

# Give a little GET A LOT

Workplace giving programs not only help the needy, they improve employee engagement.

BY JESSICA MUDDITT

That warm fuzzy glow you get when you help those less fortunate is a type of happiness, one that's been found to be more lasting and satisfying than spending money on yourself. According to a 2014 study in the *Journal of Economic Psychology*, there are health benefits from giving over a prolonged period, such as reduced stress and a boost to your immune system.

From an HR perspective, that's great news for employers with a workplace giving program (WGP) because as well as providing staff with a way to feel good about themselves and improve their wellbeing, these programs strengthen the relationship between employee and company.

The 2015 Workplace Givers Revealed survey, from not-for-profit online platform Good2Give, revealed two key organisational benefits of giving programs. The first is an increase in employee engagement, and the second is a positive impact on your brand – both from inside and outside of your company.

Eighty-six per cent of respondents said that workplace giving programs made their company a better place to work, and 78 per cent thought better of their company for having one. Also interesting is that staff who participated in the giving programs tended to be more loyal to their company, with 79 per cent having been with their company for more than three years, and 56 per cent having been there for over seven.

"An effective program can make a huge contribution to culture, particularly in terms of creating engagement and a sense of purpose – which are notoriously tricky areas for many employers," says the CEO of the Australian Charities Fund (ACF), Jenny Geddes. >



**"We keep our messaging simple. At a minimum we're just happy for our staff to donate a dollar a week which we'll then match dollar for dollar."**

RICHARD MURRAY, GROUP CEO, JB HI FI

## WORKPLACE GIVING

### Intelligent giving

Workplace giving programs allow employees to make contributions direct from their pay (they don't have to wait for the end of the financial year to ask for a tax refund). They're also better for charities: because donations are tax-free, they negate the need to undertake costly fund-raising activities.

However, while three million working Australians have access to a WGP, only 162,000 participate, according to 2016 data from the Australian Taxation Office.

It's not that Australians aren't strong supporters of charity: in 2016, 81 per cent of adults made a donation, according to Giving Australia 2016. Geddes says the reason for low take-up of a WGP is often due to limited knowledge about which fundraising channels are most effective.

The One Million Donors by 2020 campaign was launched in 2014 by the Australian Charities Fund specifically to drive up participation rates. Geddes, who also heads up the campaign, says that if the target is achieved, workplace giving would be capable of providing an extra \$250 million to charities annually. She believes that employers have a powerful role to play in helping to reach this ambitious target.

"Many organisations have made the great first step of putting a program in place, but they have a limited understanding of how to make it excel," she says.

The One Million Donors campaign includes the Workplace Giving Excellence Awards, which aim to inspire and celebrate success.

HRM magazine asked some of last year's award winners and this year's finalists about the secrets to their success, and sourced tips



Richard Murray,  
Group CEO of JB Hi-Fi  
which won an award for its  
workplace giving program

from one of the award's judges Sarah Davies, CEO of Philanthropy Australia, and other key facilitators in workplace giving.

### Make it easy to give

It goes without saying that the easier it is for employees to take part in a workplace giving program, the more likely it is that they will.

"We kept our messaging really simple, saying that at a minimum we're just happy for staff to donate a dollar a week, which we'll then match dollar-for-dollar and spread across all our charity partners," says Richard Murray, group CEO of JB Hi-Fi, who is also chair of the Charity Task Force and Employer Leadership Group. JB Hi-Fi won best overall program and most innovative partnership (with Redkite and The Song Room) in 2017 – winning for the second year running.

Technology is also playing a part in making workplace giving easier. Online platforms such as Good2Give and Karma Currency have significantly reduced the administrative burden. Last year, Good2Give, a not-for-profit that connects businesses and donors with charities, distributed more than \$20 million to 2,000 charities.

"We charge the company different fees based on the services we're providing. In most cases, the companies cover that administration fee, and of the money received last year, 98.9 per cent was granted to charities," says Lisa Grinham, CEO of Good2Give.

### The right fit

With thousands of good causes out there doing amazing work, selecting which one to support can be overwhelming. Good2Give can provide advice – but it's also worthwhile asking staff about the causes they care about.

"We really wanted to ensure that our employees felt connected to the charity partners we donated to," says Jodi Paton, general manager of people, performance and culture at Hoyts.

"We surveyed teams to ask which causes they felt most strongly about and then did our due diligence on charities within those areas," she says.

"From a broader societal perspective, our employees expect to work in an »



Jodi Paton at Hoyts says they surveyed staff to find out which causes they supported

"Our employees expect to work in an environment that gives back to their community."

JODI PATON, GENERAL MANAGER OF PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE AND CULTURE, HOYTS

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## WORKPLACE GIVING

“Telling stories about the important work our charity partners do with our donations helps our employees see the tangible impact.”

**KATHLEEN MCCUDDEN**, CAHRI  
GROUP HR DIRECTOR, SEEK



environment that gives back to their community. This is seen as fundamental to the culture of the organisation, and our workplace giving program was born out of that expectation,” says Paton.

