

supplier
profile

Making powerful connections

Goal Zero brings solar power to African villages, and your backpack

By Teri Cettina

MOST ENTREPRENEURS start their companies for business reasons. Later, they may adopt a good cause as a way of giving back to their community.

Robert Workman flipped that axiom on its head: He started with a good cause, then spun a great business out of his innovative charity.

In 2005, after 30 years at the helm of a highly successful Utah arts-and-crafts business, Workman sold his company and planned to become a full-time philanthropist. A chance meeting led him to explore charity efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Workman was so moved by poverty, illiteracy and health issues in that African region that he founded a nonprofit organization, Teaching Individuals and Families Independence through Enterprise (TIFIE, www.tifie.org), to focus on this area. The goal: Create new local businesses and decrease poverty by putting families to work.

Through TIFIE, Workman helped establish a number of new Congolese companies. But a core issue nagging at him was creating sustainable power and lighting. For much of the year, the Congo is dark from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Many villages, lacking electricity, virtually shut down for 12 hours.

"Crime increases at night. Work grinds to a halt. Children can't study, unless by firelight," notes Workman.

And with no power, even during daylight hours villagers can't refrigerate food and medicine, or get immediate news of the outside world.

Bringing traditional electric power to these remote towns would have been prohibitively expensive, so Workman explored solar power—sunlight being an abundant natural resource in Africa. His team also focused on shrinking the size of solar panels so they'd be

"I tell our staff all the time—it's sort of our motto—when you do good, you get good. It's that simple."

—Robert Workman

Above: Professional angler Jarrett Edwards charges his phone with a Goal Zero kit—and the power of the sun—at Lake Powell, Utah.

easier and cheaper to move and use.

"Our initial goal was simply to power one school in the Congo," recalls Workman. But before long, he and TIFIE developed a broader concept: Light a Village. TIFIE subsidized half the cost of bringing its new, compact solar systems to a pilot Congolese village, and required townspeople to pay the other half. So far, Light a Village has solar-powered the homes of a half-dozen African communities, bringing light to some 55 homes. Also, sales and installation jobs have been turned over to local residents.

Just as important, the program is serving as a model for other communities in developing countries, and it's expected that the concept will expand quickly, now that people can clearly see its benefits.

"Along the way to 'saving the world,' as we saw it, we realized we also had a miraculous consumer product in our portable solar devices," Workman says. Outdoor enthusiasts and environmental advocates, as well as emergency-preparedness teams working in blackouts and natural disasters, could all benefit from the portable systems. Goal Zero, the corporation, was born.



SUPPLIER PROFILE **Name:** Goal Zero**Full-time employees:** 100**Telephone:** 1-888-794-6250**Website:** www.goalzero.com**Products at Costco:**

Portable solar-powered systems to power and charge electronic devices, such as lanterns, cellphones, laptops, TVs and more, in Special Events. (For a list, go to Costco.com, click on "Special Events" at the bottom of the page, then search "goalzero44.")

Comments about Costco:

"If I had to name one company that really helped us launch our business, it would be Costco. They broke down barriers for us, helped us if we made mistakes and overwhelmingly believed in us and our products."

—Goal Zero CEO, Joe Atkin

**Tablet or smartphone?**


Scan or click here for a video about Goal Zero's involvement with Light a Village. (See page 5 for scanning details.)

"We took solar panels off rooftops—where you normally see them—and shrunk them so they'd fit in backpacks," says CEO Joe Atkin. "We also supercharged our systems so they power electronics in about the same amount of time as plugging them into wall sockets."

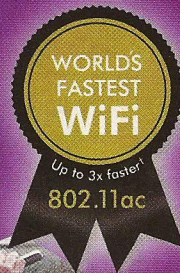
A hiker, for instance, can charge the 1-pound Guide 10 Plus Adventure Kit (it's about the size of a book) in three to four hours of daylight, then easily use it to recharge a phone, MP3 player or notebook computer.

Why the name Goal Zero? In addition to the goal of zero reliance on traditional power, Atkin says the company runs on "zero-based" corporate goals: "Zero apathy—we're passionate about what we do. Zero boundaries—there's no limit to our new product ideas. And zero regrets—we take smart risks in our business development."

The groundbreaking company that started as a charity has grown quickly and powerfully. In 2010, Goal Zero boasted gross revenue of \$1 million; in 2012, the company hit \$33 million. Workman credits a significant part of his company's success to its products' placement in Costco warehouses during Special Events and on Costco.com.

He says, "I tell our staff all the time—it's sort of our motto—when you do good, you get good. It's that simple." 

Teri Cettina, <http://cettinaworks.com>, is a Portland, Oregon, freelance writer.



Connecting more devices to the Internet?

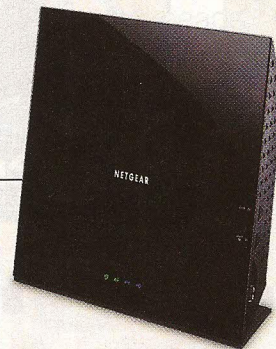
Is your router up to the task?

In today's modern homes, everything is connected to the Internet. WiFi devices now outnumber people in the average home. Multiple family members online at the same time – surfing the web, streaming music, watching movies – on devices from smartphones and tablets to smart TVs means you need the strongest WiFi technology to support it.

The NETGEAR AC1450 Smart WiFi Router with next generation 802.11ac delivers everything you need...

- AC1450 Dual Band WiFi – Ultra fast speeds for all your WiFi needs
- Whole home coverage – Great for homes with multiple WiFi enabled devices
- NETGEAR genie App – Enjoy more of your connected home

The NETGEAR AC1450 Smart WiFi Router is available in Costco warehouses and online. See the entire NETGEAR family at Costco.com now.



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