

The  
ULTIMATE  
GUIDE to Service  
Anniversary  
Reward  
Programs

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# The ULTIMATE GUIDE to Service Anniversary Reward Programs

Often in place since a company was founded, service award programs are an expected and appreciated tradition by most employees in organizations both large and small. However, even tradition needs to be updated and refreshed to keep pace with the ever-changing global environment we all operate in. Whether you are in the unique position of launching a service awards program for the first time or simply taking the time to re-evaluate your current program, this eBook provides you with evaluation tools, checklists, processes and other information you need to ensure that what you are offering ultimately is world-class.

# First Impressions Matter

## EVALUATE YOUR TECHNOLOGY

Like virtually every other aspect of business operations, technology rules in service awards programs too. In the eyes of your employees, how you communicate and implement your service award program from a technology standpoint can be every bit as important as the awards themselves.

A critical objective of service anniversary programs is to express appreciation and show employees that you value them. Your program website is often the first impression your employees have with this important recognition initiative—think of it as the “gift wrap”. What’s inside is important, but the presentation of the gift can deepen the meaning and show that you really put extra effort into marking this special occasion.

A world-class service anniversary website will have these attributes and functionality.

- ✔ **Meets your specific company brand standards.** It’s important that your employees see your corporate culture play out on the site and not feel that they are visiting a generic awards store as they celebrate this special occasion. Your site design should follow your company design protocol and all copy should be written in your prescribed voice.
- ✔ **Offers managers resources and tools.** How the award is presented can be every bit as important as the award itself. It’s important that managers have training and guidance in the proper way to acknowledge anniversaries and present awards. Your website should offer easy-to-download checklists, guides and tip sheets for making the anniversary special.

# First Impressions Matter

- ✔ **Gives managers an easy way to send personal messages of congratulations.** Every manager is busy. Having a website tool that makes it easy for the manager to send an eCard or message to congratulate the achiever helps ensure that this personal touch gets universally implemented throughout your company.
- ✔ **Provides an easy way for employees to select and order awards.** Choosing a gift should be a fun and delightful experience. Your website should offer crisp photos of every award with descriptive copy. Think of the employee as your customer and make sure your site offers a hassle-free experience for selecting and ordering the award.
- ✔ **Recognizes the employee by name.** Nothing tells an employee how special he or she is than to be greeted by name. A good service anniversary awards website should welcome the participant by name and even have a specific message for that person indicating the years of service being honored.
- ✔ **Includes a “widget” to remind employees about their award opportunity.** Everyone is busy and it’s easy to forget to place an award order. A “friendly-reminder” countdown widget helps employees keep track of ordering deadlines.
- ✔ **Is fun.** Reminiscing about “back in the day” is a fun activity for anniversaries. An appreciated addition to a service anniversary website includes trivia about this date in history from a global, local and even company perspective using facts, infographics and video clips.
- ✔ **Can be accessed and fully-accessed on all platforms.** Employees are increasingly using smart phones and tablets to access the web. Make sure your website is easy to use on all devices and operating systems. Best-in-class service awards programs use responsive design which formats the web content automatically to whatever device your employees are accessing the site from.

# Networking Rules

## INCORPORATE SOCIAL TOOLS

Social networks are an everyday communication tool for most people. Making it easy for employees to use social networks to share a service anniversary with family and friends can be a very powerful part of the employee loyalty experience. The celebratory nature of service awards not only gives management and coworkers a reason to recognize employees for their commitment to the organization, it also provides an appropriate venue for family and friends to become involved in an employee's professional life.

BI WORLDWIDE created a patented social technology called PURL which is short for "personalized URL" to facilitate this powerful family and friends connection. PURL technology gives managers the ability to invite an employee's friends, family and coworkers to write a personal note or share a photo or video on a web page created just for that employee. These messages create a completely customized, meaningful and emotional experience for the employee that goes well-beyond simply



# Networking Rules

receiving an award. With PURL, the employee can choose to share these messages on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, making the celebration last longer.



PURL is part of the BI **WORLDWIDE** Milestone Experience, **me!** program that delivers best-in-class service awards.

Find out more about ME! at [biworldwide.com/me](http://biworldwide.com/me).

