Robert Workman is the founder of TIFIE Humanitarian and GoalZero.

In the aftermath of the Sandy hurricane, I recently visited with a noble entrepreneur who shared a story of kindness towards the people of New York City. Robert Workman, of Morgan, Utah, is a highly successful entrepreneur who is also a man with a big heart and willing to help others in need.

Wealth from the sale of Provo Craft and Novelty Inc, a company he operated for 30 years, has allowed Robert to “pay it forward” to people who are disadvantaged. In 2005, with his wife Ange, Robert began looking at ways he and his wife Ange, could use his entrepreneurial earnings to change people’s lives for the better, throughout the world.

The outgrowth of his charitable focus is TIFIE Humanitarian; Teaching Individuals and Families Independence through Enterprise. The genesis of this noteworthy effort was an experience in an isolated area within the Republic of Congo, where electricity is not available. Robert noted with interest that there is abundant natural light from dawn to dusk that might provide a renewable source of electrical power. Voila, a business idea was born.

Seeing an opportunity to provide this highly valuable utility for emergency and regular power, Mr. Workman and a smart team of engineers launched a new company, GoalZero, to develop portable solar powered electrical units. After four years of development, GoalZero began selling products in the latter part of 2010. Now, several years later, the company’s revenue and employee base is growing rapidly. Robert is proud of a workforce of 100 young highly energized and socially conscious employees, led by CEO Joe Atkin.

It was the employees’ energy and idealism that led to their Sandy Hurricane recovery campaign. When the hurricane struck, the company quickly funded a war
chest of $400,000 in GoalZero products and began the
trek to New York to take 2,000 power units to
Hurricane Sandy victims. Using social media and
word of mouth, the company offered to match the
purchase of every unit with an equivalent contribution of product for the
victims of Sandy. In the space of a week, the effort has produced 2,528 units
worth $262,400.

Joining forces with Team Rubicon, a veteran-staffed disaster relief
organization, the combined group put generators into use within two days of
the massive storm’s destruction. In New York, the Occupy Wall Street
group re-focused its efforts to become Occupy Sandy Relief and played a
critical role in helping set up power to light a communications center, help get
refrigeration in place for medication for diabetic citizens, and began the effort
of helping to charge cell phones and laptop batteries for citizens and for the
legions of people involved in the distribution of recovery kits.

For the full story of these recovery
efforts, you can go to GoalZero’s
Off The Grid blog to get more
information or to track the ongoing
news. If you’d like to participate or
contribute (by providing cash or
through the purchase of GoalZero
products for the recovery efforts),
the blog will provide full details.

More than the Sandy relief effort,
however, I would like to
acknowledge Robert and his
company (GoalZero and TIFIE
Humanitarian as well) for their efforts to create companies and products
around their mission to change lives and to do good. The humanitarian effort,
Robert acknowledges, acts as an incubator to help his co-founders and team
discover solutions to critical needs that are applicable everywhere—for
example, the ability to grow healthier foods.

“We don’t develop products around
specific regional needs—we work to
find solutions that are needed
throughout the world, and then we
feed these ideas to the companies
that can create highly-applicable
products they will be able to sell,”
Robert says. “Following this
pattern, we’ve been able to create
profitable companies, multiple
times, which creates the revenue we
can use to increase our
humanitarian efforts.”

“It’s a combination of luck and hard work, but we’ve been able to repeat this
pattern a number of times, allowing us to continue,” he says.

What a remarkable concept and what a noble mission. I applaud Robert
Workman, GoalZero, and many entrepreneurs like him who dedicate their
time, their ingenuity, and their profits to helping people worldwide.

For more information about GoalZero and TIFIE Humanitarian, you can visit www.goalzero.com and www.tifihumanitarian.org. To reach me directly, you can contact me at @AskAlanEHall or via my personal website, www.AlanEHall.com.

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