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Let technology do the grunt work

Alexandra Lopez-Pacheco Jun 17, 2011 – 12:03 PM ET | Last Updated: Oct 4, 2011 12:24 PM ET



"We wanted to do for professional services what robotics and automation have done for the manufacturing industry," says Klick founder Lee Segal. Courtesy of Klick

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Company name: Klick Inc.

Headquarters: Toronto

Employees: 168

Market: International

Industry: Marketing

The Challenge: In 1997, at 17 years of age, Lee Segal founded Klick, today one of the most successful digital marketing agencies in North America, with a strong focus on the pharmaceutical industry. Innovation and creativity have been the main drivers behind the company's success since day one. This approach led to more than 30% annual growth in revenues year after year. That's why, from a strategic perspective, it has always been critical for Klick to ensure that its employees can focus as much as possible on innovation and creativity. And that takes time. "Our goal was to create an environment that freed up employees from having to spend a considerable amount of time on administrative tasks so they could focus on creative and strategic thinking," says Mr. Segal, who was recently named a recipient of Canada's Top 40 Under 40 for 2010.

The approach: The company turned to two of its own strengths — technology and innovation — for solutions. "We wanted to do for professional services what robotics and automation have done for the manufacturing industry," says Mr. Segal, "and that is to automate administrative tasks so that the employees can put their time into higher-thinking activities."

The company designed its own IT platform, called Genome — which integrates all internal communication and workflow on one portal. The entire team can access all information on the portal at any time. But Genome goes much further than that. It also provides automated tools to help employees complete administrative tasks as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Implementation: In most organizations today, employees have to spend a considerable amount of time sifting through voluminous emails — prioritizing, discarding, cc-ing or being left out of the loop because someone neglected to cc them. Not at Klick. "We banned email except for external communication with clients 13 years ago," says Mr. Segal. Instead, Klick's employees turn to Genome, which not only stores and automatically updates all the information, communication and projects' progress, but also provides automatic recommendations to assist them in whatever project they're working on.

In addition, Klick has taken its IT platform one step further. "Genome is an extension of our culture," says Mr. Segal. For example, "Empathy is a very important part of our culture — empathy for each other, for the community at large and empathy to help better understand the human impact of what we do."

The company uses Genome to imbue empathy for the community into its everyday operations through a program that awards employees credits for real dollars as they progress through a project. When the job is completed, they have the

choice of cashing in the full amount for themselves or donating it to a charity of their choice. If they choose the latter, Klick triples the amount. Genome tracks all of this, with the donations showing up in the employees' profiles on the system.

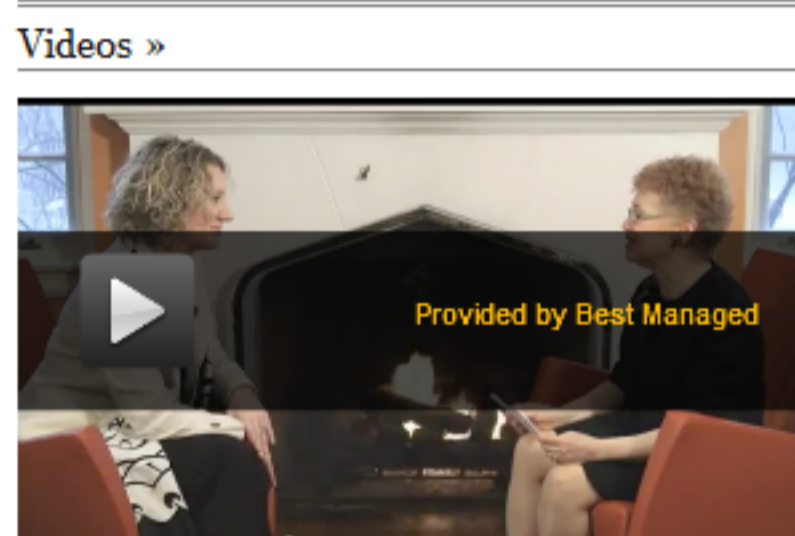
The payoff: Klick, whose employee turnover rate is under 3%, has won numerous awards over the years, both as a company and as an employer. And Klick has also won a large number of industry leaders as clients, including Pfizer, Sony, Wal-Mart, Ford Motor Company, Canadian Tire, Rogers and United Healthcare Group. What's more, they keep coming back. "Ninety-two percent of our growth comes from existing clients," says Mr. Segal.

The efficiency and freed-up time Genome affords its employees has led to such innovative solutions for customers as its strategy for Allergan, a global pharmaceutical and biomedical organization. "They were looking for positive re-enforcement for the individuals undergoing their LAP-BAND gastric procedure for weight loss, as well as a way to raise awareness about the procedure," says Mr. Segal.

Instead of a traditional advertising campaign and customer support, Klick's team came up with the idea of providing free weight scales equipped with WI-FI technology to each person who'd undergone the LAP-BAND surgery. The scales can connect with the individual's social media and automatically broadcast their weight-loss progress to friends, who in turn offer their encouragement and celebrate the person's achievements as they shed pounds and stick to the post-operation program. "From an organizational perspective, this also helped raise awareness of the LAP-BAND procedure," says Mr. Segal. And it did so at a lower cost than an advertising campaign, with the most powerful and convincing message of all: One coming from friends and experience.

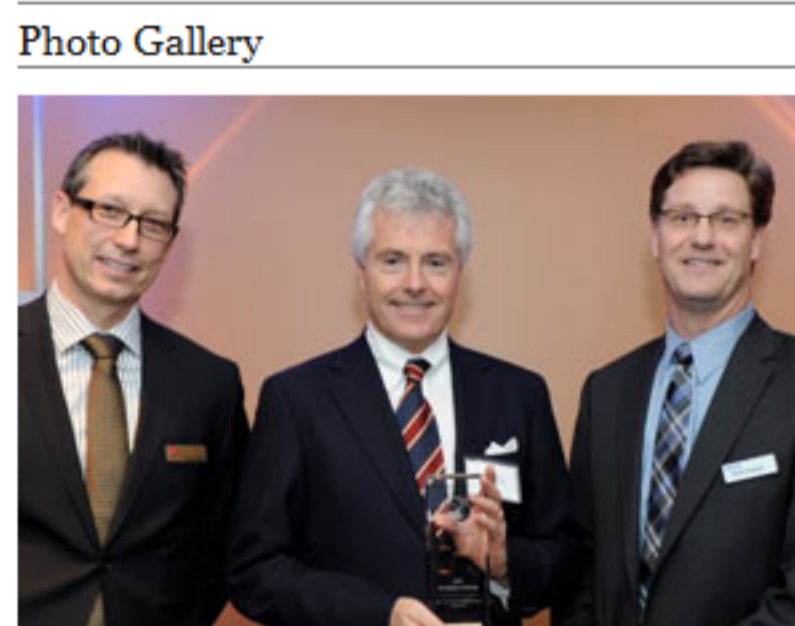
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