The Green Festival (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Every June our town holds its annual river festival, and for years it had been a sleepy affair with a few stalls and a brass band. Last year the organisers decided that something had to change. They wanted the festival to raise public awareness of how badly the river had been polluted, and they hoped that visitors would leave with more than a paper flag. The committee met in the library on a wet Tuesday, and by nine o'clock they had a plan, three arguments and no money at all.

My neighbour Priya volunteered first. She works as a designer and offered to produce a short film in animation, showing a cartoon fish swimming through plastic bottles towards clean water. Nobody had expected such professional work from a volunteer, and the committee accepted her offer immediately. The council, however, insisted on seeing everything before it was shown in public. Priya sent the file as an attachment to a long, polite email and then waited two weeks, growing more irritated every day. The official approval finally arrived on a Friday afternoon, with one small note asking her to change a joke about the mayor.

I joined the team late, mostly because I could not say no to Priya. My job was to deal with the volunteers, and there were far more applicants than places. Some wanted to run the food stalls, some wanted to steer boats, and one man simply wanted a free T-shirt. We had to choose appropriately, matching people to tasks that actually suited them rather than handing everything to whoever shouted loudest. It was harder than I had anticipated, and I lost several evenings to spreadsheets.

The most difficult part was the river race. Rowing three kilometres against the current is not something an ordinary visitor can do, so we needed genuinely athletic competitors. Two clubs from neighbouring towns agreed to come, and a local firm offered financial assistance in exchange for a banner at the finish line. I put my doubts aside and signed the agreement, since without them we could not have paid for the safety boats. The whole budget, we calculated, would have to be found again annually if the festival was to continue.

On the day itself, the weather behaved. Around four thousand people walked along the bank, the animation was shown on a huge screen, and children queued to draw fish on the pavement. Not everything went smoothly. Our first attempt to start the race failed when a swan refused to move, and the loudspeakers died during the mayor's speech, which several people thought was appropriate enough given the circumstances. Priya laughed so hard she had to sit down on a crate. By the evening, volunteers were collecting rubbish from the grass, and the river, for once, looked almost clean.

Try our 6-step method for free and make these words stick.

Listen to this episode online: https://course.interactivelessons.nl/local/podcast/episode.php?id=25476

Start this course for free: https://course.interactivelessons.nl/mod/quiz/view.php?id=1730