When incorporating social networking into your program, make sure your technology tools:

- ✔ Include the ability to engage managers, co-workers, family and friends
- ✔ Provide a way to share comments, photos and videos
- ✔ Offer the employee the ability to send out thank you notes
- ✔ Give the employee the option to share messages on other social networks
- ✔ Provide PURL access via mobile devices
- ✔ Are seamlessly integrated into your program's technology

# Make it Meaningful

## BUILD THE RIGHT AWARDS COLLECTION

Awards are the foundation of all service award programs. For years and years, offering service awards was quite simple. Companies provided one emblematic award at every five year increment of service. Lapel pins, tie tacks, charms, desk sets, paperweights, wall plaques and watches with the company logo were created, purchased and inventoried in the HR supply closet. In the 1990s the awards were “smartened up” to include lifestyle choices. Frequently “lifestyle” simply meant some sort of decorative piece like a globe, mantel clock, brass lamp or crystal vase fulfilled by a third-party vendor.

Unfortunately this same award philosophy is still being practiced in too many organizations. HR directors frequently report that their employees commonly complain that the service award selection is dull and old. Some employees don't even bother to choose an award at all.

Employees are increasingly diverse in ethnicity, age and cultural preferences. You likely operate in a global market on a 24/7 basis. Many of your employees telecommute. Employees work on laptops and tablets with little need for a pen set. Business casual attire has eliminated the “lapel” spot for a pin. Cubicles and coffee shop offices aren't conducive to wall plaques and paperweights. Even the watch has met its match with research showing that only one in ten millennials wears a watch, relying instead on their smart phones for time information. Globes are relics in museums. Brass lamps are on the cusp of being “retro” – but not quite.

Yet despite all the demographic, psychographic and style changes, employees of all kinds still value being recognized for years of service with an appropriate gift. Creating an awards collection that offers something for generations from the Gen Y'ers to the traditionalists is quite doable.

# Make it Meaningful

Apply this process to create the right awards collection for your organization.

- ✔ **Research your audience.** Look at age, gender, education, location, ethnicity, work styles and job functions. For example when a large cosmetics company did this, they found that while they had a large number of college-educated, female professionals working in design, sales, marketing, creative and support services at corporate headquarters, they also had a substantial number of high school educated men working in their distribution and warehouse functions. Different awards were clearly needed.
- ✔ **Analyze past award offerings and redemption.** If you offered a choice of awards at anniversary milestones, study what items or categories of items were selected. What trends do you see? Segment the selections by demographic group. Walk around the office and look to see if desk accessory awards are used or plaques displayed. Ask recent awardees why they chose a particular item. Learn as much as you can from historical data and don't underestimate the importance of anecdotal information.
- ✔ **Determine the appropriate number of selections to offer. It's easy to think that more is better.** Behavioral economists have shown that too much selection can become paralyzing to the chooser. It's better to offer five to seven carefully vetted items that appeal to your audience than to turn them loose in a virtual online megamall of gifts where choosing becomes time-consuming and overwhelming. It shouldn't be a burden for your honorees to select a gift; it should be a pleasure.
- ✔ **Fit your selection to your audiences.**

# Make it Meaningful

Based on your demographic and psychographic analysis you may determine that you need to offer just one traditional emblematic award at every level but at least six lifestyle items. The reverse may be true if your employees are long-tenured traditionalists. If your audience is wide ranging in age, you may need some trendy items for younger employees at five year milestones and some classics for older workers at 15 to 30 year milestones.



Experiences



Sports & Recreation



Babies



Home



Media



Luxury

# Actionable Information

## CREATE THE RIGHT REPORTS

On the surface it may seem like service awards programs don't require much in the way of data analysis, yet quite the opposite is true! To keep your program vibrant and effective, it's important to build reporting systems that provide actionable information. An advanced reporting system provides detailed information on:

- Award popularity by level with redemption analysis so you can see which awards are most appealing to different employee demographics, job categories, departments, divisions and countries.
- Budget usage to give you a way to carefully analyze your expenditures to maximize all available funding.
- Recognition PURL activity analysis for information on how social networks can build employee loyalty and camaraderie.
- Employee survey details to help redesign websites, select awards and provide other interactive tools.
- Non-response details for employees that have not redeemed awards so you can follow-up to determine what obstacles kept the employee from becoming engaged.

## MANAGER-FRIENDLY

Like all reporting, the data output needs to be easily accessible to the appropriate managers and those managers need to know how to use the data to improve results. Create reports that offer data in a wide range of formats – tables, charts, lists, etc. that can be easily exported into an Excel® or PDF format. Then, train managers on how to read and use the reports to improve how they engage employees during the service awards experience.



