

Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to Great Places! You're off and away!

You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes.

You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know.

OH! THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

--Dr. Seuss, 1990

Benefits of volunteerism

Volunteering offers incredible networking opportunities. Volunteering in your community allows you to meet new people, including community leaders. You don't have to join a club or attend meetings. You can volunteer at a time that fits your schedule. You develop life-long personal and professional relationships.

Volunteering helps sharpen your skills. Sometimes job duties change and you may no longer be doing things you used to do, and liked. Volunteering supports you in retaining professional and personal skills. A bank manager volunteers as an environment educator for an organization, working with students to spread awareness of environmental issues and conveying sustainable living options to generation next. She says it helps her keep in touch with today's students, stay fresh, and become more innovative through communications, thus a better manager for her team in the bank.

Volunteering helps you develop and discover new skills. Employers are often seeking well-rounded individuals who have good teamwork and goal setting skills. Volunteering offers unlimited opportunities to cultivate new skills that can enhance a career. A budding manager in retail industry explored his skills as football coach for a community school. He is a better sales team leader in his company because he understands importance of a motivated team, and finds innovative ways to support them achieve sales targets.

Volunteering offers opportunities to practice skills in a relatively risk free environment. It is much more effective to practice a skill than to read about it or study it in a classroom. Volunteering is an excellent opportunity to experiment, practice and try out new techniques and skills. It offers you an opportunity to build your self-confidence through practice. You can stretch yourself in new way that can benefit your career and personal life. A business development consultant volunteers for fund raising at a non-profit. His skills face different challenges in the dynamism of non-profit industry and help him execute and test innovative ideas.

Volunteering can help you expand your horizons and explore new career options.

Demographics are changing rapidly in our society and volunteering is a great way to enhance cultural awareness, acquire and practise new skills. Group work not only fosters teamwork, but also offers opportunities to learn more about different perspectives. If you are thinking of a career change, volunteering is a perfect way to explore new fields. A senior legal consultant at a bank and a devoted volunteer on women's issues has widened her career options. Armed with her

understanding of legal framework, and volunteering experience in the field, she is today a noted writer journalist on child and women's rights.

Volunteering give you satisfaction and makes you feel proud. A young professional and a volunteer at 'special school' gains valuable personal skills such as patience and tolerance enhancing his professional standing. A feeling of 'being loved by someone' and a satisfying smile on child's parent's face have become invaluable possessions; bring him closer to his own family. There are so many options for being involved in your community, through professional associations, neighbourhood organisations, arts and historic organisations and social service organisations. If you feel strongly about something that is happening or not happening in your community, get involved. Get others to join with you and craft new solutions to community problems.

Volunteering gives you visibility. Volunteer work can indeed expose you to a wide range of people, including many strong, influential community leaders. An advertising professional volunteers for a national association of advertising professionals. He enjoys it because he gets opportunities to meet and interact with many veteran and senior professionals from his profession.

Volunteering can be rejuvenating. A small break in our routine and an opportunity to create a balance in our lives rejuvenates us. Volunteering around a personal interest or hobby can be fun, relaxing and rejuvenating. The energy and sense of fulfilment can carry over to a work place to relieve work tensions and foster new perspectives for routinely old situations.

Volunteering can create leaders. By watching people around, you begin to identify the qualities of leadership that most admire. You can develop leadership qualities in yourself by following footsteps of your seniors, or innovating team leading ideas. Managing a group of volunteers is not the same as managing employees. Volunteer groups are often groups of peers and they respond more to leadership than management. You will have opportunities to lead by persuasion, innovation and your ideas and ideals. Working in volunteer settings will help you learn strategic thinking, change management and conflict resolution skills. You will learn about your Community, about trends and issues, about people and resources. All of which help you to develop your leadership potential.

Volunteering demonstrates a wide range of skills, which could enhance your resume. Work experience is important, even if it is without a pay check. If you are developing new skills or thinking of pursuing a new career, volunteer work can give you valuable hands on experience. Career counsellors and head-hunters encourage job seekers to document pertinent volunteer experiences.

