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Not-for-profits can be a great career move



When we start looking for a job, there is an understandable tendency to lean towards sectors and companies that are perceived to be more stable – larger organizations, corporations, and public service, to name a few.

The one sector that is often overlooked is not-for-profit because of many perceived negatives: less stable, consistently looking for money or donations, smaller workforce, etc. What is also overlooked is what is classified as not-for-profit. We typically think charities, and while those are classic examples of not-for-profits, there are many others.

For example, there are organizations in Ontario that are legally mandated to provide a particular service on behalf of the government. They are not public service agencies and operate as not-for-profit. There are also membership-based organizations for specialized trades or large organizations such as schools and hospitals.

One of the best moves you can make at any point in your career is to work for a not-for-profit. The team you work with may be small, but this is a good thing. You learn early on in a not-for-profit that if you want something done, you better do it yourself. You also learn to do more with less. This valuable experience allows you to become a “jack of all trades” and learn a

bit of everything.

Two of the most rewarding experiences in my career to date include the opportunity to talk to many newcomers to Toronto about avoiding the common pitfalls of buying their first vehicles, and working in a job that allowed me to showcase some of the most innovative ideas and discoveries being made in hospitals across Ontario. I really enjoyed being able to help people directly, and showing Ontarians the level of innovation found in their healthcare system was beyond rewarding. It felt good to be in a position where I could share this information.

Later in your career, when you are ready to give back, not-for-profits are always looking for experience and insight to improve their organizations and plan for the future. Think about joining an organization as a manager, board member, or in some other mentoring capacity, so you can give back and help these organizations improve their service.

A not-for-profit can create career and life experiences to carry with you for the rest of your life. Much of your experience will depend on where you choose to go, but if you are looking for a job, consider a not-for-profit organization. There are valuable skills you can learn quickly that would take you months or years to hone taking the "safe route". Not-for-profits help many people in our communities; why not let them help you in your career?

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