Want to Emulate Toms Shoes' Charitable Model? Here's How to Get Started.

If you are considering adding charitable value to your business, the one-for-one business model can help you embrace the rise of social entrepreneurship and benefit your business.

Popularized by Santa Monica based shoe retailer Toms, whose generous business model rewards consumers by instantly adding altruistic significance to their own purchases. Toms originally made a promise to deliver a pair of free shoes to a child in need for every sale. Though Toms has since expanded its charitable offerings, consumers have been quick to buy into the feel good factor that buying one and donating one achieves.

Toms may have set the wheels in motion, but the business model has been replicated by numerous companies since. The generous consumer benefits have received plenty of praise, but also some criticism for how effective is has proven to be in delivering a positive social impact.

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Some businesses have come under fire for sending single products to countries that are lacking in even the most basic of social amenities, and have been accused of engaging in short-sighted marketing attempts to win over the socially conscious consumer, without assisting aid-based economies in any practical way. For example, giving shoes to children who have none will certainly help one aspect of their daily lives, but without food, housing and access to education and healthcare, their feet are the least of their worries.

So how do you go about achieving a more sustainable impact through your business?

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Organizations like B1G1 offer the infrastructure to enable contributions with minimal resources, but you can also look at businesses like eyewear company Warby Parker, who has created a more targeted approach. It not only donates glasses to children, but also provide the tools and training needed to administer basic eye exams, as well as selling glasses at affordable prices. The company has identified that across the developing world, just one pair of glasses increases productivity by as much as 35 percent, which in turn increases monthly income by 20 percent.

Wildflower and Oak is another business who has discovered how to turn a good idea into practical donations that have a far-reaching impact. As a purveyor of baby blankets, for every product they sell, they donate a clean delivery kit to a locally based charity, Midwives For Haiti.

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The one-for-one model isn't restricted to product based businesses either. A marketing agency could donate consulting hours to an NGO. A printing company could donate educational books to communities in need. The possibilities for implementation are endless.

The one-for-one business model has the potential to effect monumental change in social and economic development. However, getting it right is the key to its ongoing success.

Any business trying to make the world a better place, one pair of shoes, glasses or blanket at a time, should be applauded. However, if you are looking for a way to give through your

business, find a solution that offers a wider impact on our global community as a whole.

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