

MarksNelson

Location: Kansas City

Founded: 1968

Local employees: 106

Project: Marks of Kindness program

Marks of Kindness was started to allow MarksNelson employees to use creativity and innovation to give back to local charities, support the employees' community efforts and bring staff members together.

Leave it to a bunch of accountants to notice the details.

When a group of MarksNelson employees was helping out at the local Ronald McDonald House at the annual volunteer day last year, the outdated tube TVs in the guest rooms really stuck out.

The group decided that people staying at the facility – usually parents of sick kids in local hospitals – should have the best accommodations possible. Just like that, the Marks of Kindness program was born.

Managing Member Mark Radetic challenged his team to design a program that would go beyond just raising money for new televisions, but also truly engage the employees to be part of the initiative.



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They started with a simple tactic: giving every employee \$10 at the beginning of a company meeting. How much ROI could they deliver on that money by the end of the year to help the cause?

One employee hosted a golf tournament; one collected aluminum cans; a couple auctioned off prime parking spots so pregnant employees could have

a shorter walk to the building. Those small projects and spare change added up, and the firm already has purchased 18 televisions and is getting ready to buy an additional 15 – well on its way to meeting the three-year goal of 88 new TVs. Already, the employees have raised about \$8,000.

Not only did the employees surpass

the expectation for the first year, Marketing Director Amy Hoppenrath said, but they also succeeded in boosting morale, teamwork and interoffice relationships – a much-needed benefit for people who often work long hours.

Employees always have been given the chance to be involved with the firm's direction, but Hoppenrath said the creativity and excitement about the program was a nice surprise, one that has allowed employees not only to give back, but to really put the MarksNelson mission, vision and values into action.

And they're only getting started. The firm will end the year with a silent auction for one last push, and then the campaign starts round two in 2016. For the employees, it's a good example of the culture they've cultivated.

"To be recognized along with such great companies and their innovative programs is truly an honor for MarksNelson," Radetic said. "We are very proud of our Marks of Kindness program and the positive impact it has made, most importantly, on our community, but also on our employee engagement and our firm's culture."

– Matt Smithmier