

# VOLUNTEERING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYMENT CHANCES

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**Abstract:** This article reviews the general principles of volunteering activity, based on the fact that volunteer work is an increasingly large, yet poorly-understood area of the economy and social domains. Describing personal experiences and analyzing the benefits of volunteering in order to encourage the development of the given domain in our country, aims to express the value of volunteering experiences. Moreover, employers are supporting increasingly more employees that are involved in a volunteering activity. This is happening due to the big impact that volunteering has on an individual's behaviour and personal development. The following article describes in detail the roles of volunteers, types of volunteering and the most popular organizations that offer such an opportunity in our area.

**Keywords:** volunteering, soft skills, software developer, technical skills, employability

## 1. Volunteering

In nowadays' life, when applying for a job, university graduates need whatever advantages they can get their hands on. There are a lot of opportunities that have a big impact on your chances of getting hired, one such example is volunteering.

Volunteering is more than just your opportunity to do something great for your community—it can also have a major impact on your job search and professional reputation. This is a crucial aspect when it comes to increasing students' employability.

*Volunteering* is generally considered an altruistic activity where an individual or group provides services for no financial or social gain "to benefit another person, group or organization". [1]

There are different types of volunteering, for example, at events, as observed at the Olympic games, with the roles:

- Guiding spectators and other participants at venues and other facilities
- Driving vehicles to transport Games participants between venues.
- Welcoming overseas delegations
- Administering the distribution of equipment to teams, media and other Games participants
- Entering data and displaying event results at competition venues.
- Supporting the distribution, collection, etc., of equipment. [2]

Another type is volunteering at NGOs and organizing events for other people. For example, Board of European Students of Technology (BEST) regularly organizes hackathons and summer courses. They recruit volunteers from among the students and their possible roles can be: finding sponsors and partners for lunches, coffee breaks or prizes; social media marketing so more people can find out about the event; logistics responsible that would research and arrange locations, materials and merchandise for the event etc.. Another organization is CoderDojo, it organizes courses so that kids can find out more about Computer Science and what are the possibilities of modern technology. Kids get bored easily, and since Information Technology is ever-changing, this is the perfect activity for them. All the mentors at CoderDojo are volunteers, so this is the ideal opportunity for them to share their passion for IT and at the same time get valuable communication, presentation and leadership skills.

## 2. Benefits of Volunteering

Since there are a lot of possible roles that don't need special training, anyone can get involved and thus obtain or train their soft skills. According to Linz Darlington, CEO at Benefacto, 'giving your time does have a lot of benefits for the volunteer' [3].

One important skill is leadership, it can be as simple as finding the right course of action and convincing others to follow it. Another is communication. Building a rapport with colleagues, clients and suppliers is a fundamental skill to succeeding in the activity.

Volunteering never fails to come with a healthy dose of perspective. You'll be introduced to characters you would never have otherwise met and parts of your city you never imagined existed. That's quite something to take back to work with you and helps in developing empathy.

These are just some examples, but there is research that young people can and do increase their self-confidence and self-esteem, develop a range of communication skills and improve their ability to work with other people through volunteering. [4]

The best way that can help an individual to decide on the volunteering opportunity that can fit their needs and desires is to analyze the benefits that they can get from it, for example:

- Gain self-assurance: Volunteering can help an individual gain self-confidence by giving them the chance to try something new and build a real sense of the action of accomplishing or completing something challenging.
- Desire changes and become the change they want to see in their community, society or environment.
- Build a strong network of people having the same fields of interest.
- Acquire new skills, gain experience and qualifications.
- Take on a challenge, accomplish personal goals, practice using personal skills and discover hidden talents.
- Being involved in volunteering activities is one of the best ways to improve and strengthen your resume.

Thus, an individual can gain very important skills in the context of volunteering, for instance, problem-solving, listening and communication skills, and the ability to create interesting new things. Volunteering can help increase an individual's confidence in meeting new people, being in unfamiliar surroundings and taking on new challenges. Moreover, it can offer the chance to lead a volunteering project, which will develop valuable project management and team leadership skills.

### **3. Personal Experience**

1) As a consequence of volunteering at multiple events, I have interacted with a lot of different people from different backgrounds, this has given me the opportunity to learn how to communicate more efficiently, that means to offer information in a way that is easy to understand, and how to get or ask for the information that I need in order to better do my tasks.

