

Even busy executives can make time for a cause

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The literature abounds about how volunteering can help build new skills and talents, give us an edge in our , make us more with our time, and even our health. Many of the benefits and volunteer opportunities are often aimed at young professionals who tend to have more free time than more senior leaders. However, senior leaders often have an opportunity to make a major impact by lending their time.

It wasn't too long ago when my family was impacted by Hydrocephalus, a little-known brain condition. One million people in the U. S. live with Hydrocephalus and it is also the most common reason for brain surgery in children, yet remains largely unheard of.

I had the desire to give back to raise awareness and support for the . Making an impact doesn't always require a large financial commitment, but I struggled with how to find the time amidst my hectic work and personal life.

Like many other nonprofits, what the Hydrocephalus Association sorely needs is leadership and business and time, and I wanted to personally address this gap.

Here's how I made it happen, and how you can, too.

1. Find an organization.

If you don't already have an organization in mind, find one that aligns with something you're passionate about or touches your life. In my example, volunteering for the (HA) was important to me since there is little awareness about this condition that personally affected my family, along with so many

others in the U. S. Giving my time was a tangible way to help raise awareness.

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If you don't already have something in mind or are just looking to give back to any group with need, sites such as can help you identify volunteer opportunities in your community.

2. Determine the skills you have or wish to grow.

Sometimes, it's as simple as offering any time you can give, and saying, "" For young professionals or those seeking a career change, volunteering offers potential to . For senior leaders, there's the benefit of years of experience and expertise that can aid the organization.

I began by volunteering to chair one of the committees tasked with communications, which is where some of my professional experience lies. I then progressed to support the research and expansion of the organization's brand experience via its , Facebook , and other digital channels.

Improvements in these digital channels have had a big impact on those who live with the condition as well as their friends and loved ones, bringing them better access to support networks and informational content and resources online.

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I currently chair the board of directors where my primary role is to help set the organization's long-term vision and strategy and to ensure donor funds are used effectively to support our mission. Each person on our 21-member <https://assignbuster.com/even-busy-executives-can-make-time-for-a-cause/>

board partners with HA staff by serving on several committees such as communications, support and development and research, as active volunteers. We also leverage our personal and professional experience and networks to help the HA achieve its goals.

3. Find the time.

Finding time amidst your other professional and personal commitments and hobbies often is the biggest barrier. In order to overcome this, you need to address the stakeholders in your life who will be impacted by your decision to volunteer, both at home and at work.

My commitment on the HA board consists of three two-day board meetings a year. Two days of meetings happen over the weekend, taking away from family time. Having support and understanding of the my loved ones was critical for me.

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The remaining four days occur during the work week. To make it work, I needed the flexibility at work to commit to those days. Adobe recognized the value of my participation in the board and has been supportive of my time off. This is not an anomaly: More companies are recognizing their as a form of charitable giving, and finding ways to donate skills and manpower to .

Allowing employees at all levels to volunteer isn't just a nice gesture or write-off for companies; that allowing employees to give back to their communities by way of volunteering increases levels of commitment and pride among employees.

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To make it happen, have a conversation with your manager to ensure that he or she understands the commitment you're making and that the person is comfortable with the time you'd need to spend away from work.

As Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once said, " a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Define what's important to you and take that first step.