



# Handprints Over Footprints

Combining Social Impact with Environmental Stewardship to Create Net-Positive Enterprise

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## Objectives:

- Define what a handprint is and why handprints are important
- Learn how individuals and corporations can create handprints
- Explore applications and results of handprinting

## What Is a Handprint?

You've probably heard of a footprint. This term typically describes our impact in negative terms, such as how much water we consume to manufacture products, or how much energy we use in our house. It is essentially the total planetary cost of your presence. A handprint, on the other hand, describes the ways in which we contribute to positive changes. Handprints can include anything that causes a reduction of a footprint—yours or someone else's. A handprint represents the total benefit of your presence.

**“If footprints are what we unavoidably take, handprints are what we intentionally give.”**

## Environmental and Social Co-benefits of Handprinting

The good we do will translate to either environmental or social benefits—or both. When both are achieved, this is called a social co-benefit where a positive economic and/or social impact was created in response to creating an environmental handprint.

When thinking about the social benefits we can create, it is most efficient to make them equitable—creating co-benefits in an affluent region with the capability to change their status quo is not going to create equity. Instead, directing co-benefits to regions that otherwise would not have the means

of infrastructure to improve is more facilitating toward social equity.

## Potential of Handprints

Handprints can be both restorative and regenerative. When handprints are restorative, the positive impact of our actions can be measured by environmental and social footprints. When handprints are regenerative, we are creating opportunities for others to generate a positive impact through their actions.

## Environmental and Community Responsibility

There are various aspects of environment and community that we can focus on to create a positive impact. In an ideal world, we'd consider them all equally. However, social and environmental priorities can be influenced by local economic and ecological conditions. For instance, in developing parts of the world, food and hunger might have a higher priority and therefore, organizations can determine initiatives that can address those concerns. In certain countries, labor welfare and safety could be a bigger priority and certain policies and procedures may need to be implemented to create solutions.

## Three Steps to Positive Handprinting

### 1. Identify and address immediate problems

Conduct an analysis of the areas in which you can reduce your footprint, and consider how you consume or sequester natural resources or create adverse environmental effects. A Life Cycle Analysis or Assessment (anLCA) is a prime example of how a business can identify and address their impacts. LCAs compile relevant energy and material inputs and environmental releases associated with a service, product, or process. Hotspots can be identified that cause high carbon emissions, pollutants, or reduced air or water quality.

### 2. Shrink your footprint

Start with the processes that are causing the biggest impacts and work down the list. Identify the necessary steps and plans that contribute to decreased negative impacts on the



environment and society without compromising our overall goal. Reducing one's negative impacts is an active and ongoing process. Results come through time and effort given.

### 3. Create avenues for a ripple effect toward handprint

Once our overall footprint has been reduced, we can more efficiently work toward creating a handprint. When one person or organization is seen doing good, others will follow and then each individual will have positive influence on the next person. This is what we call the ripple effect.

### Applications and Benefits

Companies have realized over time that none of the aspects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) can function independently of each other. As Millennials have demonstrated increasing interest in a company's purpose when choosing where to work and shop, companies are forced to consider how they can give back more than they take from the environment and their communities.

Creating positive impacts in society brings benefits to businesses, employees and nonprofits alike.

#### Benefits for Employees

Employees like working for companies that do good. They will give better productive outputs when they feel they are a part of a greater whole that benefits society. To attract, develop and retain quality talent, businesses should:

- Offer social programs
- Have a good public image
- Maintain positive media coverage
- Offer a work culture that promotes societal benefit
- Offer volunteer and charitable giving opportunities
- Engage in responsible impacting

#### Benefits for Business

A business has a direct relationship with people, its environment, and potentially resources. Therefore, businesses have a duty to be responsible for their impacts on society and nature. This means that diversity and inclusion are as important as environmental factors when addressing impacts.

Businesses that practice handprinting position themselves

in a win-win situation, attracting customers who are socially conscious while making a lasting difference to the world in which they operate. Consider the following:

- Marketing studies have demonstrated that roughly 60% of Americans would prefer to see businesses be drivers of change, rather than rely on governments to intervene.
- 55% of surveyed consumers responded that they are willing to pay more for products from socially responsible companies.

#### Benefits for Nonprofits

When corporations and businesses partner with nonprofits to achieve common interests, a nonprofit is able to have increased funding, sometimes through employer match programs. Nonprofits will also receive increased public exposure about their cause as well as increased opportunity to forge new partnerships. Employees of the interested business are great volunteers, often sponsored via their company to take time from the work week to help out.

#### Resource:

<https://living-future.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Handprinting-Guide-Sept-2017.pdf>