

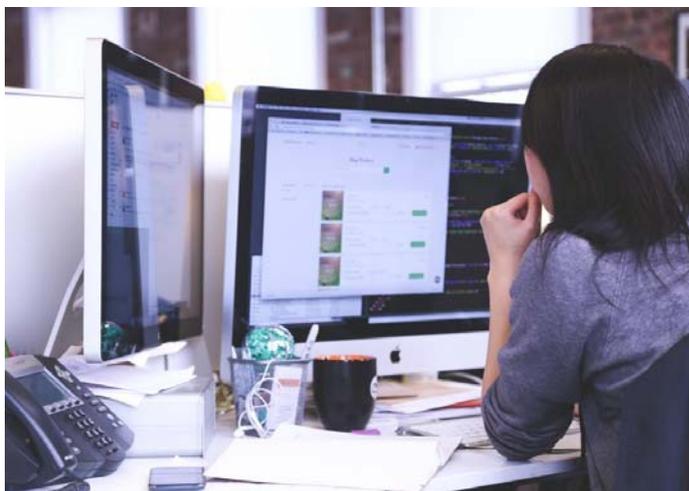


**Tori Utley** Under 30

*I write about social good and millennial entrepreneurship*

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## Want To Boost Your Career? Re-Think The Volunteer Experience On Your Resume



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There is no doubt that the job market is competitive. But for aspiring young professionals and entrepreneurs, patiently waiting in line until you get your turn at a job opportunity can be difficult. Cost of living, student debt and the need to build a resume are all reasons why young millennials have been pushed into a position of thinking differently about their career journeys.

Thinking differently about your career can mean several things – blended education, aggressive networking, side hustles, entrepreneurship – the list goes on and on. But there's an area of the resume that has been long untapped by young professionals aspiring to build their experience and move into a meaningful job opportunity – volunteer experience.

I've helped many people with their resumes and usually see a scarce volunteer section with data added "just because I'm supposed to" or "to show potential employers that I'm well-rounded." Beyond this philosophy, the volunteer experience is



generally the same – helping a nonprofit by volunteering to hand out fliers, working at an event, etc. It always surprises me that there are many college-educated, incredibly qualified individuals not exercising their skillset to help the nonprofits and causes they care about – everyone has been, for the most part, doing the same type of volunteer work.

When I was an MBA graduate student, I knew I wanted to increase my skillset as a project manager. I was getting project management education but wouldn't meet any qualifications to be a project manager in a large company for at least one or two years. Not only is it difficult to wait that long to be in the career you aspire to work in, but it can be difficult to understand how to start bridging the gaps between education and experience to become qualified and move closer to your desired career.

There was a local nonprofit in my hometown that I wanted to get involved with, so instead of choosing to volunteer by helping prepare meals or hand out fliers, I took a risk and asked if they could use a volunteer project manager. I explained that I was studying project management in graduate school but wanted to help a nonprofit while learning at the same time. It turned out they needed the help I was able to offer, and the volunteer position opened up.

The position eventually evolved from simple project management to managing complex projects like database technology implementations as the organization grew, providing ample opportunity to learn the skills of the trade. Here are three ways volunteering can be a great way to boost your resume as a young, growing professional:

### **1. It's beneficial for both the professional and the nonprofit alike.**

Thinking differently about the way you volunteer with a nonprofit or cause is both good for your career and great for the organization you're helping. Volunteering is experiential in nature and offers the ability to grow professionally, while allowing the organization to grow as well in both maturity and scale.

### **2. It brings needed talent to the nonprofit sector.**

With the nonprofit sector often lacking in funding and resources, many organizations are focused on getting the critical resources they need to operate their daily programs, and often skills and resources needed to grow are pushed to the back burner. By offering your volunteerism in skills that can not be afforded by nonprofit organizations, you're helping bring necessary talent and insight to worthy causes and initiatives.

### **3. It's a meaningful way to build your resume.**

No matter how you volunteer, the act of helping and giving back displays generosity. You're donating your time and talent while your resume is being boosted significantly. With this boost comes the assurance that you're helping charities you care about become more sustainable, well-run and accomplish their goals of serving humanity.

So to young professionals – keep volunteering, and help with fliers and events when you can, but think differently about the hidden value in the nonprofit sector that is in need of dedicated



time and talent. It is hard work, but in the long run you may land your dream job faster, with unique experience that made an impact along the way.

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