notice I said “participate.” Don’t focus on their ability to run a sub-60 second quarter or 2:20 half. Get them comfortable with the idea of track running, and help them set realistic targets relative to their current conditioning. After a few meets, they will begin to set competitive standards for themselves.

An excellent resource for runners can be your company’s retirees. Check with your Human Resources department for a contact within the company’s retiree organization and hold a fitness clinic for this group. These people are a priceless piece of the corporate running team puzzle. They bring to the team their spirit and energy for life, and they are valued participants for your team in the field events, road races, seniors relay, 4 x 200M, and masters relay.

Recruiting Checklist

- Start small. Begin with your own division or department.
- Establish a company running club. Communicate through employee relations newsletters, bulletin boards, lunchroom table tents, and voice mail.
- Invite and encourage runners of every ability. Downplay competition to novice runners. Keep workouts and runs fun. Socialize as a group whenever possible.
- Delegate recruitment team needs of senior, master, and female runners and field event athletes to positive role-model club members.
- Don't push anyone into competing. Encourage them and calm their track fears with fun track meet workouts, followed by a low-key dual meet with another company running club.
- Contact company retirees association. Speak at one of its meetings. Hold a running/exercise clinic for the group.
- Recruit upper management athletes. They are a potential gold mine for getting funds for the team as well as entering a President's Relay at nationals.
- Check with Employee Relations and Personnel for backgrounds on new hires. Look for possible former college runners.
- Network nationwide. Find key people at each area office to coordinate teams.

A key component of a company's national team is the President's Relay. Scout within your company to find which senior managers are runners or former athletes. You may just save yourself hours of sales pitches to your company's marketing or corporate relations department if you have three committed VPs and/or Presidents running. Once these people attend and participate in the National Championships, they will see firsthand the tremendous camaraderie generated among employees and the corporate goodwill shared with the thousands of corporate runners also attending the event.

Let's assume that your company is a large, geographically dispersed organization. Now that your runners are established and organized at your company division, it is time to recruit company runners based throughout the United States and overseas. Start by contacting all editors of company newsletters or

magazines to print a story, with pictures, on your team. Send a team video of running events in which your team has participated to regional Human Resources offices or the corporate Fitness Director if your company has one. Begin networking to identify team coordinators at each key location. Ask the Human Resources department to inform you nationwide of new hires with collegiate athletic experience. The key to a nationwide company forming a national team is to find one capable coordinator at each key location. Ongoing communication among these coordinators can lay the groundwork for a national team, culminating in bringing together your best runners at the National Championships.

Fielding a National Team

The chart below identifies the number of people at each distance you will need to enter all Division I or II events at the USCAA National Championships. (Please note: masters, women, and seniors runners in events where distance was not designated were charted under the shortest distance of that given event for normal strategy purposes only. Refer to event descriptions included within this sourcebook for clarification if you have questions.)

w=woman m=man mas=masters sm=submasters sen=senior *=Division I (large company) event only

EVENT	200M	400M	600M	800M	1200M	1600M	MILE	3,200M	# of Participants
Distance Relay*				1		1w 1mas 1		1	5
Submasters Distance	1smw			1sm	1sm	1sm			4
Women's 800M*				2w					2
3-lap Sprint	1 1w	2							4
Executive Relay*		1sm		1smw 1sm		1sm			4
4 x 200M	1w 1sen 1mas								4
Men's Mile Team							2m		2
Seniors' Relay	1sen w	1sen	1sen						3
Women's Relay		2w		1w					3
Submaster Sprint*	1wsm 1sm	1sm		1sm					4
President's Relay		1sm, mas, or sen		2 sm, mas, or sen					3
Pyramid		2w		2	1				5
Masters Relay	1mas w 1sen	1mas		2mas					5
Sprint Relay	2w 1mas 1	2							6
Team jump	2-3								2 or 3
Team throw	2-3								2 or 3
Div. I 5K*									5m 4w
Div. II 5K									3m 2w
Div. I 10K*									5m