

Wow Wheel Wednesdays
Kentucky Housing Corporation
Management Innovation: Human Resources

HFA Staff Contact

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Wow Wheel Wednesdays

Objective and Need: As with any housing finance agency (HFA), Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) would not be able to meet its mission to provide safe, quality, affordable housing options to families and individuals across the Commonwealth without strong support from its employees. Collectively, our diverse departments provide housing solutions through mortgage loans and down payment assistance, loan servicing, rental voucher administration for areas that do not have a public housing authority, administer bond authority and tax credits to work with developers to produce and rehab multifamily housing units, administer programs for hardest-to-serve populations and the homeless, and internal support departments.

After a nearly decade-long restructuring, including massive cuts, the threat of a pension overhaul, several changes in leadership and a shift in corporate culture, morale throughout the corporate was at an all-time low. A task force of staff “influencers” formed to devise ways to engage staff and excite them about coming to work. Along with a book club, new communication avenues, peer-to-peer rewards programs, and monthly charitable fundraisers, KHC revived Wow Wheel Wednesdays, a raffle drawing for a random staff member. This simple activity has done more than all of the other initiatives in terms of fostering communication, raising morale, and adding levity to the day. It helps us increase productivity and community and has kept us connected through the pandemic.

Planning: After an administration change, KHC hired an interim executive director who asked staff what activities or events they wanted to take place at KHC. The Influencer Committee was asked to survey their teams, gather feedback, and share results during the next meeting. Unanimously, the committee agreed it could quickly implement Wow Wheel Wednesday. The concept was to anonymously draw a name from the staff list once a month and have that employee spin a wheel of available prizes. The wheel was bought from Amazon and a list of prizes were approved by management – gift cards for a free \$15 lunch, a Starbucks gift card, a two-hour lunch, an opportunity to come in two hours late, and a Visa gift card. Gift certificates were printed for all prizes that didn’t have a physical gift card, and supervisor approval was required for the prizes associated with leave time.

Execution: The first Wow Wheel Wednesday was January 8, 2020. The physical wheel mimics the Wheel of Fortune. It is multicolored and allows the committee to write prizes in dry erase marker, so as prizes changed, KHC could easily alter the wheel of available prizes. Google was used to randomly draw a number to select the participating employee. We notified the winner, had that person come to the wheel in advance, and ran them through the process, so the spin would go smoothly. To bring fun to the activity, we played game show music over the intercom and invited the winner to come on down to the front desk and spin the wheel. Throughout the building, the committee could hear staff laughing and cheering when the winning name was announced. The first winner, Judy Lancaster, skipped down the hallway to spin the wheel, winning a free lunch. To build anticipation for the next spin, the committee placed the wheel in the main hallway on the first floor of the building. As people pass by, they “practice” spinning to see what prizes they would win.

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*"I was absolutely surprised when my name was announced and VERY excited. I loved the prize too!
Free is always good." ~Judy Lancaster*

Communications and Marketing Services recorded the excitement and shared a clip in the internal newsletter the next day for staff who could not witness the fun firsthand. As the weeks progressed, the committee began sending out a 10-minute alert to staff, so anyone on the phone or in a meeting knew the music and announcement may cause a short interruption. The committee also increased Wow Wheel from a monthly drawing to bimonthly. Based on the technology available, Communications included a picture or video of each spin in the internal newsletter and on the internal website for archival purposes. Remote workers who won had an in-office worker spin for them while they watched online.

The virtual challenge: KHC sent the majority of its staff home to work remotely in March 23, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Communications and Marketing Services polled staff about Wow Wheel Wednesday – a six-question survey asking if they valued the event and if they felt it had improved staff morale. A total of 52 staff members completed the survey with 90% saying they felt the biweekly drawing improved morale and 83% commenting that they look forward to the drawing every other week. This feedback reinforced the importance of the activity, so Communications and Marketing Services moved the drawing to a virtual event. Our graphic designer created a virtual wheel with sound effects using JavaScript from [Wheel Decide](#). We entered custom prizes that consisted of mostly electronic gift cards to grocery stores, restaurants, and Starbucks – most of which could be emailed to the winner, which lessened personal contact. KHC was in the process of transitioning to a new voiceover IP phone system, 8x8, with a virtual meeting component that was phasing out Skype for Business in the corporate. Using the virtual meeting aspect, the committee and Communications would call the winner every other week and live stream the spin via a video streaming software called [ManyCam](#), though KHC also has used a free alternative called [OBS](#) that can accomplish most of the same outcomes. Communications and Marketing Services would start an unlisted YouTube Live stream to both the KHC YouTube channel and the corporation intranet. Staff can tune-in live or watch the video at their leisure.

Outcome: This campaign is a success! To date, there have been 12 winners, who have won a variety of free lunches, extended lunch breaks, an opportunity to come in two hours late one morning, and several different gift cards. One way to measure the success of this event is the fact that staff requested we increase the number of drawings to every other Wednesday, and more staff came out each week to see the live drawing. Staff have expressed in person and in the survey how much fun each announcement has been and say in passing that they hope they can be the winner soon. Though we can no longer hear the staff clapping while the wheel is spun, the excitement has not waned during the virtual spins. The winners still get a flurry of congratulations and jealous messages after they are chosen. We have even talked about using the Wow Wheel as rewards or incentives for other projects. It is that effective, and it was simple and relatively inexpensive to implement.

Budget: Since this activity stemmed from impromptu staff feedback, it wasn't included in the actual budget. The cost of this campaign is minimal and could fit within any size budget, especially the

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virtual version. The physical wheel was ordered from [Amazon's website](#) for \$75.59 and \$195 has been spent on gift cards to date. The prizes listed on the wheel can range from a company promo item, a donated gift from management, or gift cards that can be sent via email. No matter what prizes are chosen, it is always a good idea to check with your legal department to make sure purchased items fit within allowable amounts.

Replicable: The Wow Wheel is easily replicable for any organization, because it took minimal expense or planning. It takes little space or time out of the day, it can easily be customized to an organization's calendar, tone, budget, or needs, and it has big rewards. It helps build trust among employees and camaraderie. Please view the [WoW Wheel Wednesday video](#) on KHC's YouTube Channel and supporting documentation below for the full picture of this great idea.

Visual Aids and Documentation

[Wow Wheel Survey Results](#)

[On-site Wow Wheel Wednesday Articles](#)

[Virtual Wow Wheel Wednesday Videos](#)