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# Russell Builds on People-First Strategy to Stand Out in Construction

Kudos® Case Study

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Thank Different.®





## The Goal:

### Attract and Develop a Large Pool of Top Talent to Deliver Exceptional Work

**Russell has aggressive goals — they are working to double their business by 2025.**

Construction and development is a people-based business that requires the best talent at all levels to stay competitive and grow. With three offices and ongoing field projects all over the United States, Russell needs to make sure field and office staff stay connected and have the same great experience working at Russell.

Russell is continuously working to find enough people to meet their staffing needs. They are working tirelessly to recruit top talent while retaining their existing people. Russell is committed to cultivating a social and professional culture where all employees can work, learn, interact, and develop.

#### NAME

Russell

#### LOCATION

Davenport, Iowa (Headquarters),  
St. Louis, Missouri, and Olathe, Kansas

#### INDUSTRY

Construction & Development

Russell is a professional services firm providing construction and development services across the US Midwest.

#### SIZE

250 – 500 Employees

#### KUDOS PROGRAM

- Recognition + Rewards
- Kudos client since 2019





Culture is the only way we can differentiate ourselves when working toward our goals. Our culture is what has gotten us this far, and what will continue to help us with that trajectory.”

Jill Niebuhr

*Talent Acquisition Manager, Russell*

## The Approach: Building an Irresistible Culture of Recognition with Kudos

Through the Kudos platform, Russell demonstrates its commitment to culture and people.

### Laying the Foundation

Kudos is one of the first programs you learn during Russell’s robust onboarding program. It sets the tone for their people and culture first approach – and their commitment to creating a “fun, fulfilling work environment.” Team members use Kudos daily to recognize their peers across the organization for anything from critical operational wins to everyday thank-yous.

### Supporting a Non-Hierarchical Structure

Russell prides itself on its non-hierarchical, lead-by-example, development-oriented culture. Any team member can show appreciation for someone, it’s not a top-down model. Kudos supports that philosophy through its peer-to-peer approach to recognition – users can provide personalized, in-the-moment recognition to anyone in their organization.

### A Focus on Individual Development

Russell knows its most valuable asset is its people. Its people-development strategy has four key pillars: Coaching, 360° Feedback, Core Competency Focus, and Career Development. Kudos allows employees to recognize the strides being made by their peers and encourages others to learn and grow themselves.



## Values in Action

**Russell's mission is: "Building great people, relationships and communities."**

They've established clear values to support that mission, which in turn are tied to every recognition message in Kudos:

- Appreciating People
- Client Centric
- Community
- Integrity
- Safety
- Innovation



In the construction industry, our people are our product. Our value proposition in the market is our people; without great people, we can't build buildings and satisfy our clients. Like most industries, the competition for talent is fierce; it's imperative that we attract and retain team members whose skills we develop in order to meet our company goals."

**Melissa Pepper**  
*Chief Strategy Officer, Russell*





## Results and Impact:

Russell is well on its way to achieving its aggressive growth goals. To date, Russell has delivered more than \$3 billion in projects across 33 states. Thanks to their people, they remain a market leader in their core markets.

### Attracting Top Talent

"Employees are choosing Russell over other companies for its culture," shared Jill Niebuhr, Talent Acquisition Manager at Russell. In 2021 alone, it welcomed over 80 new hires in field and office roles.

