

# All the care in the world

Private-sector jobs may pay well, but charities have the feel-good factor, writes **Sue White**.

**A**ndrew Coogan's entry into the world of not-for-profit couldn't have been a sharper contrast to his previous jobs working in corporate banks.

"I worked on the Make Poverty History campaign, campaigning for a stamp duty on foreign exchange transactions to raise money for aid. It was me part-time and two others, running on the smell of an oily rag. We survived on donations," he says.

Making the shift required a definite change in attitude.

"It was about getting comfortable with being uncomfortable," Coogan says. "You were involved in everything, so I had to be flexible, adaptable, persistent and ready to jump in."

Since then, Coogan has learnt these qualities translate to many non-profit roles. He now runs the skilled volunteer matching group Goodcompany, which delivers about \$2 million worth of pro bono services to Australian charities every year.

"Corporate jobs often operate within a fairly narrow role description but in smaller NFPs you do many different things," he says. "The flipside is you have fewer resources, so you have to work by collaborating and sharing, rather than putting out a tender and hiring a contractor."

Karen Twitchett, from Mission Australia, also knows firsthand the challenges of moving between the two worlds of work. After beginning her career in the corporate world, she transitioned to a senior human resources role at Mission Australia.

"We use our hiring process to set expectations and we don't hurry the process," she says. "We may have coffee with applicants, do second



Impact ... knowing you are making a difference can be a real boost.

Photo: iStock

interviews or introductions to board members and always give a very clear reference to our vision, mission and founding purpose."

Once staff are on board, Twitchett says they invest a lot in their job for the money.

"The pay is fair but not at the top of the market. What you get is an overwhelming sense of satisfaction about making a difference."

Working with such a highly engaged workforce means managers need to approach change cautiously.

"You need to take care in the way you consult and make decisions and genuinely engage people in that process," Twitchett says.

Newcomers to non-profits also need to adjust their expectations of the job.

"Other organisations talk about revenue, profits and surplus. We talk about success in terms of clients supported and social benefits," she adds.

For Ronni Kahn, gaining a firsthand understanding of the triple bottom line changed her entire approach to work. While running her own events company, Kahn began the charity OzHarvest, which channels leftover food from restaurants towards non-profit organisations.

For Kahn, the challenge of being reliant on the goodwill of others is

well worth it for the chance to make a difference.

Not everyone decides the switch is right for them. After years of working happily for Red Cross, public relations specialist Julia Southgate decided to dip her toe into the corporate world.

"I wanted to see if I was any good at it," she says. "At first it was a huge adjustment mentally and emotionally, I had a real sense of loss about what I do and why I do it. But here, rather than having one client, I'm exposed to a number of different sectors; it's been great."

For those people unsure about which world is right for them, Coogan believes it comes down to a mindset.

"Most people who make the decision have realigned their priorities and find a great deal of satisfaction working directly on problems facing society," he says.

"Those who don't cut it are probably the ones whose sense of identity is wrapped up in their job; they can find the loss of status too confronting."

Like Coogan, Kahn advises considering the whole equation when deciding to switch.

"If the right-hand column is financial, I advise people to also look at the left-hand one – your spirit and your soul," she says. "You're never too old or too young to realise that nurturing side of yourself and the good feelings that come from this far outweigh any monetary return."

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