

## What is the Incentive Federation and who are its members?

The Incentive Federation, Inc. is a 501(C)(6), non-profit, tax-exempt organization whose membership and leadership includes 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 Recognition Professionals Association (RPI), the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence and The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) are represented.

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## IFI Membership Renewals Begin This Month

Please be looking for your 2024 membership renewal notices this month. The Federation needs your support to continue representing the industry and providing services like the 2022 Marketplace Estimate Research Study which was released in August 2022. Also look for the IFI's latest member benefit, presentation documents entitled "Tax Considerations for Incentives, Recognition and Safety Programs," a compilation of various industry papers published by industry experts.

The user-friendly PowerPoint and infographic presentation tools will be available this month and are ideal to provide to any client that may find the IRS rules and regulations confusing or intimidating. A webinar explaining the often-complex details will be announced soon and clients will be welcome to attend.

## 2024 Incentive Federation Board Approved

The 2024 IFI Board of Directors has been elected by the IFI membership. A new Board member, Adrienne Forrest, CPIM, Senior Vice President for Corporate Sales at Citizen Watch America joins the Board next year. Adrienne is a veteran professional in the incentive industry and her company has been a long time IFI supporter.

The new Board will be comprised of the following industry professionals:

**Richard Blabolil**, CPIM, President, Marketing Innovators International

**George Delta**, Esq, Executive Director and Legal Counsel, Incentive Federation, Inc.

**Dale Denham**, MAS+, President, Promotional Products Association International

**Michael Donnelly**, CPIM, President, Hinda Incentives

**Adrienne Forrest**, CPIM, Senior Vice President Corporate Sales, Citizen Watch America.

**Brian Galonek**, CPIM, President, All Star Incentive Marketing  
**Theresa Harkins-Schulz**, SPHR, CCP, CRP, Senior Vice President - Customer Experience, Inspirus/Sodexo Benefits and Rewards Services

**Richard L. Low**, CPIM, Division Director, Richmond, The Image Group.

**Sean Roark**, CPIM, Executive Vice President, Promotion, Incentive and Engagement Professionals, Inc.

**Karen Wesloh**, CAE, CMP, Executive Director, Incentive Marketing Association

Sue Voyles, President of Word and Vision Consulting, leaves the Board after serving IFI for several years as President of Logos Communications, a prominent public relations and

communication consulting firm for our industry. Sue sold her former company in early 2023 and formed her current firm with her husband this year. The IFI wants to thank Sue for her service to the IFI Board and for the many years of IFI membership.

The Board convenes quarterly for conference calls, typically either a Zoom or Teams video call. The Board members do not meet face-to-face but do commit critical time to consulting on and approve Federation initiatives. The Federation was founded in 1984 and has been a voice for the industry by monitoring, lobbying, and communicating about government legislative and regulatory matters that impact the industry. The IFI has also conducted several valuable industry research studies since 1996, the most recent of which in 2022 established the annual revenue from incentives, recognition, corporate gifts, awards, rewards, and travel at \$176 billion dollars.

## **IRF's Academic Research In Action: A Practical Guide To Using Generative AI In the Incentives, Reward, Recognition And Events Industry**

With transformative potential, generative AI is emerging as a game-changer across business, including the fields of incentives, rewards, recognition, and events. Already, dozens of cases for leveraging generative AI in incentive program design, event planning and reward personalization have emerged.

The IRF's latest issue of ***Academic Research in Action*** presents a use case for leveraging ChatGPT 4 in brainstorming reward ideas for frontline hotel staff. This practical example provides tips into the new 'art' of conversing with AI to build on its responses iteratively and arrive at new ideas that meet your needs.

The articles also provide a list and descriptions of some common Generative AI tools and show by example the types of ideas and outlines generated by ChatGBT in response to questions.

Read the full text and download the infographic here: [\*\*Academic Research in Action: A Practical Guide to Using Generative AI in the Incentives, Reward, Recognition and Events Industry\*\*](#)

## **The IFI Provides Guidance for Clients About the Tax Considerations for Employing Various Incentive Programs**

The IFI Board signed off on its latest project entitled "Tax Considerations for Incentives, Recognition and Safety Programs," a compilation of various industry papers published by industry experts. The project to consolidate complex information from numerous lengthy documents was headed by Mike Donnelly, President of Hinda Incentives and an IFI Board member.

