



## A One-Page Introduction to Handprints

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Most human activities and all modern human lives require the use of goods and services. Production of each of these goods and services generates negative impacts, such as pollution and the consumption of natural resources. And each production process in turn requires the use of other goods and services from other production processes, creating supply chains that span the economy and the globe. Each process in these supply chains in turn generates its own negative impacts. We call the sum of these negative impacts from a production process and its vast supply chain the “footprint” of producing the good or service. Since the impacts are multi-faceted, so are the footprints. Every product has a “Carbon footprint” measuring the greenhouse gas emissions, a “water footprint” measuring water consumption, and so-on. And if every product has footprints, so does every person and every organization. While we can and must work to continually reduce them, **we will never drive our footprints to zero. Sustaining a person and operating an organization inevitably causes harm, albeit unintended and regretted.**

The inevitability of footprints does not mean that every person and every organization is doomed to be “bad news” for the planet and future generations. These same **people and organizations can also bring positive change, benefits, healing to the world around them. We call footprint-consistent estimates of the impacts of positive change handprints. If we shrink our footprints while also growing our handprints, we can eventually do more good than harm, becoming NetPositive.** We manage what we measure. To manage for and achieve NetPositive, we need to be able to measure and reduce our footprints while measuring and growing our handprints. We achieve NetPositive one impact category at a time. If your handprint is larger than your footprints for a given impact category, then you are NetPositive for that impact category.

Consider potable water. We all must drink to live. Our total potable water footprint drastically exceeds our direct consumption (whether to a person or to an organization) because of all the water required to operate the chains of processes that produce the goods and services that sustain us. But we can be water-NetPositive this year if our actions this year cause more water to be made available in the world than is consumed by us directly and by all the processes needed to sustain us during this same year. We can do this through some combination of avoiding/preventing water consumption and/or contamination, by purifying otherwise non-potable water, or by catching potable rainwater that was otherwise destined to become non-potable by, for example, flowing directly to the ocean.

The ability to be NetPositive is restricted to actors or entities capable of creating change. Products can be and are used by actors to become NetPositive, but they are not NetPositive on their own. How, and in what context, actors use a product determines whether the product creates benefits that exceed the costs of achieving them. Handprint-based NetPositive assessment accounts for impacts over the full life cycles of products. The scope of a footprint is defined by paying attention to one way that consumers and producers influence the world: by purchasing from other producers. Handprinting pays attention to the influence of purchases while also assessing other ways that companies and production can exert influence on the world, such as sharing innovations, inspiring action, and creating sustainability benefits anywhere on earth. In so doing, handprinting opens up a wider set of pathways for positive influence. Footprinting is the right way to start, encouraging us by holding us responsible to reduce the impacts required to sustain us. Handprinting and pursuit of NetPositive are the needed next steps, adding encouragement to be a cause of positive change anywhere and everywhere in the world, both within and outside of the life cycles of the goods and services that we produce and consume.