



A stepping stone into the charity sector
for people in mid-life

Impact Report
June 2024

www.thewellplaced.org

Executive Summary

There is an immediate way for the charity sector to address its skills gap.

With an available talent pool of people in mid-life who want work with purpose.

Their commercial skills are transferable.

Younger colleagues benefit from their knowledge.

Diversity of thinking creates more effective problem-solving.

A 'proof of concept' pilot, incubated by NCVO, tested the impact of a stepping stone into the sector.

We partnered with Age UK, Alzheimer's Society, Age International, Disability Equality Scotland and British Heart Foundation to create 6-month, paid placements.

This document outlines our findings.

"The social sector is hurtling towards a serious skills shortage and finding it harder to recruit the right skills."

Pro-Bono Economics, Feb '24

What we set out to do

Prove that commercial skills are transferable.

Demonstrate the value a fresh perspective brings.

Highlight the pool of talent that is being overlooked by a sector with a critical skills shortage.

Help people in mid-life extend their careers into the charity sector.

Open a conversation about the reluctance to hire applicants from outside the sector.

Provide evidence to change the mindset that it's too big a risk to give someone the opportunity to switch.

"52% of people who search for jobs on CharityJob do not work in the sector and 30% are over 50"

CharityJob Dec '23

What has been achieved

Before the pilot had concluded, 4 of the 6 associates had secured roles in charities.

They exchanged their skills for knowledge of the structure of a charity, its funding model, cultural differences and employment opportunities.

They have tangible examples of the impact of their commercial skills in a charity setting.

When applying for jobs, the experience has boosted their confidence.

They have a better understanding of the charity sector and what hiring managers are looking for.

They feel able to explain how their skills are transferable.

They are applying for roles they considered unattainable before the pilot.

“With ‘insider knowledge’ and charity experience I think we will now be taken seriously for advertised roles”

Associate

Commercial skills are transferable and valuable

All of the associates on the pilot have marketing backgrounds. They worked in various industries from corporate finance and banking to television and advertising, often in senior positions.

The skills they brought:

- setting targets and using data as evidence of impact
- working collaboratively across functions to uplift commercial focus
- understanding what corporate businesses want from a charity partner
- planning and organisation
- creative problem solving
- strategic thinking
- consumer first approach
- being pro-active
- digital innovation
- distilling large amounts of information into easy consumption

Their work is reaping rewards

Placements were in fundraising, volunteering, political campaigning and member engagement.

Every associate has made a marked difference to the teams they joined.

Their work focused on:

- developing an engagement strategy for corporate members
- improving the user journey for potential volunteers
- deepening corporate partnerships
- writing bid applications
- 'campaigning for change' desk research and evaluating competitor strategies
- finding a way forward for an innovation project

They weren't shy about speaking up and sharing a fresh perspective!

“Charities are clear that the leading recruitment issue is the lack of applicants with appropriate skills”

Pro-Bono Economics, Feb '24

A development opportunity for managers

Most of the managers were relatively new to line management.

Managing someone with more experience was a gentler way into this new responsibility.

It became a dual-mentoring opportunity.

If there was any initial apprehension around co-generational working, it was quickly dispelled.

For all it was an extremely positive experience.

Learning was 2-way; diversity of thinking, a fresh perspective and access to a commercial mindset in the team led to richer outcomes.

Managing someone more experienced was also a catalyst to think about leadership style and how to get the best from everyone's knowledge.

“It's helped me grow as a manager”

Manager

Building on our success

We will be running another cohort this November.

Applications open in June, with interviews in September.

The pilot has proven that people in mid-life, with commercial skills, can very quickly make a tangible difference in the charity sector.

They bring with them a fresh perspective from a different sector.

They have the maturity to make connections, spot opportunities, be strategic in their thinking.

Here is a willing talent pool that can help to close the sector's skills gap.

We need more doors to be opened to them.

"The wealth of experience is amazing"

Project Sponsor

Gratitude and thanks to those who participated in the pilot and are the reason for its success.

The amazing associates who were up for an adventure Christina, Caroline, Dee, Kaz, Mills and Stella.

Their line managers Maja, Julia, Laura, James, Charanjit and Barney.

Our project sponsors Alison at Age International, Elisha at Age UK, Ingrid at British Heart Foundation, Lyn at Disability Equality Scotland and Katie at Alzheimer's Society.

The team at NCVO, especially Laura, Andrew and Sarah.

Our advisory team Ele, Dawn, Tiku and Woosh.

The Well Placed' directors Lynne and Magnus.

Our partners Charity People.

Click this link to find out more www.thewellplaced.org