Choosing partners whose values align with your business is essential for success, says Davies of Philanthropy Australia.

“When workplace giving programs are just tacked on, they tend not to weather the storms of different management agendas or difficult economic climates. Where they have been thoughtfully developed to be in-sync with core company values, that’s where you see significant benefits for employee engagement and loyalty.”

Take Zurich financial services company, which in addition to offering payroll donations, provides staff with one day’s paid leave per year for volunteering. When mental health and wellbeing was identified as an issue that staff care about, Zurich chose the Raise Foundation as its main community partner in Australia. It also works with the charity to run activities to raise awareness about mental health within its team.

“Doing this helps us better relate to advisers and customers, who may be dealing with their own wellbeing challenges, particularly at claim time,” says Sue Maher, country head of HR at Zurich.

### What type of donation?

While some companies allow staff to donate to any registered charity of their choosing, some prefer to keep donations more targeted.

JB Hi-Fi’s Helping Hands program allows staff to donate to one of nine charities and has achieved a participation rate of 81 per cent.

“Research suggests that a tight program is much more effective than a broad-based one, which can be harder to message or market,” says Murray.

That might be true but according to Davies, the right approach is dependent on the organisation’s culture.

“If the employer is quite homogeneous in its brand and culture, then the workplace giving model should be designed to fit those same cultural characteristics. On the other hand, if you’re an employer with a diverse range of brands and a diverse geographical and cultural spread – and your strength is the heterogeneity of your culture – then it makes sense to have that reflected in the design,” says Davies.

### Lead by example

Regardless of which model you adopt, leaders need to demonstrate a strong commitment.

“The success of WGP’s is ensured when a leader fosters giving back to the community as integral to a progressive organisational culture,” says Geddes.

“Our senior management team gives one per cent of their salaries to our Helping Hands program, so we’re not asking our staff to do something we’re not supporting ourselves,” says Murray from JB Hi Fi.

Another effective way of demonstrating commitment is by matching donations. The matching could be financial, though for some organisations such as government or not-for-profits that may not be possible. In that case, the matching could be pro-bono work.

### Just communicate

“Integrating the program into your usual staff communications is key – this helps embed it in the culture and keeps the program top-of-mind,” says Geddes.

SEEK starts the dialogue as soon as new staff join by including information in induction materials. It also

SEEK’s Kathleen McCudden says conversations around workplace giving begin when staff are inducted

invites its charity partners to visit their offices to inspire participation and thank those who already give.

“Telling stories about the important work our charity partners do helps our employees see the tangible impact of their donations. Upon hearing these stories, people often sign up and existing donors increase their donation amounts,” says Kathleen McCudden, group HR director at SEEK. The company was a finalist for the best overall program at last year’s awards and is a finalist in the same category this year.

And if it’s appropriate, don’t be afraid to spur staff on through healthy competition.

“Workplace giving can be something people think: ‘I’ll get around to it.’ So it’s important to create a sense of urgency,” says the director of the Flight Centre Foundation, Anita Russell.

Flight Centre applied KPIs it uses for much of its operations to workplace giving ‘drives’ during staff conferences, and got participation rates up to 30 per cent from 10 per cent.

“We found it energised and encouraged people to take part,” says Russell.

Ultimately though, the message should remain simple.

“If everyone contributes a little, we can achieve a lot – it’s the sense of aggregation that gives it power and excitement,” says Davies. •••



**Lisa Grinham**, CEO  
of online platform  
**Good2Give** that  
helps facilitate  
charitable giving

# 5 reasons to hire a person with vision impairment

## Lower staff turnover rate

A person with a vision impairment is more likely to show loyalty to an employer, giving you a lower turnover rate and a lower overall cost of employment.



## Flexible, resourceful

Due to the access challenges they face every day, people with vision impairment tend to be great problem-solvers, flexible and resourceful.



## Less workplace incidents

People with a disability are far less likely to have an accident at work than their peers.



## More days at work

People with a disability have lower levels of absenteeism and use less sick leave than their colleagues.



## Diversity = good business

A more diverse workforce will increase organisational effectiveness. It will lift morale and enhance productivity. In short, diversity is good for business.



## An untapped workforce

You are looking to recruit a new employee for your business, but what if an applicant is blind or vision impaired?

Understandably, you may initially question how they can possibly do the job that you advertised for – how would they read emails or find their way to work?

You may also think, “What about the extra costs and the changes that I will have to make to my workplace?”

To alleviate your concerns, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has developed a handy guide to highlight the benefits of employing someone who is blind or vision impaired, and provide solutions to common concerns.

These job-seekers are loyal, great problem-solvers and can provide an inspiration to your workforce.

All they need is an opportunity!



To download our free *Employers’ guide for hiring people who are blind or vision impaired* please visit [guidedogs.com.au](http://guidedogs.com.au)