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In less than two years, BIG W has donated in excess of 4.5 million new items to Good360 to give to Australians in need. **Clare Joyce** discovers how the partnership works.



Good360 has a goal for nothing useful to lie unused. They match excess with need by distributing donations from corporates to charities. It's an ingeniously simple concept that had been operating successfully in the United States for many years before founder and Managing Director Alison Covington brought it to Australia in 2015.

In less than five years \$100 million worth of goods have been donated by corporates for those who need them most. By 2025, Good360 aims to see that figure rise to \$1 billion.

At the heart of this effort to match excess with need are partnerships – with corporates who donate their surplus goods and the 1,275 member charities and schools that receive those goods.

While not-for-profits and those they serve can benefit from a partnership with Good360, there are valuable lessons to be learned from the way the organisation attracts, cultivates and maintains corporate partnerships. The latest success story is a partnership with the iconic Australian retailer, BIG W.

LISTEN CLOSELY

Like all successful matchmakers, Good360 pays close attention to the needs of potential partners. The chair of Good360's board provided the initial introduction with BIG W, but from there it was up to Alison and her team to establish a partnership.

"We met with them to have a discussion regarding what they were looking for. We listen to where they are and what sort of strategy they want to put in place. We find out what their pain points are and if we can be part of the solution. That's how Good360 sits down with all corporate partners – to listen."

START SMALL AND THEN SCALE UP

While the ultimate goal is a three-year partnership, Alison knows how difficult it is for big corporates to move swiftly through a complex

decision-making process that involves buy-in from numerous internal stakeholders. The answer is to bite off a small part of the problem.

"We've learned over time that if we go in with a big proposal, that seems too much," says Alison. "So if you just say, 'Let's solve this little piece of the puzzle for you', then they can see the benefits of it and then you can expand the program."

For BIG W, the big problem is how to deal with excess goods in a way that is efficient for the business while helping the local communities in which they operate. Good360's small bite at that problem was to run a pilot.

BIG W donated 400,000 excess items to Good360's Christmas 2017 program, which were then distributed across its network of charities nationally. Not only was it easy for BIG W to see the impact of the pilot, but it enabled the organisations to build trust and respect for each other without the stakes being overwhelmingly high.

With the pilot a success, the Local Store Donation Program (LSDP) was rolled out across BIG W's 183 stores, matching local charities and schools to BIG W stores via the Good360 website. Over 500 local charities and schools have picked up much needed goods from their local stores, allowing them to stretch their budgets further and create greater impact in their programs.

SHOW THE IMPACT

It is important for BIG W that team members at individual stores see the impact on the community. For BIG W teams, giving clothing, beauty products, toys or electrical goods directly to local charities and schools is a powerful way to connect them with their communities. Partnering with Good360 enables BIG W to fulfil its goal to make a real difference for families, and ensures that the store teams are a crucial part of that goal.

Good360 also delivers data-driven reports to BIG W – after each store pick-up they report on the number of charities and the causes to which goods have been distributed. Charity partners are also asked to share >

BIG W: Making a Real Difference HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS & CORPORATE AFFAIRS, VANESSA CHURNIN

What do you look for in a not-for-profit partner?

As a major retailer, we look to partner with a not-for-profit that aligns with our company's purpose: to make a real difference for families. We want our team to be thinking about how they can demonstrate real care for each other and their community. We recently conducted customer and team research to understand what mattered to them most, and they told us their family, children's health, wellbeing and storyline, as well as a sustainable future.

What are your expectations as a partnership progresses?

We want to continue making a real difference for families in more ways in partnership with Good360. Our next exciting step with Good360 is to extend

our popular 'Free Books for Kids' initiative, which started for the second time in September 2019. In partnership with Good360, we will be donating 40,000 books to school children in remote and in-need areas of Australia so they can also have access to storyline and the books we give away in-store.

What specifically do you value in your partnership with Good360?

We have been in partnership with Good360 since 2017 and what we value most is their openness to collaborate and design the best win-win solution for families in need around Australia. We created the Real Care Community Program where two or three times per year, each of our 183 stores put aside new and unused goods ready to collect by a local charity that is a member of

Good360. This is a great way for our stores to stay connected to their local communities and at the same time focus on being sustainable, and for those goods to be repurposed and go to people who need them most.

What has been the impact of the partnership with Good360 on the company and on the staff?

The impact on the BIG W store teams and their local communities has been really significant. Each store has the freedom to choose a local charity on Good360's list that is meaningful to their customers, which makes the donation have an even greater impact. It has created greater awareness with the team about our responsibility as a retailer to reduce our waste and give back to the community.



David Walker, BIG W Managing Director, with Alison Covington, Good360 founder and Managing Director, and Tom Sawkins, Good360 Operations Manager. Opposite: Staff at Perth Children's Hospital receive goods.

stories and photos. "Often, how those products are used is not always obvious to us. When the charities tell the stories of the impact and how it has changed people's lives, it's very emotional for the Good360 team," says Alison.

These stories also have a profound impact on BIG W and drive Good360's passion to share them. "Watching the reaction of our partners when they receive these stories and how they share them internally, that's the biggest highlight for me," says Alison. "Because what was extra to BIG W has now become essential to our communities, and they didn't have a way of distributing that before. It was a pain point in their business and a frustration internally. We put them in a presentation pack and they get to share all these stories at conferences and throughout their business. So, to me, what was once a frustration is now becoming a highlight. I have seen people become very, very emotional and teary when they read these stories."

GOOD GOVERNANCE RULES

By partnering with Good360, corporates have access to thousands of charities and can help many rather than just a hand-picked few. This is vital for BIG W given the company operates across many locations with varying demographics and needs.

This, of course, means that it is critical for Good360 that the charities

it partners with are credible and doing the work they say they are doing. All not-for-profit members of Good360 must be registered with ACNC. "We've got all that governance in place so you're ensuring that your goods are going to the right place and you're having a good spread of people that they are going to," says Alison.

The flipside of this is safeguarding the relationships with their not-for-profit members. "It's very important that we can make sure that nationally many of our members benefit from the program – that all sizes of charities and all types of causes benefit from these goods."

FIVE WAYS TO BUILD STRONG CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

1 Clearly understand your corporate partner's objectives at the beginning of the process For example, BIG W's objectives were to: clear surplus stock; increase team engagement; support families in their local communities where BIG W stores are located; and have one point of contact to assist many local charities.

2 During the negotiation stage be very clear on outcomes and mechanics Your desired outcomes may include items such as dollar contribution, brand exposure and duration of partnership. The mechanics of your partnership may include who is responsible for what, timings and key milestones.



3 Request one dedicated point of contact or, even better, find an internal champion This will ensure clear communication at all stages of the partnership and that you have a strong advocate for your organisation both internally and externally.

4 Insist on regular WIP meetings with key personnel This will maximise opportunities and keep your organisation front of mind.

5 Instigate satisfaction surveys with partnership participants In BIG W's case this means store team members and the charity beneficiaries. This will help you understand key learnings, evolve the partnership and ensure the re-negotiation phase is based on quantitative feedback not anecdote and hearsay.

HAVE THE CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

It can be daunting dealing with large corporates but you should approach them as equals and with transparency, advises Alison.

"Make sure it is a partnership. I don't think it needs to be one-sided. I don't think it's awkward to have an honest conversation. They're crucial conversations to have in a partnership." **F&P**