

Hands are for helping



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It's a corporate team-building activity with a difference. The Helping Hands Program provides a unique opportunity for businesses to get involved with a worthwhile cause.

WORDS MATT HENRICKS, FOUNDER OF THE HELPING HANDS PROGRAM

There are hundreds of different team-building and conference activities out there for companies to engage in. Corporate Australia is spending millions of dollars on it every year, but sometimes little sustainable value is created from these sessions. The Helping Hands Program is different. We take people through what we think is the most moving and engaging activity on the market. We believe that we create lasting value for our participants and, even more importantly, each person leaves knowing they have made a long-lasting and positive difference to someone else's life.

Helping Hands comes to your workplace or conference room and provides the tools your employees need to build a real and functioning prosthetic hand. This hand is then donated to a land-mine victim on the other side of the world. The hand that we build was first designed by an inspiring man called Ernie Meadows, who created it as a service project in honour of his late daughter. He initially had difficulty sourcing funds to help manufacture and distribute the hands on the scale that was required, so the Helping Hands Program was our way of accessing the corporate funding needed for this incredibly important work.

Our primary goal is to make as many hands as possible. Recently, we surpassed our 2015 goal to build 5,000 hands. We've decided to lift the bar again and have set a new target of 10,000 hands by 2017. I'm quietly confident we will be able to smash this aim, even though it will require us to double our output year on year.

Our purpose is really straightforward: everyone can and should try to make a difference to the world. We believe passionately that we are all born with a yearning to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. We're born believing that we're here to do something special and that the world is



going to be a better place because we're in it. However, most of us let day-to-day stress get in the way of that self-belief. I think most of us are effectively sleepwalking through life; therefore our job with Helping Hands is to wake people up and say: 'Hey! You were born to be extraordinary. You ARE extraordinary ... now get out there and BE the change that you want to see in the world.'

All of the values that we hold dear are also incredibly important to the workplace. Our programs help people experience a sense of purpose. Purpose isn't just important in life; we think it's the key ingredient to help employees become more engaged and overcome challenges. It's an incredibly important concept for every leader to understand.

I founded the Helping Hands Program Australia back in 2012, and have to say that every year brings its own new highlights. We've run corporate conferences for groups as small as six and as large as 450. Each conference is special but ultimately I think the response from our end recipients—the customers of our hands—is always the highlight for me. We recently shipped 100 prosthetic hands to Afghanistan and received almost instant feedback as well as photos of them in use. I'm extremely passionate about helping our end customers with this kind of assistance that we often take for granted here in Australia.

Beyond our goal of 10,000 hands by 2017, my broader vision for the Helping



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- Matt Henricks

Hands Program is to become a vehicle for a large number of charity projects, so that they too can access the corporate funding they desperately need. I would like for us to be able to launch a new philanthropic project every year that is just as powerful as the Helping Hands Program. Before we get involved, I've set a couple of high hurdles to clear. The activities that I want to work on MUST be life changing for the end recipient and they also have to be truly world class from a participant training perspective. If we can tick both of those boxes in everything we do then I think we'll have a long future.

We recently launched the Water Works Program, which is a corporate training activity that enables people to build and donate real water filtration systems to those who don't have access to clean water. There are approximately one billion people in the world today desperately in need of clean water.

Beyond the business, one of my personal goals is to change the way charities think about funding. What we've created in our business is a real paradigm shift for many not-for-profits and charities. We don't seek donations; we never have. We seek to create value for our client based on their needs and I believe that's why so many corporate teams have already got involved. If other charities applied this kind of commercial logic to their enterprises, I believe they would easily be able to replicate the success that we have had. ■

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