

Gorynski executes strategic community development at First National

Editor's Note: This is one of a series of profiles featuring Midlands Business Journal 40 Under 40 award winners — entrepreneurs, business owners, managers and professional men and women under 40 years of age. The 2015 awards were co-sponsored by Northwest Bank and the University of Nebraska at Omaha's College of Business Administration.

by Dwain Hebda

Aligning community development around a targeted, cohesive strategy has helped First National Bank of Omaha achieve more focused giving and tell a better story about the bank's commitment to constituents. This is the work of the Community Development

and Corporate Social Responsibility

department, headed by Alec Gorynski.

"First National Bank has always been invested in the community for its entire 106-year history here in Omaha, as well as every other place that we do business. It's been part of our company's DNA," he said. "But I don't know that companies like ours have always had a strategy that has been focused on outcomes."

In his role as senior director of community development and corporate social responsibility, Gorynski developed just such a comprehensive philanthropic and community investment strategy for First National Bank. He's also served as president of First National Nebraska Community Development Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of the bank that serves as



Senior Director of Community Development and Corporate Social Responsibility Alec Gorynski... Leading and developing philanthropic initiatives for the bank.

one vehicle for community investment. Before that, he served in a similar capacity at Bank of the West, overseeing a \$6 million philanthropy budget, corporate volunteer initiative and employee match program that earned the bank a spot as a finalist for the Greater Omaha Chamber's Corporate Citizen of the Year award in 2014.

Gorynski, 31, said while not all companies' programs are as formalized, the vast majority of firms have come to the same two conclusions when it comes to the reasons for, and role of, corporate philanthropy.

altruistic, we are altruistic but at the same time we're going to tell a really good story about it."

Bringing structure to a company's giving also helps ensure the money is distributed effectively and supports projects that can have discernable, if not fiscally measurable outcomes. He said it's something that sets First National's giving programs apart from others.

"We have a distinct and clear strategy and we feel that it is a differentiation between us and other companies to be focused on impact," he said. "It's not just giving for giving sake, it's not just charity because it's the right thing to do. We believe that nonprofit organizations are really changing the economic and social success of our local communities and we are obligated to making tactical investment to those organizations to make them successful.

"When you have a platform like this, a distinct, clear and concise platform, it's easy to tell the story around it."

The branding benefits are not only external, either. Gorynski said the impact on internal audiences has been equally powerful, particularly when it comes to attracting the best young talent.

"As many as half of employees, and more so when you look at millennials, look to their employers to have a stake in the community when it comes to choosing where to work," he said. "Our head of HR has told me anecdotally that when asked why did you come to First National Bank, many new employees cite our presence in the community as the reason for coming to First National Bank. So I think that speaks volumes."

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