Incentive, recognition, and safety programs are designed to engage eligible participants, improve performance, and encourage loyalty. These programs can excite and motivate eligible participants to take actions the sponsor promotes while simultaneously creating advocates for the company. Rewards often have tax consequences for either the recipient or the sponsor and this new document provides easy to understand guidance for sponsoring companies.

The user-friendly PowerPoint and infographic presentation tools will soon be available, and clients will be welcome to attend.

## **PPAI: Federal Government Releases Confusing New Independent Contractor Rule**

The US. Department of Labor (DoL) announced what it has deemed a final rule on the classification of workers as either employees or independent contractors under the Fair Labor Standards Act, according to PPAI's January 10, 2024 PPAI Newslink. Proposed legislation to create a law has not passed Congress over several years, and the Administration now seeks to enforce the changes without Congressional action.

The rule aims to provide guidance to avoid improperly classifying an employee as an independent contractor potentially denying such employees their rights such as minimum wage and overtime pay.

- The ruling could have massive implications for the promotional products industry, as a significant portion of promo's sales force intentionally consider themselves to be independent.
- PPAI Media has covered the reasoning and experiences of promo pros who willingly choose to be independent contractors.

PPAI has taken a public stance against the proposed DoL rule in the past, arguing that the promotional products industry has been unfairly lumped with other industries in which workers are commonly misclassified as independent contractors against their wishes.

"This decision creates inherent confusion," Maurice Norris, PPAI's public affairs manager says. "There are at least four federal laws and two federal regulations that define independent contractors, and several states have their own criteria. This new federal regulation, while implementing the department's totality of the circumstances test, increases the possibility for affected companies to be treated like independent contractors under one law while being denied that status under another standard."

For more information about the impact of the proposed rule and proposed legislation opposing the implementation of the rule, click [here](#).

### ***Things to Know and Think About***

To find other important meetings, trade events and educational offerings in the coming weeks and months, check the Incentive Industry Calendar at [www.incentivefederation.org](http://www.incentivefederation.org). Provided exclusively by the Incentive Federation, Inc.

### **ASI Show Ft. Worth – March 4-6, 2024, Ft. Worth, TX**

ASI Show® Fort Worth is strategically positioned in the #1 region for promotional product sales and product sourcing.

To learn more, click [here](#).

### **The Federation in 2024**

If you have ideas or opinions about what the IFI should be focused on, or if you have questions, advice for the Board, or want to raise issues for the Board to think about, our Chair Karen Wesloh at [kwesloh@incentivemarketing.org](mailto:kwesloh@incentivemarketing.org) or Steve Slagle, IFI managing Director at [steves3309@gmail.com](mailto:steves3309@gmail.com) or 864-710-6739.

### **2024 IFI Board of Directors**

**Richard Blabolil**, CPIM, President, Marketing Innovators International, **Vice Chair for Corporations**

**George Delta**, Esq., **Executive Director, and Counsel**

**Dale Denham**, MAS+, President and CEO, Promotional Products Association International, **First Vice Chair-Associations**

**Michael Donnelly**, CPIM, President, Hinda Incentives, **Director**

**Adrienne Forrest**, CPIM, Senior Vice President for Corporate Sales, Citizen Watch America

**Brian Galonek**, CPIM, President, All Star Incentive Marketing, **Secretary**

**Theresa Harkins-Schulz**, SPHR, CCP, CRP, Senior Vice President - Customer Experience, Inspirus/Sodexo Benefits and Rewards Services, **Director**

**Richard L. Low**, CPIM, Division Director/Richmond, The Image Group, **Director**

**Sean Roark**, CPIM, Executive Vice President, IncentPros, Inc., **Treasurer**

**Karen Wesloh**, CAE, CMP, Executive Director, Incentive Marketing Association, **Chair**