



Millennials and Recognition: How Gen X and Millennials are shaping incentive and retention strategies.

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It is no secret that the workplace is becoming increasingly diverse. While gender gaps slowly close, ethnic and generational diversity is on the rise with a record four generations coexisting in business. These changing dynamics have organizational leadership examining and adjusting their recognition, incentive, development and human capital practices in order to attract and engage skilled, high-potential employees now and into the future.

How does this change the face of the incentive industry? I believe three key themes—innovation, technology and immediacy—will be prominent in the design of recognition and incentive strategies going forward.

Innovation Service Awards will ultimately be replaced with innovation- or idea-based incentives. The chances of a Millennial staying in one job for 20 years or even a decade are slight. The new workforce seeks inclusion—they want to be part of something bigger and insist on being heard. Companies who focus on engaging and getting the most from their workforce while they are with the company will fare better than those who continue to put a priority on retention.

Technology Both Generation X and Millennials are information-hungry, global communicators who chat with peers all over the world at the speed of light. Incentive technology platforms must evolve from static newsletters and catalogs to include applications that facilitate mobile and digital communication, blogging and podcasting. Technology will also clear the way for retail-based award redemption which will be both demanded and embraced by the new target audience.

Immediacy Immediacy is the common thread across future incentive and recognition strategies. Think “latest and greatest,” “I want it now,” “hottest trends,” and “early adoption,” when building strategies. Immediate reinforcement and feedback is paramount as is access to the latest awards (think digital downloads, the latest gadgets and media, media, media).

One of my favorite quotes comes from Peter Drucker who says “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” The future generations are over 100 million people strong. This is compelling! The future market leaders in the incentive industry are those who heed the trends and not only evolve, but capitalize on the change.

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