

# VOLUNTEERING IS A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF YOUR JOB SEARCH

There are obvious elements of a job search which include writing a Resume or CV, updating your LinkedIn profile, sending out Resumes or CVs and networking.

Another important element that deserves your attention is volunteering.

Seven reasons to volunteer:

**1. Volunteering can multiply your networking opportunities.**

You will come in contact with people you've never met, and yet you'll immediately have something in common with them. As you build personal relationships, there will be a natural inclination to share information about your individual circumstances and aspirations. You may well be surprised to learn who else your newfound friend knows, or ways in which you may be able and willing to help each other. Always remember that networking involves give and take.

**2. Volunteering provides opportunities for you to use your skills and gain new ones.**

When you align your volunteer activities with the things you normally do in the workplace, you can apply your talents in new areas. This can prevent your skills and ability from becoming rusty or outdated. When you take on new challenges, you will have the ability to turn your weaknesses into strengths as you build new skills and gain experience.

**3. Volunteering can help build your Resume or CV.**

If you are employed, your Resume or CV should have a section toward the bottom titled Volunteer Activities. If you are unemployed, and you volunteer at a non-profit organization for a specific number of hours per week or month, you can then list that organization at the top of your Professional Experience section. Your job title can include the word 'volunteer' to make clear what you do and that your compensation is nonmonetary.

**4. Volunteering can eliminate the sense of isolation.**

If you are recently unemployed, the sense of not knowing anyone who can help you, or not knowing your way around can be overwhelming. Money can be scarce, particularly if you're unemployed and searching. You may pull back from many of your normal activities. If you've been job hunting for a long period of time, you may feel that you've exhausted your normal set of contacts, and you may feel isolated and depressed. Whatever the reason is that you find yourself at home alone all day, by volunteering some of your time, you will have a place to go and an opportunity to eliminate your sense of isolation.

**5. Volunteering says something positive about you as a person.**

When you volunteer, you project yourself as someone concerned with a cause greater than your own personal needs. You are seen to be a person who gives back to your community, profession or cause. Most of all, you are seen as a person who goes above and beyond what is required of you. If you are unemployed, your volunteer activities can show you are different than most job seekers. Instead, those activities become the answer to the question, "*What have you been doing since you lost your job?*" These traits are all highly valued by employers.

**6. Volunteering enables you to make a difference in the lives of others.**

Our busy schedules rarely permit us to do what we'd like in order to further the work of the organizations or causes we care about. Yet when you take the time to volunteer, you impact the lives of so many people who benefit by the group you serve. Your time and talent count.

**7. Volunteering can lead to full-time work at the place where you've demonstrated your skills and commitment.**

As a volunteer in an organization, you get to know who's who and what's what. You can develop a relationship with the leaders and staff, and you are often among the first to know of, and be considered for, paid opportunities as they arise. After all, when your work and commitment to the cause are known and respected, what else does a hiring authority have to know before thinking of you as that ideal fit candidate? Your volunteer work can become a working interview.

It's worth seriously thinking about what you want to do and what volunteer opportunities are available to you. Consider how you can align your volunteer work with your real work activities and experience which improves your marketability.