

# 10 Tips to Build Brand Values Into Recognition Programs

*Convey brand values through employee incentive, recognition, and rewards programs.*

## Executive Summary

Building a corporate culture around brand values is critical to the success of any company. Leaders want employees at every level to embrace the brand values and understand how their roles help make the corporate vision and mission actionable. Likewise, employees must understand how their behaviors help deliver on the brand promise to the customer. A large part of designing an employee incentive, rewards, and recognition program is focused on productivity, compensation, and profitability. An equal part of the strategy, however, is centered in how these initiatives can tie back to the core messages that are integral to business values and brand promise. In this paper, we highlight 10 popular brand values, how they are supported through incentive, rewards, and recognition programs, and some of the communications ideas that can help you build more creative, effective, and memorable programs.

## 1) Innovation

Innovation requires that people are engaged beyond their actual job descriptions, goals, and daily activities. It means they understand not only what they do each day, but what others do and how improvements can impact performance and relationships. Many times, people with innovative ideas are seen as a threat by peers because of the uncertainty of change. But change is an important part of growth. Rewarding people for 'Bright Ideas' can be a collaborative and community culture. Today's rewards and recognition programs use a variety of techniques to encourage participation, which leads to a culture of meritocracy. From a 'suggestion box' to peer-based recognition, to Spot Awards, and an actual 'Spotlight On...', innovation is inspired by 360-degree participation by people. Often, the kind words people share with each other can inspire self-confidence and further thoughtfulness and creativity. Choose a solution that allows for reporting that includes tracking and measurement to demonstrate progress and momentum.

## 2) Teamwork

Team recognition programs can be used as a strategic business component to drive performance, setting divisions and regions to compete. Friendly competition is designed to build camaraderie within a business unit. However, the metrics established must balance criteria to have a fair and productive internal engagement. Customer satisfaction, rate of cross-selling success, or any other form of team measurement can be recognized on leader board postings. By leveraging peer-to-peer, manager recognition, and 'thanks' rewards, you can build evidence of teammates helping each other. Teamwork can be demonstrated by setting a plateau milestone for a team, and can be celebrated using collective success team rewards, or through individual

rewards. A sense of an 'elite team' can be accomplished via group travel for sales teams or teams that lead in 'living the brand values'.

People work hard all day, but may never get to really know the people around them. Structured team meetings can only go so far, and are often exclusively focused on corporate goals. The opportunity to earn and participate in a group travel experience provides employees with an opportunity to develop lasting and meaningful relationships through activities designed to engage and delight. These shared experiences create memories that last a lifetime and add value to the team relationships and organization well beyond the cost of the trip or event.

### 3) Customer-Focused

More than the old adage, "The customer is always right", your customer-focused culture requires your people to be proactive in engaging customers and ensuring their satisfaction, almost anticipating issues before they arise. Operationally, it costs much more to win a new customer than it does to keep an existing customer, so your bottom line can be severely damaged by customer churn. By recognizing and rewarding outstanding customer-focused employees, you demonstrate the importance of exceeding expectations in satisfaction.

Choosing awards and rewards that are meaningful to the employee makes a difference to them (by demonstrating your level of caring) just as their caring resulted in customer satisfaction and retention. When looking at the reward for saving a customer, look at the Lifetime Value of that Customer, the overall cost to earn business in a similar engagement, the cost of operational integration, the cost of marketing and sales... you'll find that the reward for outstanding customer-focused behaviors should be one of your top priorities. Depending on your industry, you may not be allowed to reward a customer for being loyal. But you can reward your team member who valued the relationship enough to constantly deliver the customer-centric brand promise that makes your offer meaningful.

