

Career & Workplace

## How Four Hands bucked the Great Resignation as it paces for 50% revenue growth in 2021

'We could be doing more business if there were no supply chain issues,' CEO says



Inside the Four Hands headquarters and showroom at 2090 Woodward St. in Southeast Austin. After 25 years in business, the brand has become a staple of the local economy.

MERRICK ALES



By Paul Thompson – Assistant Managing Editor, Austin Business Journal  
Sep 14, 2021, 2:32pm EDT

### IN THIS ARTICLE

**Matthew Briggs**  
Person

At a time when many companies are struggling to fill vacant positions, Austin-based furniture maker Four Hands LLC has managed to hire more than 100 employees in 2021 while keeping its turnover rate at about 4% for office staff.

At the same time, revenue is pacing to increase 50% year-over-year after a 2020 that saw 30% revenue growth. Four Hands in 2019 brought in \$205 million to rank among the top private companies based in Austin, [according to Austin Business Journal data](#).

So what's the secret to success at Four Hands?

"I think there's numerous factors," said CEO [Matthew Briggs](#), who was named a [2019 EY Entrepreneur of the Year](#). "One of them is, this is a culture of success. This is a company that has grown 24 out of the 25 years that we've been in business – and in the last 10 years, that growth has gotten stronger."



Matt Briggs is CEO of furniture seller Four Hands.

COURTESY PHOTO

A profit-sharing program that Briggs said typically yields a 20% bonus on top of employee base pay certainly doesn't hurt. While the bonus programs for warehouse workers are different, Briggs said "basically every employee in the company in some way has an ability to make money that is above and beyond their base pay."

But Four Hands takes its benefits even further, offering 90 days of fully paid parental leave after the birth of a child. Upon their return, employees are expected to work 25-30 hours per week during their first three months back. Employees also get their birthdays off, Briggs noted.

Perhaps the most popular perk, Briggs said, is the company's furniture purchase program, which permits employees to buy any piece of furniture at cost for their homes – and trade it in any time for full value. While that program was halted temporarily during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is now back up and running.

Briggs said that a month into the pandemic, employees expressed more concern about the reinstatement of the product purchase program than the broader trajectory of the company. To Briggs, that was a sign that he had earned the trust of his team.

The vibe internally became, "It's going to be good, but I want to refurnish my house," Briggs joked.

Those perks have created a company culture that has generally bucked the 'Great Resignation' – a [wider trend in the workforce](#) which has seen employees re-evaluate priorities and, in some cases, leave their jobs for greener pastures. Meanwhile, the National Federation of Independent Business found in May that [48% of businesses had unfilled job openings](#). The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in April a record-setting quit rate of 2.7% – the highest recorded monthly quit rate since BLS began tracking the statistic in 2000. Four Hands, conversely, has had roughly 4% turnover in all of 2021, and it has hired more than 100 employees already this year as its employee count has ballooned to more than 550 worldwide.

The strong retention rate at Four Hands created a sense of stability that kept the company on track even through the darkest days of the pandemic. Still, the company was not immune to the [worldwide material shortages](#) that have impacted everything from [semiconductor manufacturing](#) to homebuilding.

“We could be doing more business if there were no supply chain issues,” Briggs said. “The whole international supply chain is disrupted in a way that I’ve never seen in my entire career.”

Because 95% of the company’s business is wholesale, Four Hands didn’t see the same sort of revenue hit that some brick-and-mortar retailers did. The company had also recently invested “a ton of money in technology,” Briggs said, making it easier for retailers to work with Four Hands during the pandemic, especially when physical trade shows were shut down.

Meanwhile, with discretionary spending reduced for expenditures such as vacations and dining out, Four Hands saw a marked increase in spending on home furnishings.

“I think there was a psychological shift of going, ‘You know, if this is where we’re spending our time, it suddenly becomes a whole lot more important.’ People are spending a lot more money on their homes and making it into a much more comfortable place to be,” Briggs said.

Four Hands also had a built-in advantage over other furniture makers: Its overseas offices in locales such as India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Mexico.

“Having people on the ground there, we could essentially continue to function pretty much seamlessly,” Briggs said. “We’ve managed to bring as many new products to market over the last year and a half as we ever have, when we’re seeing a lot of our competitors either substantially reduce or doing zero new product introductions.”

One of the strengths for Four Hands is that many of these international offices dealt with pandemic-related shutdowns at different times. Of the company’s five major offices, at no time have more than one of them been shut down simultaneously.

Major customers include Pottery Barn, Crate and Barrel and West Elm. But the company has also made significant inroads with online-only retailers, including Wayfair. It also supplies higher-end online retailers such as Lulu and Georgia, Kathy Kuo Home and McGee & Co.

Briggs has found that the hardest lesson learned over the pandemic is “the endless unpredictability of business.” Plans made three months out were often scuttled in short order. That has made Four Hands learn how to become increasingly flexible.

“If you’re sort of married to any way of doing something specific, or you are married to a course of action, it’s just going to break your heart,” Briggs said. “But despite everything going wrong all the time, we’ve had phenomenal success.”

The company’s exponential growth has led to natural questions about its future. Specifically, might it consider going public?

“It is something that, at our scale, you absolutely have to explore,” Briggs conceded. “Anything we’re talking about would be likely to happen in under five years.”