### Building a Culture of Appreciation

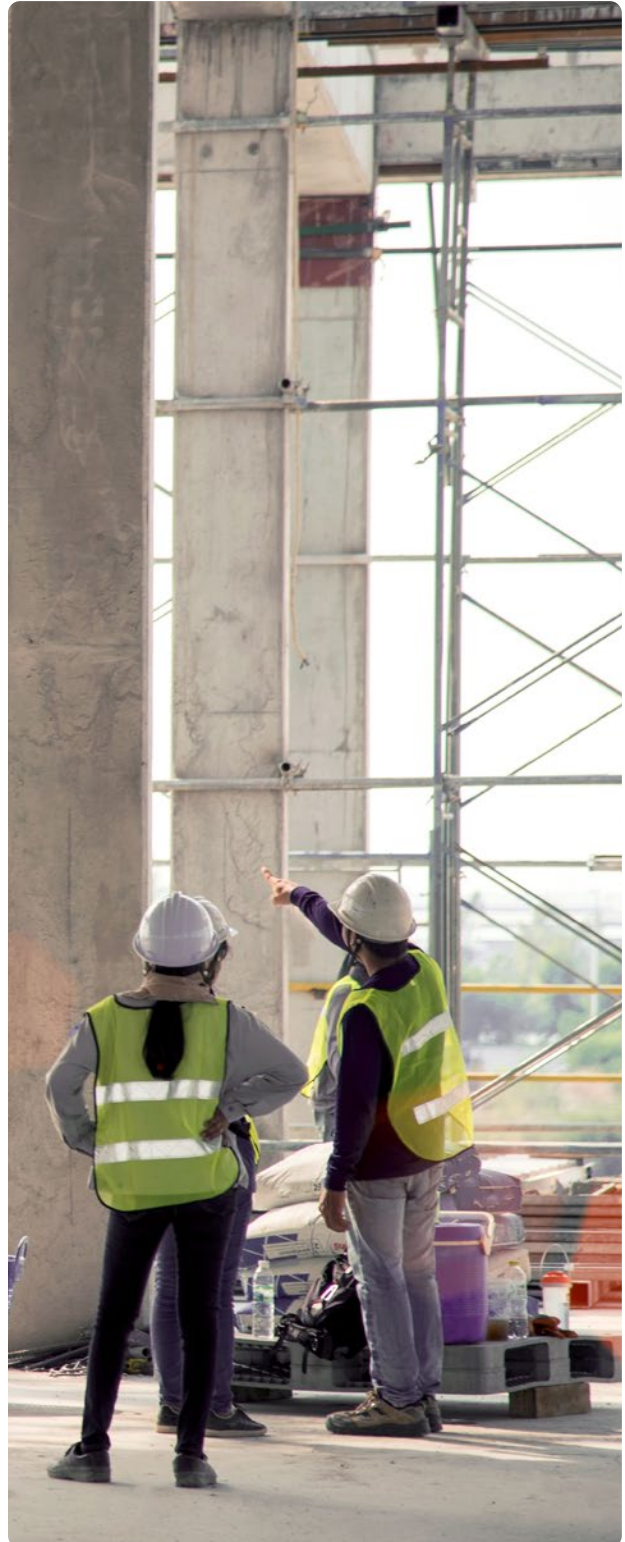
Since implementing Kudos, approximately 78% of employees consistently report having "received recognition in the last week" – a number that has held steady amidst a significant merger, the impact of the global pandemic, and a mass influx of new employees in 2021.

At Russell, Kudos is used all day, every day, by everyone from Russell's CEO (who uses it nearly every day) to employees who have worked at the organization for as little as one day. Appreciating people is hardwired into the culture at Russell.

### Exceptional Employee Feedback

When asked why they love working at Russell, employees have said:

- *I am here because of the culture. Russell cares about me and my family.*
- *The flexibility and trust in us to do our jobs is amazing.*
- *I am challenged and appreciated for my contributions.*
- *I know I can excel here because they invest in my development.*





### Enhanced Safety

Many organizations have recognized Russell for their safety practices, including the Association of General Contractors of America, National Contractor's Insurance, Ltd., and The National Safety Council. In 2020, Russell achieved, for the second time, one million hours with zero lost-time incidents. Studies show that employee engagement can lead to as significant as a 70% reduction in safety incidents\*.

\*Gallup 2016 Q12 Meta-Analysis

### Bringing Together Field, Remote & Office-Based Teams

One of the reasons Russell chose Kudos was its robust mobile app. They wanted their employees in the field to have the same access to culture and recognition as the office team. The results have been fantastic - the field team loves the app. They can use Kudos to send recognition in the moment, without needing to wait until they are back at home or in the office.



We have project teams nationwide and we need to make sure that everyone feels the Russell culture and Kudos has helped us do that – it's been a differentiator for us."

Jill Niebuhr

*Talent Acquisition Manager, Russell*



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