

Who are the Incentive Federation's members?

The Incentive Federation is the only organization whose membership and leadership includes all the industry's national trade associations, as well as individual industry companies. It is under The Incentive Federation umbrella that the collective interests of the Incentive Marketing Association (IMA), the Promotional Products Association International (PPAI), The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF), the Recognition Professionals International (RPI) and Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) are discussed, nurtured and advanced.

Some Perspective

% of U.S. businesses using non-cash rewards

1996 – 26%

2015 – 84%

\$\$ in Incentive Marketplace

1996 - \$27 billion

2015 - \$90 billion

The Incentive Research Foundation Studies End Users' Views of Non-Cash Rewards and Recognition – Part 2

In our June issue of the IFI Bulletin we covered one of the Incentive Research Foundation's most recent studies, Voice of the Market, Part 1: The Use of Non-Cash Rewards and Recognition which provided end users the chance to discuss various topics of interest – what they're doing, why, how they're measuring the results, use of vendors, and resources for expertise.

Simultaneously, researchers evaluated the natural language, emphasis, emotion, interest level, and topical sophistication of the end-user.

Part 2 of that study reveals how these stakeholders learn about and engage in the incentives industry.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

Over the course of 2017, fifty professionals with responsibility for designing and executing non-cash reward and recognition programs were interviewed on behalf of the Incentive Research Foundation. To qualify, respondents were required to have significant influence on the design and execution of a rewards program.

ON THE JOB LEARNING

While passionate about their work, incentives and recognition management is not a career path typically sought deliberately by program owners. It is common for them to recall more happenstance introduction to the field, having been asked to help manage an incentive trip or a recognition program as part of some broader job they'd held in the past. Learning is done on-the-job; none of the respondents had taken coursework or certification prior to working on programs. Some are lucky enough to have worked on teams with more experienced colleagues, and gratefully absorbed whatever knowledge and experience was available through their coworkers. Others had to learn through trial and error, using experience, internal feedback, and program results to optimize program design and improve administration practices.

In fact, it does not often occur to newly-minted program owners that there is an entire discipline and marketplace standing ready to support their programs. Incentive program design and

management is not included in standard business school curricula and is not a field of practice broadly visible or relevant to most people entering the workforce.

INFORMATION SOURCES

As with most topics, the internet is the default “first stop” for professionals looking for information on rewards and recognition. Program owners are always interested in learning new and better ways to design effective and engaging programs. Many who are not yet connected to suppliers or industry associations find little satisfaction, however. Internet searches frequently return vast amounts of noise, with little payoff. Natural language searches with little industry-specific refinement are unhelpful and frustrating, leaving them as alone as ever in the operation of their programs.

ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Program owners, even when not connected to the rewards and recognition industry, are active in other associations and organizations relevant to their roles. Functional organizations, such as SHRM or WorldatWork for HR professionals, or AMA for marketers, play an important role in connecting them with peers. For some, industry-specific organizations are valued, particularly for financial services, pharma, and manufacturing professionals.

TOPICS OF INTEREST

Program owners are consistent in the types of information and interactions they would find compelling from the incentives industry, including:

- Best practices – What should we be doing with our programs?
- Benchmarking – What are other companies doing? In our industry? What about the best companies?
- What’s new and fresh that we should be incorporating into our programs? How do we keep things interesting?
- What are the industry resources we should be leveraging?
- Where can I go to network with other program owners?
- Where can I go to network with execution and destination experts? (travel-specific)

While best practices and benchmarking are of interest to most, those responsible for incentive travel programs

Of moderate interest are topics such as:

- What rewards fulfillment suppliers and resources are available to us? (applies to gift cards and merchandise)
- Is there a better way for us to design/implement our rewards website? Who can help us with that?
- Are there resources that will help us figure out how to determine requirements for our rewards platform and which providers can help us (without it costing too much)?

INDUSTRY CALL TO ACTION

It is striking the degree to which program owners, spending enormous sums on rewards, are largely unaware of the resources, expertise, and suppliers available to them in the incentives marketplace. This gap is driven not from lack of interest, but from a missed opportunity for the industry to connect with front-line reward and recognition owners.

Send Us Your Case Studies To Share With Others

To help our Federation members better understand and manage the effects of the recent ruling on the collection of use and sales tax on their businesses, we invite members to relate how they are, have been or plan on dealing with the collection of such taxes. We'll publish your case studies anonymously, if you wish, for others to learn from. Just send a brief email outlining the process or procedures being used and we'll take it from there, giving attribution and credit if you wish.

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