

# HOW COMMUNITY SERVICE BENEFITS YOUR CAREER

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As we approach the holiday season, many of us tend to experience greater joy in giving—whether that is to family, friends, or our community. And while we all know that the greatest joy of giving is the satisfaction of making someone else's day better, that is not where the benefits of giving end. Similarly, we have all likely heard the personal benefits of giving—giving makes us happier, healthier, and evokes gratitude.[1] But how does giving benefit you professionally, and what impact does giving have on your career? Below we highlight four concrete ways that giving—particularly community service—benefits your career.

## 1. Community service provides leadership opportunities

Community service provides invaluable opportunities to gain leadership experience that may not be available through your current employment. Young in-house attorneys often face a conundrum of wanting to move up the corporate ladder, but they have difficulty gaining experience in managing large projects and teams. Such management experience can be found through community service. For example, many nonprofit organizations host large fundraising events. Through volunteering for such organizations, attorneys can gain concrete experience managing a team to plan and coordinate a large fundraising event and point to the specific outcomes of their efforts such as the amount of funds raised, the number of attendees at the event, and the number of people helped in the community.



## 2. Community service allows you to build your skill set:

In addition to leadership opportunities, community service provides an environment where you can build your skill set and work on areas where you seek improvement outside your employment. For example, by serving on the board of a nonprofit organization, you have numerous opportunities to serve on various committees to learn and practice new skills. If you are newer to the in-house environment and want to improve your business acumen, you may want to serve on the finance committee to learn more about monitoring cash flows and understanding a profit and loss statement. Alternatively, you may want to serve on the marketing committee and learn about developing a branding strategy. Through such acts of service, you can learn from business professionals who have training in these areas and then implement your new skills in your in-house role.

[1] Renter, Elizabeth. "What Generosity Does to Your Brain and Life Expectancy." U.S. News & World Report, May 1, 2015, <https://health.usnews.com/health-news/health-wellness/articles/2015/05/01/what-generosity-does-to-your-brain-and-life-expectancy>; Harvard Health Publishing, "Giving thanks can make you happier," Harvard Health Publishing Harvard Medical School, August 14, 2021, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>.

### 3. Community service strengthens your network:

Community services provides infinite opportunities to strengthen and grow your network. By volunteering, you will undoubtedly meet new people, and it can be easier to network with new contacts because you already have a shared connection to the cause to which you are donating your time. Volunteering is not limited to meeting new people though; you can also volunteer with your coworkers and get to interact with them in a more informal environment than your employment. Community service can be an excellent way to find a mentor. It can be easier to form a more authentic mentoring relationship with a more senior business professional when you meet that person through volunteering versus a more stereotypical networking function.



### 4. Community service improves your confidence:

Community service provides you with a sense of accomplishment and belonging and greater self-esteem. While these traits relate to personal growth, they also directly impact your career. More confident employees are simply better performers. Furthermore, volunteering improves your reputation, which is critical in a corporate environment. Although it is not recommended to engage in community service for the accolades, you likely will not be able to help but share your passion for giving with your coworkers. An improved business image as someone who gives back is a beneficial side-effect of community service.



#### Biographies:



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Maeghan Whitehead, counsel at Kilpatrick Townsend's Dallas office, focuses her practice on counseling and advocating for businesses and individuals in complex commercial and intellectual property disputes. Maeghan is the 2022-2023 Lead Chair of Attorneys Serving the Community, a dynamic volunteer organization of women lawyers from the DFW area.

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