

How Volunteering Could Help You Land Your Next Job

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Volunteering could help you land your next job.

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There are many different ways volunteering can help you further your career while you give back to your community. For example, you can learn new skills or enhance skills that you already have.

Volunteering is also an excellent opportunity for networking. By making contact with new people, you may open the door to a new job.

Finally volunteering keeps you active in your community and can give you the reason you need to get out of the house while waiting for a potential employer to call.

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When you start looking at different organizations or groups to volunteer for, ask yourself what's important to you? Look for a group or organization that works with issues that you strongly support. If you can't find one, this may be an opportunity for you to start one yourself. If there is an issue in your community that you feel strongly about, but no one has addressed; this is your chance to do something. It can be as simple as painting an elderly neighbor's house or forming a neighborhood watch.

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Another thing to consider is your skill set. Do you enjoy working in the outdoors, have a knack for teaching, or just enjoy interacting with people? Look for volunteer work that will incorporate those aspects of your personality. Many organizations look for volunteers who have previous familiarity with certain equipment, such as computers or possess certain skills such as carpentry, athletics or communication.

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Volunteering may also provide you the opportunity to learn something new, or gain exposure to a new situation.

For example if you want to improve your writing and editing skills you could choose to help with an organization's newsletter or website. Or if you are used to working in an office all day, you could choose a more active volunteer assignment such as working in your local food bank, leading tours at a local museum, or helping on a community build project such as a playground or restoring a local stream. Many nonprofits seek out people who are willing to learn. It's important to keep in mind the time commitment training would require before the actual volunteer assignment begins.

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If you have computer access and the necessary skills, you can also volunteer over the computer. Virtual volunteering can be as simple as typing a college term paper for a person with a disability, or corresponding with a shut-in who has e-mail. This type of volunteering may be the best suited for you if you have limited time, no transportation, or a physical disability that precludes you from getting about freely.

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Another thing to consider when you're looking for volunteer opportunities, is the time commitment. It's important not to over-commit yourself. If you aren't looking for a long term assignment, start slow. This way you can determine whether or not the work suits you and the time you can give. You can also avoid over-extending yourself, frustrating your family and possibly shortchanging the organization should you find a job during your assignment.

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Though most nonprofits are eager for volunteers, some may require you to fill out an application, describe your qualifications, and come in for an interview. Some may even require you to go through a background check, depending on what you are volunteering to do. This is also another opportunity for you to keep your interviewing skills fresh as you continue your job search.

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You may already know that hospitals, libraries and churches use volunteers for a great deal of their work, but listed on your screen are several community groups that may also be looking for volunteers. Most of these organizations you can contact directly and ask for the volunteer coordinator or visit their website for volunteer opportunities.

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To learn more about volunteer opportunities in your area, visit the Governor's Office of Community Service website at serve-dot-mt-gov or click on the link on your screen.