

Volunteerism: You Often Receive More Than You Give

Years ago, my father sat me down and gave me what was some of the best advice I have ever received. It had nothing to do with making money but everything to do with getting ahead in the world. It was self-help advice that really focused on helping others.

He told me I would never have any trouble finding opportunities. And he told me that 20-25 percent of my time should be devoted to this pursuit.

“Volunteer,” he said. Not exactly music to the ears of a broke, fresh out of college, aspiring millionaire. But as I have come to appreciate, he was dead-on right – AGAIN.

Volunteering has made my life so much better, and I suspect that anyone who has become passionate about a cause will tell you the same thing.



People who do volunteer work and help others on a regular basis have a healthier outlook on life. They are inclined to be go-getters and consistently report being happier and more contented.

It doesn't matter whether you are young or old, student or professional, working your way up or at the top of your game. Needs abound wherever you are.

I love Mother Teresa's quote which says it all: “Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.”

Let me give you a few examples. Bridget is a full-time college student. She works part-time too. She was feeling like she had a full plate until a professor asked for a few volunteers to help tutor elementary school students who were struggling. She figured she could spare two hours a week, and guess what? The former “undecided” major is finishing an education degree and preparing to student teach. Volunteering helped her discover her passion, while she was helping little kids discover their abilities.

My pal George was looking toward retirement, knowing he couldn't play golf seven days a week. He had built a great company, overcoming plenty of obstacles along the way. He was a trusted mentor to dozens of young entrepreneurs. He had been very active in his community and cared about the people there. He got involved in the development of the local history center, and even agreed to be the volunteer director. He's busier now than ever before. I have to schedule our golf games at least a month in advance! The community is benefitting tremendously from his leadership, but he says he's really the one reaping the rewards.

If you still think you are too busy to share some time, ask yourself these questions:

- Are you looking for an opportunity to help? Sharing your talents doesn't diminish them, it often enhances them.
- Are you interested in learning a new skill? Every organization has a job or two that no one really wants to do – so take on that chore! You will learn something new, but more importantly, you will discover that you can do all kinds of things you never thought you could. What job is usually the hardest to fill? Fundraising. You'll hone your sales skills while you help a worthy cause.
- Do you like to meet new people? Volunteering offers the chance to make some new contacts and develop some great friendships.
- Do you need to sharpen your skills? You can learn how to run a meeting, prepare reports, serve on committees, supervise others, and a thousand other skills that you may not be able to learn in your occupation.
- Are you in a rut, in need of a fresh perspective? You will see a whole new view of the world when you step into an organization that is struggling to help those who need it most.
- Are you ready to have some fun? No one said helping others had to be drudgery. Helping clean up a park, planning a community celebration or calling bingo at the senior center can be a great change of pace from a desk job.
- Do you want to make a difference? Volunteer at a place that is desperate for help. You could be the one person who really can make all the difference.

And please remember, volunteering is a privilege. If you think doing good deeds will make you look like a hero, think again. Approach volunteer work as a chance to be useful, and be grateful that someone thinks you are up to that task.

Mackay's Moral: *Don't just make a living, make a life worth living.*

By Harvey Mackay

To your success,



Harvey Mackay