Make the Most of Your Volunteer Experience.

Volunteering can be rewarding, both on a personal and career level. Here are some tips on how to make the most of the experience.

Volunteering is one of the most important contributions you can make to the world. After all, your mix of talent, experience and interests is at the heart of the value you can bring to a cause or community. To make sure your experience is a completely positive one, consider the following:

82%

According to a recent survey by Deloitte, 82% of hiring managers are more likely to choose a candidate with volunteering experience .

Pick the right organization & role

The first step to making the most out of your volunteer experience is to choose the organization and role that best fit your beliefs, skills, personality and passions. Do the research. Familiarize yourself not just with the volunteer program, but also with the organization's leadership, vision, goals, mission and initiatives. Be clear on what you'll be asked to do. The better the work aligns with your interests, talents and experience, the more valuable—and satisfying—your contribution will be.

Make a commitment

Once you've decided on an organization and role, make a commitment and stick to it. No one benefits if your commitment to the originally agreed-upon arrangement wanes, and it may be seen as a negative reflection on you, despite the fact that you're working without compensation. If the volunteer position turns out to be different from what you expected or your ability to contribute changes, be forthcoming. Communicate the need to change the arrangement with your contact in a timely manner.

Be proactive, take initiative

To the extent that it's appropriate, taking initiative and making suggestions will maximize the value you'll bring as a volunteer. But be sensitive to the capabilities and limitations of the organization—your idea may be great, but with limited staff and finite resources, it may not be feasible.

Set goals

It's also a good idea to set goals for your involvement with input from the volunteering coordinator. The coordinator may be able to assign tasks specific to your goals. They also may be able to help measure your success in achieving those goals, especially if the volunteer program has a performance evaluation or feedback process. These goals might be skill or experiences focused, like "gain experience with web analytics" or "create arts lesson plans for elementary-aged children."

Look for opportunities to network

Volunteering is more than an opportunity to make a difference in your local community. It's a chance to expand your personal and professional network. Most charities host events to attract donors, acknowledge contributors and volunteers, or both. It's well worth it to attend, not just to be appreciated, but also to meet new people in the organization as well as the broader business and not-for-profit community.

Leave with a portfolio

Be sure to collect evidence of the skills you acquire in the form of summarizing projects, tracking impact and articulating the work you're doing, visually or in written format. Many volunteer roles involve wearing "lots of hats" so it's important to document your experience and capture the work you have accomplished. There may be important facets or details of your involvement that you don't recall as time passes, so keep a journal or continuously edit your resume to reflect your experience.

How do I list volunteer experience on my resume?

Including volunteer work on your resume can help you showcase your skills and help hiring managers understand your interests. When deciding what to include, think about what will be the most relevant and impactful to the role or company you're targeting. Format the section in bulleted accomplishment statements.

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FUNDRAISING ASSISTANT   **CHI Animal Shelter, Chicago, IL**   **March 2019**

- *Sourced $1,500 in donations in a single month through an email, text and calling campaign.*
- *Assisted staff with registration and other day-of event needs for the shelter's annual walk-a-thon.*