

# Groupon harnesses the power of group buying to do good

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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On Mandela Day, Groupon staff handed out 103 gift boxes to children at the Afrika Tikkun in Mfuleni as part of devoting 67 minutes of their time to a community service, as donated by customers through its crowdsourcing platform, with additional 136 boxes distributed by the NGO's staff.



To assist customers who were unable to contribute their time, the website hosted two donation deals. They could either donate monetary value to Afrika Tikkun, C.R.O.W KZN or the Tears Foundation or purchase one of the gift boxes (each containing a stationary set, coloured markers, a colouring-in book, a puzzle, a ball, wafer biscuits and a pair of socks) distributed on the day.

Simon Bowes, head of retail operations at Groupon South Africa, explains Groupon's charity initiatives and how the global e-commerce marketplace is harnessing the power of group buying to do good...

## ■ Why is CSI important to Groupon?

Groupon understands that the business value of CSI and the impact it has on communities are not mutually exclusive concepts. Essentially, Groupon South Africa will only expand its reach if the living conditions of the communities it operates in improve. All South African businesses have an obligation to help grow our economy and improve the living standards of our citizens. Groupon's values are aligned with this kind of forward thinking and we will continue to invest in CSI projects that have real quantifiable results.

## ■ What is GCI (Groupon Charity Initiatives) and how does it work?

GCI is a new way to discover local initiatives, rally together and lend a helping hand. Think of it as a crowdsourcing platform for local causes.

We first discovered the power of group buying at the inception of our business and decided we could harness this power to do good in the communities we operate in. Every GCI campaign connects you with enough people to achieve something awesome that you could not have done alone.

Groupon donates 100% of all amounts received through its promotions to the designated charity or programme. In turn, Groupon funds all the costs of operating the CGI programme.

### ■ **Do you think customers are more likely to support companies that make a difference in their communities?**

Our key objective with CSI projects is to uplift the communities we operate in. As a hyper-local business, this local aspect of our campaigns resonates with our customers and can only have a positive effect on their loyalty as customers.

### ■ **Explain #GrouponGives.**

The #GrouponGives initiative originated as a way for Groupon to give back to the community, in a manner we thought would be most beneficial to those in need. After some research, we discovered two things that are high on all charitable organisations' lists.

These are: 1) funding; and 2) awareness around this. The idea of getting the public involved was just really a means to harness people's innate want to do good. Often people want to help and assist where they can, but this is not always possible – so we worked on a way to make it easy for them. We further reward people for doing good (by giving away an additional monetary donation to those who shared their contributions).

With this in mind and with Mandela Day we thought it the perfect opportunity to tie the two together. Mandela Day is one of the most phenomenal initiatives generated in South Africa and an opportunity to help fellow South Africans in need.

### ■ **What are some of Groupon's charity campaigns you are most proud of and why?**

We had a Groupon Christmas box in 2015 where our customers sponsored a Christmas hamper to hundreds of children across the country. We personally dressed up and went to deliver the presents. The excitement on the children's faces was a real highlight in my time at Groupon and something that makes what we do so rewarding.

### ■ **Any planned changes/improvements to these initiatives going forward?**

We plan to add more initiatives on our website and making sure that charity is something that our customers are reminded of on a regular basis. Sometimes we are caught up in the daily grind but we seek to offer a platform that will allow our customers and Groupon the opportunity to give back to the community.

*Keen to get involved? Go to the [site](#) and search for 'Mandela Day'. The monetary deal will remain open until the end of the month. What's more, if you purchase and share your donations deal on social media, you stand the chance to win R2,000 for a charity of your choice, donated by Groupon.*

## ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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