

## Business And Enterprise Attitudes Towards Volunteering

Every time young people start their job career, they are asked about how long they have been in the field and how many years of practice they have. The question is: how can they have experience if they have just graduated from university, college, or school? Does it mean employers unintentionally or intentionally require young people to start working already from school? Or is there another solution?

### The Importance of Volunteering Experience for Young Job Seekers

Volunteering is the solution in this case. Even though, according to its name, it should be a voluntary act of help for others, not to work only for personal use, Obviously, experience comes naturally, as an extra, as a cherry on the cake. By participating in volunteer opportunities, fresh graduates can gain valuable experience in their respective fields. This allows them to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom and the practical skills required in the workplace. Employers recognize the value of volunteering experience as it demonstrates initiative, teamwork, and adaptability. Therefore, they may be more willing to hire candidates who have dedicated their time to volunteer work, even if they lack prior professional experience. Ultimately, volunteering acts as a stepping stone for young people to enter the workforce and kick-start their careers.

In addition to bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, volunteering also offers young people the opportunity to explore their interests and passions. Through volunteering, individuals can gain hands-on experience in a specific field or industry, allowing them to better understand if it is a career path they want to pursue. This exploration can be particularly valuable for young people who may still be unsure about their future career goals. By volunteering in different organisations or projects, they can test out different roles and responsibilities, gaining clarity about their interests and strengths. This self-discovery process can greatly inform their career decisions.

### The Benefits of Volunteering: Gaining Skills and Job Opportunities

However, volunteering in some ways is becoming like currency right now, bringing to this field the philosophy, “If I help you, what will I gain?”. As a volunteer myself for many years, I was working with purely humanitarian ideas because I always saw many people who needed help and felt good about being useful to them. So, it is hard for me to understand any ulterior motives in this field. However, I have to admit, volunteering taught me many things, many skills that turned useful in my future jobs, and it gave me, as I call it, natural experience. I helped others because I wanted to, but it also added great value to my experiences while applying for jobs and even provided me with job opportunities.

If requirements will be as they are now in the companies that hire, to have experience at once, when you finish studies, more and more young people will have to turn to volunteering practice. Volunteering not only allowed me to develop practical skills but also provided me with a sense of purpose and fulfilment. It taught me the importance of teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving, which are all highly sought-after qualities in the job market. As competition for entry-level positions

continues to increase, volunteering can serve as a crucial stepping stone for young individuals to gain relevant experience and stand out among other candidates. In a world where experience is valued more than ever, embracing volunteerism may become a necessary path to success.

However, what are the businesses thinking about the volunteering practice? Some years ago, I had a role as volunteer coordinator, so I had to go find organisations' that would accept volunteers. The first questions that I faced were: What do the volunteers know? What skills do they have to help us out? And when asked if they have a person who would help volunteers understand how everything works in the organisation, many times I heard the answer: Will we also have to help them? We have a full load of work, and I am not sure that anyone can constantly stay with them and explain things to them.

Luckily, since I started working with volunteers, opinions have been slightly changing every year, and especially in post-COVID society, things in job environments have changed quite a bit. Volunteering has gained actual power, and now in Lithuania, your volunteering experience can earn you part of the grade (0.25 points) while entering universities.

### **However, is volunteering really valuable in the job market?**

I mentioned that many young people are forced to work just to have valuable experience, and in Lithuania, the mentality is more money-making than „humanitarian“. There is still a widely spread opinion that „you should work as soon as you can to earn“, so volunteering is often seen as a no-option even for young people. Still, I personally have best practices from it. When, during COVID, I started volunteering, there were people who asked me why I did that (same as when I volunteered in Italy 15 years ago). I answered that it's a valuable experience, and for the skills that I will learn while volunteering, I would have to pay big sums of money otherwise. So, I was almost looked at as a crazy person.

However, half a year later, I learned to write projects and was offered the job at the same company I work for now. This opportunity to volunteer during COVID not only allowed me to give back to my community, but it also opened doors for me professionally. The skills I acquired through volunteering, such as project writing, turned out to be highly sought-after in my field. Little did those who questioned my motives know that volunteering was not just a selfless act but a strategic move towards personal and career growth. By demonstrating my dedication and skills through volunteering, I was able to showcase my abilities to my superiors and colleagues at work. This ultimately led to recognition and the offer of a job within the same company. Not only did volunteering allow me to contribute to a greater cause, but it also provided me with invaluable experiences and connections that have furthered my professional growth. It goes to show that sometimes the most selfless acts can also be the most beneficial in the long run.

It is important to note that not all volunteering experiences guarantee professional growth or job offers. For example, someone may dedicate their time and skills to a non-profit organisation for years, yet fail to receive any recognition or career advancement opportunities. This could be due to various factors, such as limited resources within the organisation, a lack of visibility or networking opportunities, or simply not aligning with the needs and goals of potential employers.

There is no one answer to the question of whether companies like or dislike volunteering experiences, but more and more companies value young people who take initiative, work hard, don't give up, and try to pursue their way by taking chances to volunteer or work and learn valuable skills. At the end of the day, what matters is knowledge, skills, and how good you can be at the job you are applying for. In this case, volunteering is a valuable tool for young people to learn and share their

experiences with the community and to develop the mentality of not only earning money but also giving part of their effort and knowledge to society. Volunteering helps to grow both professionally and personally, and in my opinion, it should be suggested, promoted, and possibilities for volunteering enhanced so that most young people have an alternative to internships, especially when they are not studying further after school or are unemployed.

## On the other hand

One counterargument to promoting volunteering as an alternative to internships is that internships provide structured learning opportunities and professional development that may be more beneficial for young people's future careers. Additionally, internships often offer compensation, which can be important for those who are financially struggling or need to support themselves. For instance, instead of pursuing an internship at a law firm, a high school graduate who is not planning to attend college can volunteer at a local legal aid organisation. By assisting lawyers with research tasks and observing court proceedings, they gain practical experience and develop a basic understanding of legal processes. This hands-on involvement can serve as a valuable alternative to an internship, allowing them to explore their interest in law and potentially even opening doors for future job opportunities in the legal field. Additionally, the volunteer position at the legal aid organisation provides an opportunity for the high school graduate to network with professionals in the legal field. Through these connections, they may be able to secure recommendations or referrals for job opportunities in the future. Moreover, this practical experience allows them to build a strong foundation of legal knowledge and skills, which can be advantageous if they decide to pursue a career in law later on. Overall, volunteering at a local legal aid organisation offers a unique and valuable pathway for a high school graduate to explore their passion for law and potentially pave the way for a successful career in the legal field.

## Conclusions

To sum up, enterprises are slightly changing, and the most valuable currency that appears in the market is knowledge, perseverance, and devotion to the job. That shows that the more we go with time, the more we'll have to adapt to „learning, growing, and changing“ society and „life in order to catch up with the tendencies and improve our skills.