### 4) Respect

When holding employees in a position of esteem or honor, you can use a 'Winner's Circle' to talk about best practices of top performers. When using sales promotions, contests, or instant awards, you show employees that the company respects their efforts and achievements. When your corporate value is respect, you have to acknowledge that an award, recognition, or reward is also a demonstration of respect. When people are allowed to 'collect' their accolades, much like they would in the recent trend in Social Media games, such as Farmville, the volume and depth of respect and recognition can be shared with existing peers, management, and new employees. Respect is conveyed in listening to 'Bright Ideas', appreciating the milestones of service and achievement, communicating success through leader and message boards, and in recognizing examples of behaviors that contribute to a positive work place such as wellness, education, and safety. Choose a solution that offers a Manager's Toolbox of automated reminders: Respect starts with remembering.

## 5) Quality

Quality is a major goal in corporations, often referring to attributes of excellence and superiority. Just as quality metrics can vary from company to company (quality of research, education, service, manufacturing, materials; reduced rejection rates; and improved satisfaction, responsiveness, presentation, preparation, ideas, thoroughness, and speed), so too can the mechanisms for recognition of quality vary and be perceived differently depending on the audience. One way a company can support the message of quality is to be certain that the rewards presented to employees for their achievements are held to the same quality standards.

It would be inappropriate to present a shoddy plaque to the person who is being recognized for quality in his/her performance and contributions to the company. It would be equally unacceptable to present an award with little or no preparation. As a rule, people find quality in name-brand merchandise or gift cards, and even travel destinations (as long as every aspect of the trip has the same attention to detail).

Sometimes, quality of reward can be in keeping with corporate role. For example, executives may already own all the merchandise they need because of their economic status. They might prefer to make a donation to a charity of personal importance. Your sales team might already be jet-setting to exotic destinations – the last thing they might need is more travel. But they might appreciate tickets to a show or a dinner out with their families. For others, the opposite is true. They don't get the opportunity to travel, and they count on individual travel rewards as an exclusive opportunity to live the 'lifestyles of the rich and famous'. When quality is measured with incremental improvements, utilize the opportunities of 'Bright Ideas', peer-to-peer, and supervisor recognition to build momentum of incremental notes of achievement that lead to overall quality.

## 6) Safety

In many companies, focus on safety can be the difference between serious injury and/or life and death for employees and/or customers. Commitment to a safety mindset is imperative, whether in procedures, facilities, awareness, precautions, or regulatory requirements. Recognizing achievers in safety (teams or individuals) helps raise awareness of your safety culture and reminds your team that safety is synonymous with more than just risk – it can also be synonymous with rewards. Your investment in rewarding safety-conscious activities can do much more than protect against litigation, it can help prevent loss and injury, and even save lives. As business pressures mount from other areas, or as morale is undermined by external factors, keeping safety top-of-mind can be a positive and uplifting experience for the entire corporate culture, with rewards and recognition demonstrating personal success that impacts everyone. Recognition of safety achievement is documented evidence of the value in which a company holds its people.

## 7) Growth

Growth can be measured in expansion of product offerings or geographic footprint, increasing revenue, higher brand recognition, accumulated experience, or improved knowledge. For a company to achieve growth, it must invest in the growth and development of its people. If growth is a core value of the company, look for solutions

that can recognize achievements in those areas. Solutions can allow for cumulative, cross-pooling of points to demonstrate an individual's growth – and increase the value of the reward for the individual. Some people will collect points for the sake of having a lot to show... others will cash them in as they achieve levels. Still others will save for a big ticket item. Look for a system that keeps a record of achievements and allows participation to reflect the individual's personal style and pride in recognition. You can choose a solution that tracks sales achievements, referrals, ideas, education accomplishments and learning, safety consciousness, wellness goals, and even kudos from managers and other employees. Your solution should be flexible to allow for attributes that match the growth goals of individuals with the growth goals of your company.

## 8) Winning

At most companies, winning is a priority. These highly competitive cultures are enhanced by employee engagement solutions that perpetuate a culture based on 'drive' on a daily basis. Look for on-demand Key Performance Indicators to gauge effectiveness and engagement. Look for solutions that can support continuous programs, and ones that can compare metrics of one engagement vs. prior engagements, easily adjusting for variations such as number of participants, weighting by region, season, promotional offers, experience of sales reps, etc. With a robust sales Elevation solution, you can monitor, reward, and recognize monthly performance, exemplary moments, and contests. Whether you are engaging a team with group travel rewards or providing individual incentives with travel, merchandise, or gift cards, look for a solution that tracks all distributions and manages the reporting you need, because winning means measurable results.

