

Motivational Merchandise ROI Measures

Qualitative Measures of Motivational
Power.

*By Rodger Stotz, CPIM, Maritz Inc., and Bruce Bolger, CPIM, Selling
Communications, Inc.*

Qualitative Measures

In addition to the normal performance measures, motivational merchandise lends itself to a series of qualitative measures that can help predict the success of future motivational efforts.

Through the use of organizational surveys and tests, your organization can determine the level of buy-in, support, positive emotion, teamwork and alignment present in the target audience. Surveys help gauge how people feel about your efforts to engage them; tests can help determine how well they grasp what is expected of them or what they need to know to succeed at their objectives. Both are facilitated by incentive technology.

What's Required

A quick look at the checklist of skill sets required for a motivational merchandise program should clearly show the purchasing department why planners want to pay more for expertise. As a high-impact form of target-marketing tool, motivational merchandise can also backfire. Motivational merchandise programs require planners and vendors who can:

Understand Objectives. What financial and non-financial outcomes are desired and how will they be measured?

Undertake Audience Analysis. What are the demographics of the target audience?

Help Develop Budgets. What is the payoff for the program in financial and non-financial terms and what is that worth to the organization?

Product Selection. How will the product used as a medium to accomplish motivational or communication goals?

Make The Presentation Extraordinary. What can be done to make the presentation as memorable as possible?

Work With Other Disciplines To Maximize Results. What marketing, sales, communication and training strategies are being used with this audience, and how, if at all, should the program be integrated?

Interweave Communication Objectives. How can the awards be used in the best way to reinforce communication and alignment objectives?

Apply Training And Reinforcement Elements As Necessary. How can the award program tie into efforts to promote knowledge?

Measure Return On Investment. How did the program measure up against its goals in specific terms? The average marketer typically does not have training in these areas, let alone the extensive experience generally necessary to translate knowledge into measurable results.

Product Selection

When used in business, merchandise is a medium, not a product. Like an ad, the merchandise has a goal, in this case a one-to-one objective. That can make merchandise selection as personal as an ad campaign, depending on the objective.

Generally speaking, businesses can offer participants two options: a choice of many awards in a catalog or very individual awards, either pre-agreed upon with the recipient or communicated in advance to the target audience.

Catalogs make sense when the audience represents a broad cross section of demographics and price ranges; individual awards make sense when there's a desire to make a more personal statement. Even catalogs these days can be customized to focus on awards more carefully tailored to the targeted audience, with some vendors even offering artworks and handicrafts.

For individual awards, the selection process mirrors that of creating an ad campaign; it's a matter of understanding the target audience, getting into their shoes and finding the right items that connect the giver with the audience in a memorable way.

A Note On Points

In consumer programs, the value of awards is usually disclosed, if not in the fine print for regulatory compliance purposes. However, with other audiences, the entire purpose is to make the award part of a sincere experience and relationship, rather than a transaction. For this reason, in many incentive programs the sponsors offer awards in points, rather than in currency.

Special Presentation Considerations

Research consistently suggests that how awards are given is almost as important as the award. This can mean:

- Presenting the award in person
- Delivering with a hand-written or customized note
- Publicizing in any available, appropriate medium
- Extending personal thanks

Types Of Vendors

Incentive Federation surveys consistently find that corporations buy products from the following sources:

Direct From Manufacturer Via Incentive Representatives. An increasing number of branded manufacturers have a place on their Web site for corporate customers that include the incentive or special markets department. These departments often have incentive representatives distributed throughout the U.S.

Full-Service Incentive Companies. Many of these companies provide print and online catalogs and access to any type of product.

Retailers. Increasing numbers of major retailers now have a corporate department. Many belong to the Incentive Marketing Association's Incentive Gift Card Council.

Promotional Products Distributors. Many now sell both non-branded and branded products.

Promotion Agencies. These companies often get involved with consumer and channel partner programs and buy merchandise directly from manufacturers through the incentive representatives.

Meetings And Incentive Travel Specialists. Some of these companies offer merchandise incentive catalogs or pillow gifts for meetings.

What To Look For In A Vendor

Vendor selection is obviously important. Essentially, things to look for in a vendor include how well it understands the role of merchandise in marketing and motivation. Positive vendor characteristics include information in print or on the Web geared for corporate needs as well as:

- Brand offerings that work with the sponsor's brand
- Clear capabilities for drop-shipping
- Ability to customize and send out personal letters to recipients
- Participation in industry associations

Where To Find Vendors

Organizations requiring a few gifts to be given in person usually can get the best service at retail. But corporate buyers seeking bulk purchases will want to deal with specialists, which can be found at:

Motivationshowonline.com: The online trade show of The Motivation Show.

Useonlineincentives.com: The Web site of Incentive and Potentials magazines.

Incentivemarketing.org: The Web site of the Incentive Marketing Association, whose members include the manufacturers, retailers and incentive representatives who sell gifts.

PPA.org: The Web site of the Promotional Products Association, which includes many of the leading distributors in the U.S.

Return-On-Investment Measures

In addition to the traditional performance measures, incentive travel has a number of non-financial measures that can be tracked through surveys and behavior changes:

Learning. What did people come away with, and is it what you wanted them to come away with?

Alignment. Is there a greater common understanding about goals and means to obtain them?