

Want to do better at work? Consider volunteering



It's undisputed that the act of volunteering can have a powerful effect in bettering the lives of others, while for the volunteer, this selflessness – and the *warm and fuzzies* that usually come part-and-parcel – are usually said to be enough of a reward.

But did you know that, in fact, volunteering can tangibly benefit the volunteer too, by helping them move forward in their professional lives?

Patronella Sono, Staff Volunteerism Portfolio (SVP) Specialist at Momentum Metropolitan, says that jobseekers – particularly those who are graduates – often find that prospective employers don't want to hire someone without any experience whatsoever; a chicken-egg conundrum, as these candidates cannot gain the necessary experience through gainful employment without any *existing* experience.

"Volunteering can provide you with a valuable opportunity to gain experience in your field of interest, which can be included in your CV," she explains.

One Deloitte survey found that 81% of respondents believed that skilled volunteering should be considered in a hiring decision while 76% said that it made a candidate more attractive as a prospective hire; with this desirability factor even higher for volunteer experience among college or university graduates.

Sono adds that volunteering connects you with people from all walks of life, which can subconsciously influence your personal development. "This can also help you better relate to people who come from diverse backgrounds, bringing new perspectives to your work through this exposure.

“In short, volunteerism can positively impact your career path by helping you to learn and develop new ‘soft’ skills such as people skills, as well as technical skills, as well as providing valuable networking opportunities. It can also contribute to your personal growth, making you a more well-rounded individual – all of which will help you succeed in the working environment.

“Ultimately, volunteerism is a valuable investment in both your professional and personal development.”

Skills to help you in your career

In Momentum Metropolitan’s Volunteerism Report 2022, those surveyed said that volunteerism helped them learn valuable skills that would help them in their career, such as teamwork (61%), planning (40%), leadership skills (40%) and compassion (57%).

Sono explains: “In terms of teaching teamwork, volunteerism is one of the most effective ways of bringing people together to achieve a common goal. As part of Momentum Metropolitan’s Staff Volunteer Programme, we once had to cook 2000 meals and plant veggie gardens for a preschool and an old age home. Everyone – including our leaders – was out there digging holes or adding the potting soil to ensure everything was completed and ready for harvest time. This demonstrates the true power of teamwork in action.

“One of our business leaders always says that building a cohesive and motivated team is crucial for project success. Through volunteerism, you can learn how to identify individual strengths, delegate tasks accordingly, and foster a sense of teamwork and collaboration among diverse group members.

“As a team leader, you need to communicate goals, tasks, and instructions clearly to your team members. You also need to listen to their feedback and concerns. Through this experience, you develop effective communication skills, both in conveying your ideas and actively listening to others.”

Sono explains that volunteering also teaches planning and organising. “Depending on the nature of the volunteer act, you might be required to plan an event, such as a soup kitchen. This might involve creating an agenda with allocated tasks for each person and ensuring that you have the required resources to execute it according to plan. In a workplace setting, almost any job requires some degree of planning, and so this experience will help you better execute according to schedule.”

Finally, it also encourages a deep compassion for others. “Yes, to volunteer in the first place you’re likely already a compassionate individual, but I believe that volunteering teaches us the true meaning of the word. In a work environment, this form of care for others can make you a much admired and respected colleague or leader,” she adds.