

AZ Insider: Charitable Giving in the Workplace- A Buffet of Ideas

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Kathy Shayna Shocket has the inside stories on people making a difference.



Kathy's dish on the successful ingredients for inspiring charitable giving in the workplace.

As the Senior Director of Hospitality of the Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona, **Steve Gerken** was determined to come up with a way that the unserved food could be offered to those in need of a meal. After two years of working through the legalities there's now a dynamic program in place. The excess food is picked up regularly three times per week at the resort's two properties and redistributed to the needy at the Phoenix Rescue Mission.

It's an inspiring example of charitable giving in the workplace. It's also a reflection of a business with a strong philanthropic philosophy. **Steve Gerken** shares the credit of the program's success with the support of his employer, the Salt River Pima- Maricopa Indian Community which operates both the Talking Stick and Casino Arizona. "From the very top we appreciate what the community does for us and we want to give back to that community," he says of the many ways the resort makes a charitable difference.

Management gave Executive Chef **Tom Freimuth** the green light to spend time researching how the program could work. "We didn't want to see the unserved food go to waste and we were lucky to find **Chris Christensen** at LA Speciality Produce," says **Chef Tom**. LA Specialty, a Los Angeles based produce company founded the "Chefs To End Hunger" program in 2012. The program now in three states became a reality in part because of LA Specialty's giving philosophy where charity is a core value.

Business and fundraising experts stress that the key to promote workplace giving, whether it be through employee payroll deductions, or employees who volunteer representing the business, is through the direction set by senior leadership.

Here are some added tips for motivating charitable giving in the workplace:

- * Create ways for employees to give back beyond their charitable donations through payroll deductions. Employers who encourage employees to volunteer their time through work often find that it fosters a team spirit and builds morale within the workplace. Some companies have even discovered that its charity work programs can help keep and attract valuable employees.
- * Make sure there are no hidden costs of an employee giving or volunteer program which will unnecessarily tax the payroll or take away from an employee's productivity.
- * Keep in mind that charitable giving in the workplace is a partnership between not only the employer and the employee - but with the charities. Thus, carefully review your company or employee's values and goals to determine which cause and non-profit to support.
- * Allowing and encouraging employees to become involved with a charity they personally care about increases participation.



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