Rights and Responsibilities

Rights of a volunteer are essentially the responsibilities of host organization (NGO). Responsibilities of a volunteer are essentially the rights of host organization. It is mutually agreeable understanding. The following are broad guidelines for what the rights and responsibilities a volunteer can expect and this list is a short version. They may seem like common

sense, but they are often violated by those who do not consciously recognize their importance.

As a volunteer, you have the RIGHT to,

1. Expect that your efforts contribute to the organization's objectives.
2. Receive the necessary orientation, training, and supervision to complete the assigned task at the organization.
3. Be treated with respect.
4. Expect that your time will not be wasted by poor planning.
5. Ask relevant questions and give suggestions about the work you are doing.
6. Be trusted with confidential information necessary to do your work.
7. Be appreciated for the work you have done.
8. Be given written proof or evaluation of your work, if you request it.

As a volunteer, you have the RESPONSIBILITY to

1. Understand thoroughly the assigned task.
2. Observe the deadlines with the best quality of work to one's ability and knowledge.
3. Discuss with the organization and ISR team about any significant change in assigned work.
4. Prepare and submit regular reports about progress of your work.
5. Adhere to the regulations as explained by the ISR team.
6. Be sincere and committed to the service you offer.
7. Trust ability to bring about positive change through skilled contribution.
8. Loyal towards organization, its staff, and organizational goals.
9. Maintain dignity and integrity of the organization.
10. Acquire and update skills through ISR training programs and on job training at the host organization.
11. Maintain professional working relationship with colleagues and
a. representatives in the community,
12. Contribute to supervision through self-evaluation and willingness to ask.
13. Maintain cordial relations with employees and other stakeholders of the
a. NGO while you work with them.
14. Be responsible and professional. Inform NGO if late or absent or planning to discontinue.
15. Leave your address & contact details with NGO.
16. Keep ISR team updated about your progress in the organization.
17. Be proactive in starting new and better initiatives.
18. Spread awareness about NGO and its activities.
19. Don't over-commit to the NGOs. Communicate your concerns to the reporting officer.
20. Train yourself well before committing to volunteer for special cause such as teaching to physically challenged students.
21. Don't involve yourself in the sensitive internal matters at NGO.
22. Don't communicate confidential or prohibited information of the NGO.

DOs & DONTs

Do's

1. Maintain cordial relations with all employees of the NGO you work with
2. Speak appropriately for audience (especially when working with individuals with special needs)
3. Give enough time & space before committing to volunteer for special causes
4. Inform the NGO if late or absent for the assigned duty
5. Leave your address & contact details with NGO
6. Keep your ISR team updated
7. Inform NGO if discontinuing
8. Take initiative to starting something new or better
9. Spread awareness about your NGO's activities

Don'ts

1. Over commit to the NGOs
2. Set unreasonable goals
3. Take up uninteresting activities
4. Get involved in NGO internal matters
5. Communicate NGO's confidential information to outsiders

In conclusion

- ✓ Be realistic, don't expect great achievements and try to learn to tolerate what you cannot change. Instead, focus on a small, realistic goal and make it a priority. When it is realised, move on to the next small goal and celebrate your achievement.
- ✓ Don't depend on positive feedback from others, learn and practice to be self-motivated.
- ✓ If you cannot do the work you intended to do, discuss with the employer and explore other possibilities.
- ✓ If there are real problems at work don't suffer in silence. Try to explain your thoughts to your employer or
 - Reporting officer. If you find this is not getting you anywhere then contact ISR team.
- ✓ Remember your personal objectives. What objectives did you set for yourself before opting to volunteer?
 - Regularly evaluate and introspect to align yourself your professional and personal objectives. You probably have personal as well as professional goals, which may well be more under your direct control. Challenge yourself and celebrate your personal achievements.