

Incentive Communications

Why companies struggle, and creative ideas to make your next campaign easier

Stephanie Roppolo, CRP, Marketing Strategist

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Companies have multiple strategies for success. From financial to marketing, it seems that every corner of your organization has a plan, and rightfully so. Yet, we are always surprised to come across a robust incentive program with no sign of a communications strategy to promote it. “Why?” we ask.

“Why would an organization invest (sometimes millions of dollars) in an incentive program, but not promote it to their qualifiers?”

We have a few answers. For 43 years, VIKTOR has met and worked with hundreds of incentive stakeholders, allowing us to see first-hand where incentive planners struggle. This experience has enabled us to identify several hypotheses as to why planners find it hard to implement a communications strategy and where there are opportunities for change.

“There isn’t enough time!” We hear this obstacle frequently. Incentive implementation typically falls into two business unit areas: Human Resources or Marketing and Sales. In most companies, these business units operate at maximum capacity and resources are often tight. This makes it a challenge for incentive leaders to give their communication needs the right time and resource investment.

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Solution Idea:

Build your communications plan into your operational timeline and allocate the resources necessary, as if it were any other task. There should be no hierarchical distinction between sending out a creative communication teaser to your qualifiers versus finding the perfect hotel for a President’s Club. Incentive program ROI is a result of active participant engagement, and—this is big—frequent communication is what dangles the carrot. It is just as vital to your program’s success as sophisticated award technology or a meaningful room gift.

“We don’t have the money.” The industry rule states that 2 - 5% of your program budget should be allocated to communications. If you did not budget accordingly for a communications campaign, then you might need to consider cutting out some type of program element or even better, join forces with other communication vehicles already in place.

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Solution Idea:

Join other communication channels. It’s easy to add incentive details or winner highlights in communication that is already going to participants. Examples include intranet postings, internal newsletters, paycheck stubs, sales manager meetings, national sales conferences (agendas and announcements), existing office signage (reader boards or marquees), social media, etc. The idea is to understand every area in which the company is already talking to your qualifiers and then ask to join the communication. It’s a win/win! The company gets more engaging and fun content for their communication and you get to promote your incentive (for free)!

“We already communicate too much.” Yes, as you can imagine from the previous idea, companies are already communicating a lot to employees and channel partners, so your communication risks getting buried. For this reason, it’s important to develop a unique brand and messaging platform for your incentive.

Solution Idea:

Develop a strong incentive brand and messaging platform.

If a qualifier has three choices in opening a corporate email—will he/she choose the one that talks about HR Benefits, a new product or the one that shows his/her incentive ranking? The ability to brand and activate your incentive with a look and messaging that becomes recognizable will reach your qualifiers faster. They will start to go right to your targeted messaging, allowing them to course-correct their performance behavior faster (“sell more product by this date,” “focus your sales this month to win this,” etc.).

This is where you will see the power of your communication campaign directly impact the pace, energy, and results of your sales goals.

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As you can see, there are many obstacles that can cause incentive communications to fall off your “radar,” but it doesn’t take much to make it a priority. **By incorporating communication touch-points into your operational timeline, maximizing communication channels that already exist and developing a recognizable brand**, your qualifiers will get more engaged and have time to change their course to win, bringing your organization higher sales results.



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