

Step 2: Audience Identification

What program designers need to consider about their audiences.

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Knowing All You Can About The Target Audience Is Key

Anyone experienced in the incentive business can give you numerous examples of companies using gut, personal instincts related to this phase of incentive programs. Yet, probably no aspect of program design has a greater impact on outcomes than an understanding of the audience. Fully understanding the people whose actions you need to achieve your goals is critical. You're interested in changing behavior favorably, so it's of utmost important to define the people being targeted for behavioral change. This includes knowing (definitively) the following.

Who They Are

Have you clearly identified on a one-to-one basis (or as specifically as possible) the people whose actions can lead to your success? Do you have their permission to e-mail them, or do you have access to their mailing addresses or some other efficient means of reaching them? You'll need this to contact them for fact-finding, for communicating to them what the program is about, and more – not the least of which will include reward fulfillment.

Income

Are basic financial needs being met, or are these (perhaps) high-income people with more time to grapple with psychic need? This has a bearing on how best to engage your audience.

Education

What is their level of literacy and general knowledge? This helps you determine the appropriate communication strategy.

Involvement

Are they employees, channel partners, customers or prospects? The more involved or engaged people are with your company, the easier it is to engage and move them.

Emotion

How does this group feel about the organization, either positively or negatively?

Capability

Do employees have the skill sets to do what you want them to do? Does the channel partner have the product knowledge needed to sell your product or service? Does the direct sales employee have the skills necessary to present the product or service to a dealer principal so that the dealer makes a stocking decision?

Impact

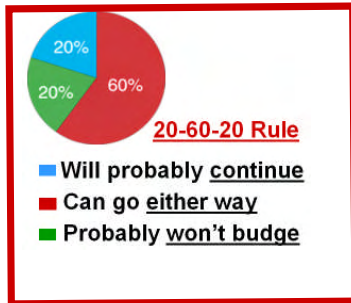
Make sure you have identified everyone who can affect your performance goal. Often, other groups can have more of an impact than you might think. For example, customer service people can have a direct bearing on the efforts of salespeople to increase sales. Their role in customer satisfaction, and thus repurchase likelihood, is very important. Similarly, retail personnel at a retail outlet can have a direct impact on whether or not customers see the point-of-sale displays that a retail outlet agreed to put up. The shipping department might play just as large a role in helping you meet customer production deadlines as the assembly operation. No matter what department you're in, you can benefit by looking at all of the people who can affect the achievement of your incentive program goals.

Motivational Attributes

Motivational attributes look at how people are motivated -- by extrinsic rewards or intrinsic rewards -- or some combination. Because few organizations have precise psychographic information, this analysis often has to be based on an informal evaluation of the culture. Many organizations with large populations should assume that their audience contains all types.

The 20-60-20 Rule

When identifying the program audience, consider the anecdotal (but highly useful) 20-60-20 rule:



20% of your best performers will probably continue to perform no matter what you do, because they already perform under the current circumstances.

Another 60% can go either way—switch on their buttons and performance improves; switch their buttons the wrong way, and off they go in the wrong direction.

The final 20% probably won't budge no matter what you do.

This rule of thumb is supported by the research showing the benefits of so-called open-ended programs in which people compete against themselves rather than their colleagues: Even a small improvement by many people in the middle 60% of performers can have a significant incremental benefit.

Just Ask Them

Many organizations use annual or semiannual surveys to get answers to the above questions about their target audience. They are able to collect the information because it is part of an incentive program in which the audience gets benefits for participating.