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My business is responsible for helping a man with cerebral palsy speak. We enable a young woman significantly disabled by multiple sclerosis to live independently, despite being told her entire life she would need 24 hour care. We've helped a young man looking for work after finishing his HSC increase his typing speed from 7 words a minute to 70, which has subsequently lead to him being interviewed for a data entry position.

Now you may not have been aware that Accenture, in addition to being a consulting and technology services company, was also in the business of empowering and enabling people with a disability, but thanks to our involvement with Hartley Lifecare, that's exactly what we do.

So what is it that we do?

Accenture has been involved with Hartley Lifecare for the past five years, working together on a range of programs to help people with disabilities gain greater independence, integrate socially, access education and the workplace, and communicate with others through the use of technology.

Working in the industry, I see the impact technology can have every day: Enabling you to do your banking online; Having your road tolls paid without you having to stop your car; MRI scans to help accurately identify medical conditions. But perhaps the most powerful use of technology can be seen through the work done by Hartley's Assistive Technology Program.

The funding we have provided to the program by the Accenture Foundation, offers residents a range of technological solutions to enable them to accomplish tasks that others may take for granted: such as changing the channel on TV, opening and closing curtains, or even having a simple conversation; and I mean this in the most literal sense. Through the Accenture Assistive Technology Program we are able to provide a suite of technology to people who do not have sufficient control of their voice or mouth to form words.

The software is similar to the predictive spelling software that most of us have on our mobiles today. The person can use the mouse to pull up a key board, select the first few letters of a word, again using the mouse, and then choose between the different words that are presented. When you click on a word, the computer reads it to you, so you can be sure you have the right one. In this way you can make whole sentences, and when you're done, the computer reads the whole communication out.

I'm sure you can imagine how powerful this can be for someone who has never been able to speak, or write, before, and the impact this has on their friends and family. Using this technology, they are able to communicate in a way that they never imagined possible.

Our involvement with Hartley Lifecare isn't just limited to funding; our staff are also given the opportunity to become involved by helping to set up the technology and showing the residents how to use it – obviously an incredibly rewarding task.

Accenture also raises funds for Hartley Lifecare through the Ability Cycle Challenge and Gala Events. From fundraising efforts, Hartley Lifecare have been able to introduce the Hartley "Driver Unit" which provides Hartley clients with transportation to enable them to get to work, visit family, and participate in other activities that require travel.

Our fundraising efforts have also purchased much needed equipment such as special beds, wheelchairs and other specialised items which allow them to be more independent. In some instances Hartley has been able to use funds to supplement vacations / holidays for their clients.

Accenture are proud to be a part of the group who contribute to supporting a respite service. Without this support Hartley would have to reduce the number of days respite care was provided which would leave many families in Canberra and surrounding ACT community without a much needed service

In business it's rare that you get to see the direct outcome of the service you provide at an individual level. Even more rare is when you see it dramatically increase someone's quality of life. Hartley Lifecare gives us an opportunity to make a real, tangible difference to the lives of people living with a disability. We're not only proud to be associated with this important organisation, but our clients appreciate and value the work that we do together in this space.

Becoming involved in Hartley Lifecare is more than just a tick in the box of being a good corporate citizen. It's a chance to make a real contribution. I'm proud of the difference we have been able to make, and I encourage you all to join us in changing people's lives.

For more information about the Accenture Foundation visit:

http://www.accenture.com/Countries/Australia/About_Accenture/Company_Overview/Corporate_Citizenship/Partnerships/AccentureAustraliaFoundation.htm