

Can Employee Rewards & Recognition Amplify Your Company Brand?

Word-of-Mouth Marketing – Get Bragging.

We believe that brand awareness is one of the most significant program benefits you will gain from your Rewards and Recognition investment.

In this paper we will examine a key area where marketers invest millions of dollars to amplify their brand messaging – **Word-of-Mouth Marketing (WOMM)**. We believe if companies would include their Rewards and Recognition programs as a part of their external WOMM strategy, they would see bigger brand expansion results, build stronger internal and external brand ambassadors and drive sales.

Is your internal Rewards and Recognition program excluded from this strategy? It would make sense if it is. Most employee Rewards and Recognition programs are owned by Human Resources. WOMM is housed in marketing, and these camps rarely combine their playbooks. So how could these two initiatives benefit by joining together?

“Why would you simply choose to sit back and hope conversations will just happen organically about your brand? If you want to win the marketing race, you need to unleash the power of word of mouth.”

~ *Forbes*, 2015

We believe it starts with bragging rights.

Are you giving your employees a reason to brag? Is their work experience so spectacular they tell everyone they know to buy from you? Are they telling everyone they know that your company is the best place to work?

Bragging = Word-of-Mouth

For decades, the incentives industry has touted that Rewards and Recognition experiences offer employees bragging rights. We believe a big missed opportunity for companies is the connection between an internal Rewards and Recognition program and an external Word-of-Mouth marketing strategy. Imagine the synergy!

Take a look at one scenario.

Joe works really hard all year and surpasses his sales quota.

In recognition, he wins a trip to Bali.

Or on a smaller scale, he comes in to work and his desk is covered in congratulatory balloons.

Both make Joe feel really good about where he works.

He is full of pride.

He takes a picture of this recognition on his cell and sends it to his wife. She posts it.

His colleagues and managers come by for kudos. More pictures go social.

His kids make him a card.

He calls his Mom on his way home, and she is on her way to bridge and can't wait to tell her friends.

One of her friends calls her son, who works for a competitor.

Another friend decides she will try this brand next because they take care of their employees.

And so on and so on.



“In contrast to cash that’s quickly spent and forgotten, a **non-cash award comes with “bragging rights”** and is a lasting reminder of individual achievements. It also promotes a favorable association with the employer.”

~ *Succeeding in Small Business, 2016*

“When people earn merchandise and travel they remember the experience. The reward is a lasting reminder of success, creates a bond between company and the reward earner, and **allows the reward earner to brag to friends and family.**”

~ *From Art to Science: Why Tangible Non-Cash Rewards Are More Rewarding for You and Your Participants*

Why are bragging rights important to your Rewards and Recognition program? Why should an organization care? Because word-of-mouth marketing is shared within an employees' social circle, creating trust in the story and driving sales.

- *56% of B2B purchasers look to offline word-of-mouth as a source of information and advice, and this number jumps to 88% when online word-of-mouth sources are included.*
[BaseOne]
- *Millennials ranked word-of-mouth as the #1 influencer in their purchasing decisions about clothes, packaged goods, big-ticket items (like travel and electronics), and financial services.*
[Radius Global]
- *Researchers found a 10% increase in word-of-mouth (off and online) translated into sales lifts between 0.2 – 1.5%.*
[MarketShare/ Keller Fay Group]

Additionally – the positive shout-outs from your Rewards and Recognition program will also impact:

- Customer Servicing/Delivery
- Account Management
- Product & Services Development
- Passion – “Why Do We Work Here?”
- Talent Acquisition & Retention
- Engagement
- Long-Term Loyalty
- Innovation

Okay then! You get it – bragging rights are a key ROI benefit that can drive your company brand through WOMM. So how do you get the WOMM ball rolling?

Start with giving your employees bragging tools! It sounds simple, but we often see creative communications left out of a company's employee Rewards and Recognition program strategy. Communication allows the program to gain momentum and start conversations. It also creates excitement, which leads to the key benefit of engagement.

So make some noise! Announce winners and high performers with a splash. They deserve grand pomp and circumstance. This is not the time for an incognito Evite or a simple text email

announcement. We recommend you use this opportunity to ignite your WOMM campaign and give your employees the communication “tools” they need to share their reward achievements.

- In our paperless world, print materials are practically obsolete. However, this is the right occasion to send a printed announcement, invitation or card/certificate. Give your employees something they can share, post in their office for colleagues to see and acknowledge, post on their fridge at home, or send to their mom! Make them feel special.
- Follow up digitally with a picture, a quote from their manager, a letter from a colleague, etc. These emotional tributes make great social postings not only for your internal team, but HR will love these materials in their recruitment efforts.
- Make sure you are posting all of this on your own social channels so it can be liked and shared. Future hires are watching and so is your competition.
- Include families! Send a letter home or something that allows the reward to be shared with their spouse and children. Make sure everyone has a communication channel to brag about their achievements.
- Don't forget your industry channels – what better way to elevate your brand to your direct customers than showing you are an organization who cares about their people.

Secondly, ask for a seat at the WOMM strategy table. If you own your internal employee Rewards and Recognition program – there is a good chance that someone on the marketing team is being tasked to drive the brand through WOMM. Team up. Collaborate.

It might look something like this:

- A better defined internal brand campaign with effective assets
 - Recruitment collateral
 - Culture videos
 - Internal testimonials
 - A more targeted social strategy
 - A new internal manifesto or credo
 - Inspiring campaigns that answer “why” and ignite passion
 - Innovation and ideation campaigns
- Sales presentations/pitches that better communicate the brand message
- A better tradeshow booth for both sales and HR
- A well-oiled elevator pitch
- Revised criteria for your own Rewards program that is more aligned with your brand mission

The possibilities to impact your organization's brand are limitless. By WOMM and Rewards and Recognition joining together, your organization will define a stronger internal employer conversation, amplify your external brand and grow your corporate culture faster and a lot more cost effectively than if left in two camps. **Now get bragging!**

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VIKTOR

“We take most of the money that we could have spent on paid advertising and instead put it back into the customer experience. Then we let the customers be our marketing. Historically, our number-one growth driver has been from repeat customers and word-of-mouth.”

~Tony Hsieh, Zappos CEO

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