## 9) Integrity

To create a culture of integrity, actions that portray integrity must be identified and rewarded on the spot. When employees ask the right questions first, or make suggestions that show thoughtfulness towards ethical behaviors, use a Spot Reward as a way of pointing out that moment. Measure cumulative Spot Rewards to help decide your Employee of the Month. In robust systems, points earned by individuals through their activities can be counted towards overall performance reviews. Make sure your employees know what behavior the award is for. Promote behaviors through internal (and even external) communications to highlight behavioral correlation to brand values. An e-newsletter or 'Spotlight On...' section of your site is a great way to shout SUCCESS.

## 10) Sustainability

There is much discussion around sustainable corporations and their continuum with business, environment, and society. Incentive, recognition, and rewards programs are also in an age of sustainability, and motivation and performance techniques offer a spectrum of continuous ways to engage and inspire internal audiences. You can start with a paperless system to help sustain the environment. Use an online communications conduit to encourage the behaviors that actually support sustainability defined specifically for your company and culture. Sustainability of an organization is nourished by engaged people. Engagement is sustained by a broad belief within a company that the company cares about its people... and caring happens when the recognition

resonates as being sincere and meaningful. Rewards and recognition solutions offer robust reporting capabilities that allow program managers to see the effectiveness of various approaches and to understand what resonates with employees.

Marketing is a continuum, whether to an internal or external audience, and people's interests are affected by trends they see in commercial media and retail locations. A sustainable system allows for flexibility in rewards that are current and genuine. Choose a solution that allows for integration of meaningful aspects for sustainability, such as wellness, milestones, and referrals (whether employee generated or via channel or partners). Getting referrals for business or new employees sustains your company. Rewarding participation helps keep employees and partners engaged, which ultimately reduces turnover and improves continuity and sustainability.

## Conclusion

Keeping brand values top of mind is difficult when employees are mired in day-to-day work functions. A strategic employee incentive, rewards, and recognition program can be seamlessly interwoven with daily activities to bolster behaviors that add meaning to your performance and culture. The psychology of motivation is an evolving science and art influenced by many factors. Choose a solution provider who is experienced in the strategic planning as well as the implementation and fulfillment of rewards and recognition. When you choose the right partner, you can focus on your brand values and promise so that individual and overall solutions provide meaningful experiences.

## About Dittman Incentive Marketing

Dittman Incentive Marketing is a leading provider of sales incentive programs, rewards and recognitions solutions using customizable online software (SaaS) to help companies realize immediate ROI. For 35 years, we have helped some of America's most successful companies achieve extraordinary results and exceed their business goals. Our strategic solutions are based in the psychology of human motivation which has demonstrated results through incentives, recognition, rewards, years-of-service awards, as well as referral, safety, education, loyalty, and wellness programs. Dittman Incentive Marketing is a recognized leader in financial services, manufacturing, homebuilding, technology, healthcare, automotive, retail, pharmaceutical, and many other industries for unparalleled excellence in our points systems, group travel and individual travel services, and exquisite merchandise rewards.

Dittman Incentive Marketing offers easy-to-use software solutions that are customized to the needs of our clients. Great Rewards™ provides an excellent merchandise experience for one-off sales incentive programs with no start-up costs. Great Escapes™ offers tiered travel rewards for executives and individuals with no start-up costs. TotalPRO™ provides an exceptional point-based rewards, recognition, education, and incentive solution with your choice of modules appropriate for enterprise-wide commitment to employee excellence and corporate responsibilities. You can start with one program and add modules as you see tangible results through our robust reporting features.

Dittman Incentive Marketing solutions reflect the core brand, culture, and values of our clients, helping them to attract, engage, inspire, appreciate, and retain talented people. Our solutions allow you to maximize employee potential.

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