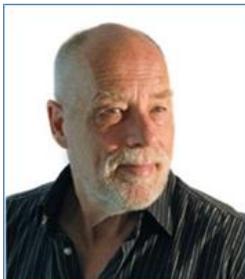


Volunteer – it's human to be good

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Over the course of your career you have probably volunteered. More than 45% of Canadians have and Canada ranks #8 in the world for time given to volunteering and money donated to non-profits. That's a big investment in non-profitable activity. What's the personal ROI from volunteering?

There are two perspectives – personal and business or professional. According to Harvard Health Publications, volunteering is good for you, better than unsaturated fats for your blood pressure and heart... coach kids' soccer and get exercise. And we don't need statistics to understand that by adding meaning and purpose to your life, volunteering is also a catalyst to mental and spiritual health. It's better than substance dependency to ward off loneliness and depression... work in a food bank and connect to people. Disillusioned with the corporate world - consult on a board and build a hospital. Want to see how others in the global village live and die - teach nursing in a developing country and build healthcare capacity.

Getting outside yourself, beyond your horizon of familiarity, to diversity your life, learn new expertise and contribute to the well-being of others is challenging and rewarding. It's growth off the job and with tangible ROI.

But can volunteering be profitable; should it reap ultimate financial benefits? Within the bounds and rules of conflict of interest, accountability and transparency – there certainly are other rewards to be gained.

For new Canadians, volunteering can deliver that frequently required 'Canadian experience' which can't be a matter of discrimination but is often an advantage. For young job seekers, a volunteer stint in a career related field can also boost the resume. For sole proprietors and small business owners, there are new, untapped networks to be mined for prospects and leads. Success with leveraging volunteer-driven initiatives will depend on sincerity, attitude and good communications. You would not, as chair of a board, award contracts to your brother with or

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without commission. But you can introduce two board members to each other whose businesses might be complementary. The richer a volunteer experience is, the greater the benefits for everyone.



A few pointers

In searching for a good volunteer opportunity fit, make sure you pick something you like or are good at to ensure that you will be most effective. Research the organization's history, accomplishments and culture. Look into their board members and Canada Revenue Agency status. Visit the place, if possible, and interview a long-time volunteer or staff member. When satisfied, make a solid but reasonable commitment without over doing it at first.

Volunteering, if you have something to offer & choose wisely, is rich in personal and professional benefits.

References:

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