



**AwardEmployees**

... with the award they would choose for themselves.

## **What Type of Online Award System Should You Use?**

## What Type of Online Award System to Use?

Since my column last month on the value of online award systems I have received several good questions on the subject. Most wanted to know the best kind system to use, what features are important, what are the best awards to use, etc? Like everything else in the award industry, there really is no one answer for these types of questions, and while I have my opinion, as I'm sure any of us who sell these systems would have, when asked these types of questions I revert to the way I was taught at the beginning of my career. I asked questions in return.

For a client to know what kind of system is best suited to their needs, they must spend some time prior to investigating potential suppliers, and attempt to understand the fundamental types of systems that exist, and some of the basic features. Web-based incentive and reward systems range from simple online "redemption engines" used mainly to showcase and distribute awards to winning participants, to complete turnkey enterprise solutions that will manage workplace performance throughout the organization. At first glance, and depending on the proficiency of the salesperson you're asking, most systems will appear very similar. But looks in this arena are very deceiving. While similarities exist between all systems, there can also be vast differences. Choosing which one is best suited to your needs will depend on several factors. In the beginning of your search, ask yourself these questions about the system you think you need. The answers to these alone could immediately eliminate several potential suppliers. :

- Will it be utilized for single or multiple programs?
- Do you want the system to allow you modeling capabilities to forecast an ROI?
- Will it be an enterprise wide solution or used in just one area?
- Do you want the system to be tied to one particular award supplier, or independent and able to provide any type of award that fits your participant's lifestyles?
- Should it have the capability for expanding for future needs?
- Should it provide you with the ability to model various types of rules structures and test their outcomes against historical performance records before you commit to a final structure?
- Do you require a peer to peer or management to peer recognition component?
- Do you require internal messaging capabilities?
- Do you want it to have the future capability to enable real time performance management or performance evaluation modeling?
- What are your total communication needs within your award initiative?
- What type of tracking and measurement will be needed?
- Will it need to contain training components?
- Is there a need for program quizzes and tests?
- Does it need to be totally custom branded?
- Do you require a component that will provide for participant surveys?
- Will you require online reporting, and if so to what depth?
- How many different types of awards do you want on your site?
- How much do you want to invest in a web based system?

A mistake I often see by clients who purchase online award systems is that they buy a system that has all the features one could want but they never use even half of them. It's like buying a race car and then only using it to go shopping at the mall. Why spend the money on something you really don't need, or won't need in the future. There a lot of great platforms out there if you take the time to ask the right questions, you can find the one that fits your needs.

The second major mistake I've noticed is that clients often buy great systems that are tied only to the supplier's award deliverables. One of the greatest benefits of an online system is that it can house a virtual award mall in which you can have a multitude of awards. Don't handcuff yourself with just one or two of them because the supplier only wants you to have their highest profit awards. That doesn't give your participants the value they really deserve.

*Before you start the process of selecting a supplier, list as many of your system requirements as possible, it will save time and money. With the large array of companies that have web solutions available you will find that not all systems provide the same features. Many were only built to drive the sales of traditional merchandise awards and may not offer the award flexibility you need.*

If you have questions on the incentive awards industry, please feel free to ask. My passion is to help clients run successful incentive award and recognition programs. Successful programs help many folks share in the success of their hard work.

**Online incentive award programs can produce some great results and have become the best value in the industry!**

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