

Barclays Bank Strengthens Community Affairs through Corporate Social Responsibility and Active Employee Engagement Programmes

Employee involvement takes center stage in social responsibility

Barclays is an innovative, customer-focused company with 2,916 branches and 74,800 staff members, delivering international banking, investment banking and asset management services. Their mission: to be one of the most admired financial services organisations in the world-in the eyes of shareholders, customers, colleagues, and the communities in which they work. Set against an agenda that is becoming more challenging and increasingly complex, Barclays takes their commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) very seriously. The company embeds CSR values, operating a business in a manner that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that society has of business, into every aspect and level of decision-making within the organisation-and as a result their community programme grows stronger each year. Employee involvement is at the heart of Barclays Community Programme and it is one of the largest of its kind in the UK.

Overwhelming participation strains resources

Barclays uses MicroEdge GIFTS® grants management platform to manage their grantmaking process and for their employee involvement programmes. Last year, the company processed about 10,000 applications from employees for matching funds. These applications-entirely paper-based, including many handwritten forms-were administered by a team of just 35 people, lead by Robin Webb, senior manager of Barclays Community Affairs.

With this magnitude of applications requiring considerable administration, Robin realized that Barclays needed to reduce the quantity of paper used and the time spent processing applications. It was essential to the company from

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both an efficiency and environmental standpoint. Additionally, their paper application provided no choice of coding selection, leaving it up to the person inputting the data to make assumptions. "And staff members often had difficulty reading the applications, which created the need for time-consuming follow up," recounts Robin. Barclays took initial measures to rectify this problem by creating an email form that employees could complete and submit for match funding requests. Although it eliminated the handwritten

aspect of the process, this method called for staff to cut and paste information from the email form into GIFTS. Ultimately, it proved to be much too slow.

Remarkable acceptance of online process

Robin learned about the IGAM Internet Grant Application Module from MicroEdge when Buzzacott, a UK-based consulting firm who sell and support GIFTS in Europe, implemented GIFTS for Barclays. Buzzacott is a successful, growing mid-tier accountancy firm that is rooted in the City of London, with a tradition for providing professional, independent advice to a range of clients, including many charities and international corporations. More recently, Buzzacott has continued to

grow and develop specialised teams servicing the needs of the charity sector and other professional practices as well as developing a flourishing IT consulting service. "IGAM had great potential to eliminate the tedious cut and paste process for Barclays," says Stephen Hart, Head of Sales & Marketing for Buzzacott, "and it could be used across many other areas of Barclays' giving programme."

Robin steered the online conversion and organised an exceptional effort to deploy IGAM, expecting exceptional results and setting a tough target to have 50% of applications submitted online within three months. Despite these difficult milestones, Barclays exceeded their expectations. "IGAM has been a tremendous success," exclaims Robin. "Just one month after going live with

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-Robin Webb,
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our online application process, 53% of Barclays match funding applications were submitted using IGAM." The company expects that within a few months, they will increase online submissions to approximately 70-75% of the total application pool.

Unique and inspired uses for IGAM emerge through employee involvement

Barclays has fully embraced IGAM and uses it for a variety of programmes. In fact, their very first project involved using IGAM to capture survey feedback from staff on various aspects of volunteerism. The company also uses IGAM to administer their external grantmaking programme, and for several special programmes. For example, Barclays sponsors Make a Difference Day (MADD), the UK's largest single day of community action, in which people from all walks of life, of every race, age and background are encouraged to give some of their time, no matter how little, to activities that make a real difference in their communities. Barclays wanted to capture information on employee volunteerism electronically, and in their first year using IGAM for MADD, Barclays employees filed 600 of the 700 total applications using IGAM. Additionally, the Chairman's Awards programme honors Barclays employees for their volunteer efforts. Nominations are now made with IGAM through an online form from internal and external associates. The company also embarks on a number of regional projects using IGAM, such as media partnerships with local radio stations to provide grants to organizations within a particular community.

A creative solution for those without online access

While the company still accepts paper applications, Barclays strives to provide the most convenient and easy method for their applicants. For example, in geographic areas that have lower Internet usage, Barclays has provided a unique solution that still enables them to take advantage of the rich data

collection and automation features that IGAM provides. In this scenario, applicants can submit requests online from any shared computer, using a mock email address in the online form. The information is linked into GIFTS, and these particular applicants receive a paper response. "The process is still partially enabled, and it works well for several reasons," asserts Robin. "First, it allows people to become accustomed to using Internet technology; and second, it still enables Barclays to capture a wealth of information electronically."

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Better communication with applicants

With a dynamic giving programme, it is important for Barclays to avoid receiving a lot of irrelevant proposals. They created a custom eligibility questionnaire with IGAM that visitors fill out before submitting proposals. "Since we don't make grants to individuals or certain types of organisations, we are now able to ask these questions at the outset," states Robin. "By doing so, we save many applicants the time and energy of completing ineligible requests for funding, and our staff members are not hindered by unnecessary administration."

An increase in quality and value

IGAM has improved Barclays' coding and accuracy, enabling them to be more specific in their programme areas. There is less need to go back to applicants for additional information, since applicants can upload file attachments, budget reports and other documents along with their proposals. Additionally, IGAM has been easy to use. Robin explains, "We didn't have to call in Web designers to create the forms. They are very easy to navigate around, and often we can create a form from scratch in 35 minutes." Barclays has not yet gone through the evaluation process to produce actual numbers, but they do recognise that IGAM has had maximum impact on workload. "We're not looking to reduce staff, but rather to free up their time to do value added work both internally and externally."

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