2) My personal volunteer experience helped me develop my communication skills, improved my ability to work along with a team, enriched my leadership experience, people management, and cross cultural skills. More than that, living in a developing country for an extended period of time grew my sensitivity to a range of social issues related to old-fashioned views. These views include how men or women should act, and normal and accepted behavior or beliefs in a group of people at work and outside, in social settings

Following my volunteer experience as a GirlsGoIT Ambassador at GirlsGoIT Chisinau, I found considerable support and interest from my colleagues (involved as volunteers in the organization) around my assignments concerning STEM domain, leadership and event-planning. Volunteering assignments can open doors and build skills that help in all professional contexts. Moreover, volunteering helped me clarify my career aspirations and built up personal and professional skills that will be needed in the nearest future.

### **4. How to combine the job Software Engineering and volunteering**

The world of software development is in ascending technological progress. The constant technological progress is remarked in every area of nowadays life. The main pylon in this process is considered to be the software engineer.

According to the dictionary, a software engineer is a person that develops various applications that enable users to accomplish tasks on their personal computers and electronic devices. This is the person that needs to develop a variety of skills. In order to succeed in their jobs, engineers must satisfy technical requirements that cover the hardware part, as well as the software one.

Software engineers take pride in the depth of their technical ability to do things very well, which separates them from the crowd. But, what makes a good software engineer? First, it is the technical knowledge of clearly connected or related ways of doing things (i.e., hard skills), as well as the skills necessary for applying that knowledge in practice. Second, but anyway important, it is a set of soft skills, in particular working together, communication, problem-solving and almost the same between-people and very important thinking skills that are expected from software engineering professionals.

Engineering software involves performing tasks in distinct areas, such as system analysis, software design, programming, software testing, and software evolution/maintenance; other software occupations in a software team include the project manager, troubleshooter, helpdesk personnel, database administrator, and so forth. Thus today, specialties within software engineering are as diverse as in any other profession [5].

Additionally, software engineers need to communicate very effectively with users and team members, which reinforces the idea that the people dimension of software engineering is as important as the technical expertise.

Concerning the technical requirements that cover the hardware side, main assignments that a software engineer can have, are strongly connected to the computer's software development and maintenance. Moreover, knowing programming languages and improving the ability to write code is a must, based on the fact that the whole technological process in the IT sector is based on the development of software. Being able to make use of technical skills can help an individual work more efficiently, boost his confidence and make him a more valuable candidate for employers. Candidates who have the ability to do particular job-related tasks well are often more confident when applying to certain businesses than those who don't. Also, workers with technical expertise are often better at doing two or more things at once in a challenging and complex role. With good enough technical ability, workers will be able to speak to fellow workers and clients in a self-assured way using their specialist skills.

According to the World Economic Forum report concerning top 10 skills that will be the most valuable ones in 2020, below soft skills are considered the ones that are needed to be developed and improved in an individual.

- Complex problem-solving.
- Critical thinking.
- Creativity.
- People management.
- Coordinating with others.
- Emotional intelligence.
- Judgement and decision making.
- Service orientation.
- Negotiation.
- Cognitive flexibility.

On the one hand, technical skills are important due to the fact that it can make an individual a more valuable candidate for employers. On the other hand, technical skills do not assure a high-level position. General programming skills, software testing, and software design are not enough for an engineer to perform his job with excellence. Thus, software engineers need both hard and soft skills in order to be successful at the workplace.

According to research, people that have done volunteering, have higher employability in some circumstances [7]. Since software developers and engineers are known for their lack of soft skills, especially communication skills, and volunteering helps train them in a non-stressful environment, it follows that former volunteers or even people that still volunteer would have higher employment chances among possible candidates for jobs that have great promotion opportunities, since getting higher on the corporate ladder requires better communication skills with all types of people [8].

## **Conclusions**

It is a well-known fact that volunteer work can improve your career. Finding a volunteer position that will help you develop new skills, will definitely improve your professional image and character. However, you can find a volunteer position that will help you polish the skills you already have.

Being a volunteer gives you a low-stakes way to explore a new career path. Volunteer to help make known to many people an organization about which you are emotional in a good way. This represents a great way to experience a field in which you are interested, without the long-term commitment. If you are now unemployed, volunteering is also a great way to fill a gap in your resume. While you are searching for a job, volunteering can help you gain valuable work experience.

In the context of having a job, volunteer work that is done next to your coworkers can have amazing benefits for both the people involved and for the company. Working well and getting a lot done will increase serotonin levels after such a rewarding experience, and workers will have a much more positive attitude after giving back to the community. In fact, it is crucial to consider volunteer work in your daily working schedule, without any concern about how much time it can take.

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