ENGAGING
strategies

LOOKING FOR NEW WAYS to motivate staff and improve performance across the business is one trend that never changes, even when the methods to do so might.

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Online channels including social media and gamification provide exciting opportunities that add fun elements and greater collaboration among participants. Incorporating them into your incentive and reward programs, events and internal communication campaigns is easier than you think.

If you break down a typical incentive program there are many stages that lead to a successful outcome. It is easy to direct focus on the end result, the reward – being monetary, a voucher or an experience such as an event or ultimately a trip away. But the incentive program that drives the improvement or increase must change behaviour in order to obtain the desired result. Key to this is engaging participants and then tracking and measuring the change towards the desired outcome. The program framework is driven by the desired outcomes which can be diverse and are not always purely a sales-driven target. Change in business culture through compliance to new initiatives; greater engagement through education and learning on new products or services; or a pure sales initiative driven by % increase against key targets can all benefit from an incentive program. These outcomes formulate how the program is ultimately measured and return on investment reviewed, and must be strongly considered when developing the incentive strategy.

To track activity and continually engage with the participants there are a few solutions that you may wish to consider. The simplest of these is to create a website to provide a specific communication channel with your audience. This is not just an opportunity to reinforce the ultimate 'prize' but to provide ongoing information throughout the qualification period as to how each participant is tracking against others in the program. This can be broken down to provide competitive sets, such as areas, teams, divisions, geographic regions or sales territories.

Adding a social element to the site and the program is another way of interacting with the audience. It also provides a platform for the participants to connect with each other, share common experiences or even ask for help on commonly faced issues that may not have been considered when the program was scoped.

Social for some people is still quite daunting so this could be as simple as having a wall on the site where comments and questions are posted. This is something that shouldn't be regulated but managed and answered by the company to help provide the solution.

Being engaged – Gamification

Maintaining motivation in any campaign or program is never easy and the final stages are often the hardest to motivate and engage with people. We are always looking at new avenues to achieve this and have been implementing gamification models into our program development for clients recently.

At its most simplistic, this is using the principles of all game environments which are based around goals, missions and reward. So taking this off our Wii and into the business environment is best explained in two ways.

For those of you who are social and use Four Square you will know that the more that you visit a site the more your profile increases to hopefully become the 'Mayor' of that location, which also means that the business can promote campaigns and offer you value adds or discounts. Similarly, in Farmville you are assigned missions, tasks and goals and once these are achieved you increase your status, gain points and move further along being accredited to the next level. You are also emailed missions whilst you are away from the site notifying you of an action that needs to take place.

Using these principles we can integrate gamification into the web-enabled incentive program. Missions and tasks to complete can be sent to participants and are tracked as actioned. The missions can be targeted to drive a specific action at a particular point in the program.

The beauty of gamification over a stand-alone website is that you can expand the "scope of the program" to take into consideration market trends, changes in the economic landscape or the launch of new strategic marketing products. Any of these may have a direct impact on the program and may not have been apparent when the original scope for the program and website were developed. In short, there is flexibility. So if a product line needs to be pushed or there are special offers, these can be promoted through missions and rewards given to those people who action these missions, further increasing their ranking and their engagement.

For example, a new online video module may instruct participants to upload a photo of their perfectly merchandised store, as demonstrated in the video to provide education, and thus the behaviour is demonstrated and then acted upon. This is just one example and missions can be tailored to the desired outcomes, and then measured to create a reward cycle. This can run in tandem with sales targets and live data feeding into the site, driving competition to reach the desired targets.

By applying some of the above rationale and implementing into a program, regardless of whether this is business to internal, to business, to channel partners or to consumers you are able to track and report on engagement and apply quantifiable objectives to the program.

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