

Volunteering Can Make You a Better Leader

According to an InStep Consulting 2006 online survey, 69% of professionals said volunteer experiences helped them enhance their leadership skills, and 72% reported improved communication skills as a result of their activities. Volunteering can be a viable way to develop your leadership abilities. Do you want to benefit professionally by getting more involved in your community? Here are a few tips to help:

Determine what you seek to gain from the volunteer experience

- Community involvement or “giving back”
- Exposure and visibility – internal or external
- Networking and connections – internal or external
- Skill-building or professional development

Select the type of volunteer experience based on your goals and interests

- Business/Professional associations
 - Committee work
 - Leadership positions
- Company-sponsored campaigns (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, United Way)
- Direct service with social service organizations
 - Hands-on client contact
 - Event planning/fundraising
- Board service with social service organizations

Screen organizations to find a match with your goals and interests

- Find out who else is involved – staff and volunteers
- Inquire about staff and volunteer interests, skill sets and tenure with the organization
- Learn about the organization’s reputation, track record and experience

Be honest about your time and availability

- Focus your efforts and don’t overextend yourself
- Ensure that you will still be able to honor your other obligations

Evaluate opportunities based on your goals, interests and availability

- Find out up front the expectations for your role and involvement
- Decide whether you will enjoy the experience – specific tasks and environment
- Determine whether you will gain the “*right stuff*” (skills, contacts, etc.)

Create a “buzz” about your volunteer work

- Share your experience with your manager, colleagues and “champions”
- Seek to have skill-building experiences included in your development plan

RESOURCES FOR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES:

Boardnet/USA: Free site where nonprofits needing Board members and those interested in service can connect <http://www.boardnetUSA.org>

BoardSource: Articles, books, and resources on nonprofit Board service <http://www.boardsource.org>

Council on Foundations: *Institute for New Board Members* is a week-long residential course for those serving on foundation boards <http://www.cof.org>

Idealist: Online resource for information on nonprofits (globally) and database of volunteer opportunities <http://www.idealists.org>

New York Junior League: *Nonprofit Boards Clearinghouse* offers two five-session training sessions for those interested in Board service <http://www.nyjl.org>

On Your Feet: National nonprofit engaging people in community service and activism by educating them about diverse nonprofit organizations and creating opportunities for direct community involvement in BOSTON, LOS ANGELES, NEW YORK CITY, PHILADELPHIA, SAN FRANCISCO <http://www.oyfp.org>

One Brick: Provides social atmosphere and volunteer connections to nonprofits in CHICAGO, NEW YORK CITY, SAN FRANCISCO, WASHINGTON DC <http://www.onebrick.org>

SERVEnet: Program of *Youth Service America* that connects nonprofits and volunteers <http://www.servenet.org>

VolunteerMatch: Free site where nonprofits needing volunteers and those interested in volunteering can connect <http://www.volunteermatch.org>

###

About the *Competent Advantage*™ Program:

Interactive seminars and advisement help high-potential leaders to:

- Align skills with career paths and job opportunities
- Discover personal motivators
- Improve communication skills
- Learn tips to make effective career transitions

Primary Focus Areas:

Branding & Personal Image
Career Assessments (Delivery & Interpretation)
Career Transition
Communication Skills

Goal Setting
Interviewing Techniques
Resume Building