

* GET RESUME CREDIT FOR VOLUNTEERING! *

Take credit for all of your life accomplishments. Just because you were not paid, do not relegate your volunteer experience to the end of your resume.

As anyone who has ever crammed volunteer work into a life full of work and family obligations will attest: volunteering IS WORK! So why not include it on your resume?

You should. People often choose volunteer work which either:

- 1) Capitalizes on their strengths or their professional field. For example: a lawyer offering pro bono services to low income families.
- 2) Fills a need or interest that the person does not get from their paid job. For example: a computer programmer who is an assistant youth soccer coach.

In both cases, valuable accomplishments and refined skills result from the volunteer work. Who cares whether you were paid?

SHIFT YOUR MINDSET ABOUT VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

KEY POINT: In reality, a potential employer doesn't care whether any of your experience allowed you to be paid very well, very poorly or not at all. What they do care about is, "So, what's in it for me? How will this help MY business?" That is the unspoken question your resume must answer.

When you start to categorize your volunteer experiences as work, you will see that the exact same principles governing how we showcase paid experience are also used for volunteer experience.

The question to consider is, "How have your volunteer experiences made you into a better potential employee? Are you now more skilled, better rounded, a better leader, negotiator or team player?"

The raw truth is that companies hire new employees for only 3 reasons:

- 1) Make the company money
- 2) Save the company money
- 3) Improve the efficiency of the company (which ultimately saves or makes money too). You have to PROVE you will provide value to the company.

So how do you translate volunteer experience to your resume? There are 3 major steps to follow:

1) TAKE THE RELEVANCY TEST

One of my favorite words when it comes to resume writing is the word "**RELEVANT**". Ask yourself, "Does this experience communicate something that enhances my employability to a potential employer?" Or is it just a "nice to know?" Or worse, "Does it detract from a certain focus and make me appear scattered?"

Let's look at an example. Let's say you were the #1 Seller of Girl Scout cookies in your troop. Should this information go on your resume?

Answer: it depends (it always depends). If the candidate was a 50-year-old attorney... well, no, it doesn't belong. It's too long ago, and doesn't add much to the career skills needed. It is not **RELEVANT**.

