



## Global Program Considerations

Jennifer Rosenzweig | Global Employee Practice Leader | Carlson Marketing

**Growth is a critical key to business success, as an organization that is standing still is one which won't survive in the long term.** In this spirit of "bigger is better," many organizations have extended their reach by growing into markets around the world, working to replicate their brands across borders. Many soon learn, though, that it is less about stamping out carbon copies of themselves, and more about creating an offer that speaks to their brand, yet in a way that serves the immediate community. This is often described as "think globally, act locally." And in this same way, a company which wants to design a reward or recognition system that serves their employees around the world would benefit by considering this "global, yet local" perspective.

Many efforts to take a US-based incentive system globally are motivated by the desire to reduce overhead. In particular, incentive programs which rest on a technology infrastructure offer the promise of being readily scalable, as adding participants can represent an incremental cost. However, this assumes that the underlying design of the program—that is, the key objectives and expected outcomes—are identical. It also assumes that the company culture and country culture have a strong commonality. Our experience has been the opposite; the make-up of business units within large companies spanning the globe can vary significantly, running the risk that a cookie-cutter approach will yield disappointing results, despite being cost-effective.

The solution often lies in "meeting in the middle" by establishing a vision which includes leveraging key program assets, while accommodating local needs. For example, an initiative may benefit by retaining a back-end reporting system, which allows project administrators around the world to view the data from a common perspective. However, the front-end look and feel, program goals, and reward and recognition options may all be opportunities which allow for local customization.

Ultimately for any international program to succeed, it must engage participants in ways that add unique and individual value. And that's the kind of language which everyone speaks and understands.

October, 2008