

The art of motivating salespeople

When the tide comes in, all the boats in the harbor go up! The long-term benefit of an incentive program is to coax your sales force out of their production comfort zone. Once a salesperson stretches to a new level of personal production, their self-confidence and expectations skyrocket.

 By [John Boe](#) 16 Jan 2012

Traditionally, sales managers have relied primarily on commission to motivate their sales force. Unfortunately, a compensation structure based solely on commission does not address separate motivational factors and therefore, commission alone will not motivate your sales force to peak performance.

The challenge of designing an effective sales incentive contest is that it should not only appeal to your top producers, but it must also excite average to below average salespeople as well. A successful incentive program is a mixture of awards, recognition, and peer pressure. To encourage salespeople to reach their potential, successful managers personalize incentives.

The secret to motivating a salesperson lies in discovering their "hot buttons" and designing an incentive program that showcases them. You can identify your salespeople's hot buttons by getting to know their interests, hobbies, and recreational activities. While money is certainly an important ingredient in any incentive program, it should by no means be the only tool in a manager's motivational toolbox. If money by itself were a sufficient motivation, salespeople would simply sell more without additional enticement.

Once you have identified meaningful hot button incentives, you are now ready to develop a written program that is understandable, measurable, and achievable. Any program that does not take these three critical components into consideration during the design phase will be confusing and more than likely counter-productive. In order for your program to be financially self-sustaining, you must reward productivity, not activity. In other words, don't pay on attempt, pay on measurable results. One of the biggest mistakes a manager can make is to water down the incentives by under funding the program. A well-structured incentive program pays for itself from increased revenue.

In my opinion, the most effective incentive programs are those that create the environment for multiple award winners so that everyone believes they have an opportunity to win something. For example, in a golf tournament, in addition to the lowest score, there are often awards for best putt, longest drive, and closest to the hole. In addition to highest total sales production, potential categories you might wish to consider would include, most improved production and market share growth.

To maintain interest it is recommended that the contest be of a relatively short duration, such as a ninety-day period. Once the groundwork has been laid, it is now time to promote and launch the contest. Consider a business luncheon to generate excitement and kick-off your contest with style. Display the actual prizes whenever possible. Keep the enthusiasm building by publishing individual and team standings frequently. It is an excellent idea to acknowledge achievement during the course of the contest. There is tremendous power behind a timely word of praise or a handwritten note acknowledging achievement. Always remember that people are your greatest asset!

ABOUT JOHN BOE

American John Boe presents a wide variety of motivational and sales-oriented keynotes and seminar programs for sales meetings and conventions. John is a recognized sales trainer and business motivational speaker with an impeccable track record in the meeting industry. For more information, go to www.johnboe.com. Free newsletter available on website.

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