

This is how being a volunteer can help you land your first career

13th – 19th August is [National Student Volunteer Week](#), which is the perfect opportunity to start thinking about how volunteering can help you land your first career. One of the biggest challenges for those entering the job market for the first time is the fact that so many roles require candidates to have some previous experience in a similar role. But what if you've only just finished studying? Where exactly are you meant to gain that experience? One way many people overcome this hurdle is by volunteering in the industry they hope to eventually be employed in.

- **Resume.** Your resume should demonstrate to prospective employers that you've got certain skills that you'll be able to put to good use in the role you're applying for. For young jobseekers, you're unlikely to have previously had a similar position, so you've got to find another way to showcase your skills. Being able to point to volunteering where you've learnt and developed certain skills that are required for the role you're applying for will be invaluable.

You can also point to your volunteer work as evidence that you're a self-motivated, proactive and hard-working candidate.

- **Skills.** Some things are easier to learn on the job. Chris studied journalism at university, but he said the experience he gained and skills he learnt editing the university paper and volunteering at a community radio station were perhaps even more valuable than what he learnt in lectures. "There was never a class on how to use a dictaphone or edit a piece of audio or use studio panels," say Chris. "I learnt that from people I volunteered alongside at the paper and radio station and I, in turn, passed those skills onto others when they started out."
- **Professional networks.** Chris now works at a major metropolitan newspaper and is surprised by how many people he knows from his days at the student newspaper. "I never started out even really thinking about the contacts I'd make. I just did it because I wanted to be a journalist. Looking back, I now realise that everyone there had the same idea – we were just a like-minded

group. I now work alongside some of those people everyday.”

The old saying – ‘it’s not what you know, it’s who you know’ – can be true in many instances. The contacts you build through volunteering might be able to put your name forward for a particular role, they might agree to be a reference for you or they might have some insider knowledge on a role that isn’t advertised. You never know, it might be the thing that gets you over the line in the application process.

- **Personal fulfillment.** If you’re thinking about volunteering, reach out to organisations that you admire; look to do work that you find genuinely exciting. You might not be getting remunerated for your time, but that doesn’t mean it can’t be fulfilling in other ways. You might find that your volunteer work gives you a sense of achievement. It might also provide you with some direction if you’re unsure about what you want professionally. Through volunteer work you might discover you have a passion for something you’d never even thought about before. It might be instrumental in shaping and influencing the decisions you make when trying to enter the job market.

There are lots of reasons you should think about volunteering, but if you’re doing it to improve your chances of employment, then it’s important that it aligns with your career goals. That might mean, for example, targeting an organisation that you’re passionate about or one that you think will provide good networking opportunities. Whatever you end up doing, though, learn from those around you. You never know when what you learn may help you land your first career. Check out [SEEK Volunteer](#) for the latest opportunities.

You can also point to your volunteer work as evidence that you're a self-motivated, proactive and hard-working candidate.