

SA's Brownie Points helps corporates streamline their CSR

 By [Tom Jackson](#)

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South African startup Brownie Points is helping corporate businesses streamline their CSR processes by providing a digital platform that helps them design, run and measure impact initiatives.



Founded in 2015 but only officially launched in March 2017, [Brownie Points](#) aims to connect and empower three groups – people, non-profits and companies – using one innovative platform. Its app combines volunteering, donations and rewards.

“We connect people and companies with verified non-profit organisations through custom giving opportunities to not only make volunteering more fun, meaningful and rewarding, but to also make a measurable difference,” chief executive officer Pascale Henke told Disrupt Africa.

“Our volunteers earn 'brownie points', a social currency redeemable for over 60 rewards from companies like Woolworths, Takealot and GetSmarter. Volunteers can also choose to donate their valuable brownie points to their favourite causes.”

The startup was one of the 10 chosen to take part in the first [Startupbootcamp Africa accelerator programme](#) in Cape Town last year, and since then has been actively focusing on corporates. In the last three months it has run two large corporate pilots, and has a host of others arranged for this year.

Brownie Points for Business helps corporates design, run and measure impact initiatives, actively engaging their workforce and saving time.

“We increase engagement by encouraging some healthy competition between employees, while tracking all staff volunteering and donations,” Henke said. “Using the interactive dashboard, your social impact team can see progress on company impact goals in real-time, and access data for reporting and marketing purposes, as well as for tax deductions and BBBEE points.”

Brownie Points provides employees with opportunities to connect with coworkers, while taking action around causes they care about. Each employee has their own customised profile displaying company initiatives and information on all their good deeds, in both a professional and personal capacity.

“We have gained some traction with big corporates to digitise their CSR and sustainability efforts to make it more streamlined, data-driven and effective,” said Henke.

“Each pilot is designed per corporate, giving the corporate an opportunity to really see the value and us the opportunity to test our system before fully embedding it to ensure it all runs smoothly. Even though these corporates have paid for these pilots they have all saved significant time and money while adding real trackball value.”

She said Brownie Points was developing further new features, including volunteer challenges, ad-hoc disaster relief campaigns, and repeat volunteering, for those who would like to commit to a longer-term relationship with their favourite cause.

The startup has competitors – forgood, GEM Project, and the Social Collective among them – but Henke said she had identified several gaps.

“One of these is the psychological side of doing good and philanthropy. How can we encourage volunteerism when no one knows about it? A meaningful user experience and positive marketing are at the top of our list. We want people to feel empowered by all the good that is happening in South Africa in terms of social upliftment and development,” she said.

The second need was for an advanced platform that offers non-profit organisations everything they need with one profile, including a one-page website, online donations, wishlists, volunteer management and more.

“We wanted to do the heavy lifting for the social sector and all its involved parties,” said Henke.

“Brownie Points is the first platform in South Africa to combine all forms of giving – time, skills, money and goods – into an exponential impact network.”

The startup has an angel investor, and has started generating revenue. It charges companies a subscription and usage fees on their bespoke digital CSI platform, and will soon start charging its rewards partners transactional fees on rewards redeemed.

“The Brownie Points platform ticks lots of boxes, giving HR real time data on staff volunteering and giving, while saving teams hours of mundane admin. Brownie Points also offers an amazing marketing platform, empowering staff to do good and sharing this on different social media platforms,” Henke said. “Therefore, it has opened many potential revenue streams.”

She said feedback so far has been “phenomenal”.

“Everyone we have been speaking to wants to get involved, but just doesn’t know how. We plan to eliminate this problem,” she said.

Brownie Points operates across South Africa, and has over 300 non-profit organisations in six provinces and 27 non-profit sectors. Henke said though it was not currently looking for funding, it will do in future to fund ambitious expansion plans.

“After proving our model in South Africa, Brownie Points will launch in countries across Africa, and possibly India, Europe and the United States,” she said.

Read the [original article](#) on [Disrupt Africa](#).

ABOUT TOM JACKSON

Co-founder @DisruptAfrica. Tech and business journalist in Africa. Passionate about the vibrant tech startups scene in Africa, Tom can usually be found sniffing out the continent's most exciting new companies and entrepreneurs, funding rounds and any other developments within the growing ecosystem
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