

RISING — to the — CHALLENGE

Stories from the Covid-19 crisis



Humanitix pivoted to offer virtual events during Covid-19 lockdown.

HUMANITIX: HOW THE COVID-19 RECOVERY IS FUNDING EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

By Nicholas Moody

Rising post-lockdown ticket sales signal a big opportunity for social enterprises like Humanitix as business values play a greater role in decision making after Covid-19.

"The pandemic has really amplified the trends towards more socially conscious and sustainable business models. People want to support companies that are doing good in the world and we are consistently seeing that," says New Zealand CEO Georgia Robertson.

Humanitix is a not-for-profit event ticketing platform that channels all its booking fee profits into education programmes that address inequality.

Ticket sales are recovering and volumes have increased 400% compared with June last year when Humanitix launched, despite the impact of Covid-19.

"The Covid recovery is giving organisers of live events the confidence to start booking again, while those hosting virtual events still have all the tools rolled out during the lockdown at their fingertips," says Robertson. "It's the best of both worlds."

"We are seeing more event organisers switch to Humanitix, as Kiwis love knowing that buying a ticket to an event can support equal education. We expect to come out of the crisis with more engagement and a bigger market share moving forward."

Backed by tech-giants Google and Atlassian, Humanitix focusses on three education projects and gives event

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organisers the choice on which education initiative to support. In New Zealand organisers can choose whether to fund educational equality for Māori and Pasifika students through Manaikalani, nutrition for school children or girls' education in the developing world.

In New Zealand, Humanitix has been set up with the support of NEXT, the Ākina Foundation and Seed The Change | He Kākano Hāpai. Robertson says the Covid-19 crisis presented massive short-term challenges because its core customers are New Zealand's event organisers - a sector that has critical challenges.

"The New Zealand's events industry has been in a fight for survival with almost 14,000 events cancelled or postponed indefinitely due to the Covid crisis and gross losses put at more than \$100 million," she says.

Humanitix responded during the lockdown by developing a new suite of tools, including a Virtual Events Hub, that allows organisers to use its platform to host and manage their online events more effectively.

The hub was created to make virtual events more secure, seamless, and well-designed and allows organisers to manage attendees, logins, security and sharing of links, and content distribution.

"Converting to a digital event is not for everyone, but for those who can, we are finding that this is a brilliant way for them to deliver those experiences," says Robertson.

The 25th NZ Hi-Tech Awards is an example of how events are blending both live and digital experiences with Humanitix. The 1,300 person black tie gala dinner has now pivoted to a series of three regional gala events with live streaming between locations.

All this innovation ensures that Humanitix's booking fee profit can continue to be redirected to the education causes it supports, despite the impact of Covid-19.

"This pandemic has highlighted the true inequality that exists in New Zealand and supporting education projects provides equal access to education. It's hardened our resolve to have a big impact, and that means we spent the crisis working harder than ever," says Robertson. "Events are coming back, and our impact is coming back bigger than ever."

Humanitix launched in New Zealand in early 2019 and since then it has ticketed more than 1,000 events.

This has funded over two thousand meals for disadvantaged school children and put 62 young girls in school for a year, as well as funding seven tech equity scholarships for Māori/Pasifika and disadvantaged learners in low-decile schools in the past six months.

"The lesson is not to underestimate the impact you can have through everyday things like buying a ticket for an event. Every ticket counts towards generating that funding, which means that more kids have a better shot at equal education," she says.

NEXT Foundation representative Frank Janssen says Humanitix's operating model packs twice the punch as it combines long-term sustainable funding with a clear social mission.

"Humanitix's long-term potential to contribute to educational causes was one of the key attractions for NEXT. Another key difference to many of our projects is that their business model is designed to be financially sustainable while being for-purpose.

"Funding better outcomes for New Zealand's most disadvantaged learners using tech disruption has added significance in the Covid era when support for educational equality is even more critical."

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