

Client Story

Festival Foods

Uniting a company's giving arms into a powerful grantmaking program with GIFTS Online



Festival Foods, a family-owned company operating stores throughout Wisconsin, was founded as Skogen's IGA by Paul and Jane

Skogen in 1946 in Onalaska, Wisconsin. With only five hundred dollars of borrowed money and a lot of enthusiasm, Paul and Jane began the company which now operates 17 full-service, state-of-the-art supermarkets and employs over 4,500 full and part-time employees. It actively gives in-kind gifts and cash grants to a broad range of organizations and causes across the state of Wisconsin.

The Challenge: **Finding a Way to Unite the Company's Giving and Tell its Story**

Until recently, Festival Foods' giving in those communities had no overarching tracking mechanism or central person to oversee it. Each location had a paper application available at the store, but managing applications and awards was a very time-intensive process.

The company was doing a great deal of good in numerous communities across the state, but lacked a reliable mechanism to track, analyze and record the impact of its collective grants, as well as a way to take that story and tell it to the communities it served. With no one person in charge of completing this role and no system in place to pull it all together, it was a very difficult task. Then, in 2011, with the goal of achieving better tracking and recording of its giving, Festival Foods decided to hire someone to oversee it and implement the GIFTS Online grants management system.

The Solution: **An Online Grants Management System and Someone to Manage It**

The company hired Lynn Baron for the newly created role of Community Giving Manager. Armed with a background in philanthropy and community giving, she was just the person for the job. She oversaw the implementation of the new system and is now the primary system user, managing everything from receipt of applications (which now all come in electronically, directly into GIFTS Online) and the initial vetting of applications to ensure they meet requirements, to coordinating the review process with her remote reviewers in each of those 17 locations and communicating their decisions to the applicants—all from within GIFTS Online. Plus, she does the organization's reporting from within the system as well.



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—Lynn Baron,
Community Giving Manager



The difference has been widely felt by everyone from assistant store managers to company executives. “Our previous process required someone in each store to carry the responsibility of receiving those applications and managing the awards,” says Ms. Baron. Now this is all done with GIFTS Online.

The Outcome: Streamlined Giving, Reporting, and a Collective Story to Tell

With GIFTS Online in place, the entire process has been streamlined. “Now I can easily report on each store each month, quickly see where they are against their budget and where their dollars have gone locally,” Lynn says. “The process is much cleaner and we are also now able to refer back to the outcomes of the previous year, all rolled up, to see which awards were most impactful to the community and which were not. For the first time, we have concrete data to work with to make more informed and strategic decisions for the future.”

Prior to GIFTS Online, each location was challenged to report on what they were doing locally because no one person was dedicated to analyzing information and telling that story, let alone the overarching story of all the combined locations. However, now that they have someone dedicated to this role and a unified process with streamlined reporting in place across all stores, not only can the organization easily report their progress back to the communities they work in, they can now tell the collective story of what they are doing across

the entire state. “Our move to GIFTS Online has generated a streamlined process in which reports and our giving history are readily available for the first time,” says Lynn. “We’ve been extremely satisfied with the results.” The entire organization relies on Lynn’s expertise in GIFTS Online to keep their giving program moving forward. The ease of the process—including collection and tracking—at Festival Foods has been made possible by GIFTS Online.

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