

Paid leave for volunteering is about more than giving back

By [Joanne van der Walt](#)

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If you've ever donated your personal time to help others, you've likely experienced what psychologists call the '[Helper's High](#)', or the feeling of euphoria we experience when we help others. It's addictive and we want to experience it again and again.



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There's good reason for this. Countless studies have found that volunteering is good for our health – mentally, physically and emotionally.

A Harvard study found that people who volunteer are [42% happier](#) than those who don't. [Another study](#) found that volunteers were less likely to develop high blood pressure than non-volunteers and reported greater increases in psychological wellbeing and physical activity. There's also evidence to suggest that people who suffer from depression benefit greatly from volunteering.

It's well documented that happier staff are more productive and engaged at work, take fewer sick days, and are more satisfied in their jobs. And, when teams volunteer, they learn new skills, like teamwork, problem solving, empathy, leadership and interpersonal skills, all of which help to build stronger cultures and brand loyalty.

In an attempt to attract the best people, businesses will often say that they prioritise the health and wellbeing of their employees. This is usually sold through perks like on-site gyms, kitchens stocked with healthy snacks, and regular health and fitness assessments. But how many employees actually maximise these benefits? And how much money is going into these programmes that are not producing the desired outcomes of happier, healthier teams?

These types of perks might have appealed to the older working generation but the newer workforce care about more than just plush offices and high salaries. One study found that [78% of young millennial's would sacrifice higher pay](#) to work for a company that was purpose-driven and shared their values.

One of the easiest ways to demonstrate your values as a company – to both your staff and your customers and prospects – is to give your teams paid time off to do meaningful and purposeful work for others. Don't think of it as time away from their desks but as an investment in their happiness, as an opportunity to recharge their batteries and, therefore, an investment in your own business.

Companies that volunteer and that care about something other than profit have an enhanced reputation among the general public. [One study](#) found that more than 80% of millennials gravitate towards brands that actively work to make the world a better place, both when deciding who to buy from and who to work for. And [80% of millennial entrepreneurs in South Africa](#) say that doing social good is an important part of what they do in their businesses.

At Sage, we give our teams five, fully-paid volunteer days a year to do meaningful, purpose-driven and passion-aligned work and we're certainly seeing the benefits, not only in our colleagues but in the communities and causes we support.

As the world of work continues to change, companies will find it increasingly difficult to differentiate through fancy offices and high salaries. Those that align to the values of the new working majority – who place a greater emphasis on their personal time, flexibility and making a difference in the world – will attract the best minds and do the best work.

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