

Volunteering is good for business and community

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Volunteering the backbone of strong community connections

Volunteering builds business performance and community connection

The National Volunteering Conference to be held in Canberra this April is a celebration and investment in the millions of volunteers working throughout Australia. Volunteering is part of the Australian way of life, our sporting and social clubs depend on it, it builds business performance and community connection. The 2000 Olympics was a showcase for the strength of volunteering with 10,651 athletes (4,069 women, 6,582 men) and 46,967 volunteers. [Sydney Olympic Games 2000](#)

- So why do people choose to volunteer and how does it help the performance of both business and community?
- As a leader in business how do you develop the culture of your organisation through purposeful volunteering?
- How will volunteering contribute to developing connection with community and business performance?

Surprisingly it is the busy people in the 35-44 age group, already employed who are most likely to volunteer. Almost 40 per cent volunteered in the last 12 months. Football NSW (FNSW) has commissioned an excellent evidence based piece of research into the Community Impact of Football in NSW 2015 and identified that volunteers make up 13,559 registered FNSW coaches who each contribute an average of 7.1 hours of coaching each week and 11,317 volunteers contribute 6.2 hours of administrative support.

The leadership skills and community connection that these volunteers contribute to sport and recreation can bring great value to the workplace. Could volunteering become a consideration in selection and development for progression from team member to team leader? Is the connection to community through sporting engagement captured in market research and the development of diversity and inclusion programs?

People volunteer for as many reasons as paid workers do when they choose their employment. They seek connection and purpose, they want to do meaningful work and they seek to develop their skills. Often volunteers state that they are seeking a sense of community and want to help others. Bringing volunteers into the workplace provides a unique leadership development opportunity to build community and discretionary effort which creates value for the entire workplace.

The [ABS reports](#) that roughly 20 per cent of volunteers participated in education, welfare, community and religious work. Often this is on volunteer Boards where skills in strategic leadership and governance are highly valued. As a leader do you know how many of your team contribute to the leadership of a Not for Profit organisations? Have you explored the opportunities for investing in the growth of services in organisations that your team members volunteer their skills in?

The 2015 State of Volunteerism Report – Transforming Governance (United Nations Volunteers Program) demonstrates that for the 2015 sustainable development agenda to succeed improved governance is an essential element in developing countries. It illustrates that volunteers are enablers of

good governance at the local and national levels through both service delivery and social activism. The report also explores the role of technology in international social activism and improved governance.

An inspiring report, it confirms that volunteering builds business performance and community connections. It presents options for leaders to engage their staff in a cause larger than the every day, provides opportunities for passion and commitment adding another dimension to workplace culture and shared stories. Case studies on the business of volunteering range from the Jubilee 2000 action, to cancel world debt and highlighting concerns on global warming and economic justice. Haldane (p13) notes that if volunteers were measured globally than the “volunteer land” population would only be surpassed by China. He states that for companies and business a better appreciation of the benefits of volunteering for skills development could not only improve corporate volunteering programs but also business performance. The report provides case studies of programs for young people to engage as volunteers and build a civil society and importantly considers the informal volunteering delivered by older people in their communities as they support community and family life. It is well worth leadership attention. www.volunteeractioncounts.org

Brief Snapshots on the Business of Volunteering and Entry Points

Leanne Townsend, CEO of National Aboriginal Sporting Chance leads an organisation that draws together sporting participation and community development.

This nimble organisation [NASCA](#) works with schools across Australia bringing sporting elite volunteers and mentors to the community. Leanne has created an inspired team who connect with volunteers and business to make a big difference in young peoples' lives.

[Career Seekers](#) make a difference to the employment opportunities for qualified asylum seekers as 84% remain unemployed for 18 months or longer. The opportunity is for your organisation to take on an intern for 12 weeks. You pay the intern and your staff will be volunteering their time to provide additional support to enable the asylum seeker to contribute to your workplace and gain future opportunities.

Organisations like 3Bridges <http://3bridges.org.au/> offers a linking system for volunteers and volunteering opportunities and [United Way](#) provides opportunities for Corporate Volunteers to engage.

The 3point Connection Conversation on May 26th takes this conversation further with a focus on the business of sport and volunteering.