# Actionable Information

WHEN DESIGNING YOUR REPORTING SYSTEM,  
MAKE SURE IT:

- ✓ Is easy for managers to access
- ✓ Shows the program data using graphs and charts
- ✓ Includes program summary displays
- ✓ Provides PDF and Excel extractable reports
- ✓ Offers training on how to access and read reports
- ✓ Defines what action managers should take after reading reports
- ✓ Educates key members of HR and leadership on how to access and read reports

# Satisfaction Guaranteed

## MAKE FULFILLMENT EASY.

Awards fulfillment too often causes angst for the HR team assigned to implement service awards. Rest assured, it never has to be a problem when good up-front planning is done with proven, reputable vendors. If you handle all fulfillment in-house, then be sure to establish systems, processes and protocols so your team has clearly defined expectations and knows exactly what to do when problems arise.

## USE THIS CHECKLIST TO ENSURE YOUR FULFILLMENT IS SET UP FOR SUCCESS.

- ✓ **Have a 100% satisfaction return policy – no questions asked.** Don't risk the goodwill established in a service anniversary award program by quibbling over returns. Simply exchange the item quickly and efficiently. Do find out why the item wasn't satisfactory so you can take any needed action with a supplier. Returns also help you determine which items to include or exclude from future offerings.
- ✓ **If you are a global organization, choose a partner that has multiple global fulfillment locations.** Every country has its own cultural nuances, customs clearance laws, shipping regulations, tax reporting systems and a bevy of other regulations that can stymie your best fulfillment goals. Use a reputable vendor who knows how to get the job done in each individual country.



# Satisfaction Guaranteed

- ✔ **Allow recipients to redeem awards below their anniversary level.** If a 20-year employee prefers an award offered at the 10-year level, let them select it. It's more important to satisfy the employee than to adhere to level protocols when no additional budget is required.
- ✔ **Distribute a default award when the employee does not choose an award.** Sometimes employees don't choose an award despite your best efforts to help make the selection process easy. After a few attempts to engage the employee, simply send out a default award at the appropriate level with a note of congratulations.

# What is THIS for?

## KEEP YOUR PROGRAM VISIBLE

In most organizations the service award program has been in place for such a long time that the need to tell employees about it seems frivolous. An attitude of “Everyone knows we give out awards every five years,” so a common conclusion is to not waste resources promoting the program. Yet, with the average tenure of a U.S. employee being less than five years, it’s likely many employees don’t know about service awards. The last thing you want to hear from an employee is “Why am I getting this award? What did I do?”

CONSISTENTLY COMMUNICATING THE PROGRAM TO LEADERSHIP, MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES IS CRITICAL TO OVERALL ENGAGEMENT LEVELS AND RESULTS.

Building a year-round communication plan for your program reinforces that you value loyalty with all employees, not just those who are marking a specific year interval. Communications also ensure that all employees and managers are aware of the program and know how to access all its resources.

USE THIS CHECKLIST TO COMMUNICATE YOUR SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM EFFECTIVELY.

- ✔ **Make sure all your communication elements are company branded.** Like your website, all your communication materials need to follow your company design protocol and all copy should be written in your prescribed voice.
- ✔ **Use a range of media.** Email, social networks, print, tweets, voicemail, videos, articles in company newsletters or on portals and one-on-one communication are all appropriate ways to communicate. Mixing media helps individual messages stand out.
- ✔ **Re-announce your program at least annually.** At the start of your fiscal year or other appropriate date, remind all employees about the program and call-out any new awards or program changes.



# Keep Costs Down

## MAXIMIZE AVAILABLE BUDGET

Budgeting for an annual service award program is rather straight-forward. You have a good feel for the number of employees you recognize in any given year. Your variable costs are minimal and your administrative time is somewhat predictable. With all these “knowns” and rather static costs, you probably believe that your service anniversary awards budget is fairly well locked down. That may be the case; however, there may be an opportunity to leverage up to 25% of your service anniversary awards budget into other recognition activities simply by conducting a financial program analysis.

HERE IS A FOUR-STEP PROCESS YOU CAN USE TO ANALYZE YOUR CURRENT PROGRAM AND EXPENDITURES TO FIND EXTRA FUNDS.

- 1 **Conduct a cost/expense inventory.** Do an audit of all your program costs for the last two fiscal years. Include all awards issued, awards inventory currently in stock, administrative costs, shipping and handling, any associated printing or communication materials costs, manager training and your time to work with vendors.
- 2 **Benchmark your program costs.** These are the industry standards for service anniversary awards:
  - \$5 – 50 for plaques or certificates
  - \$15 -20 per year of service for awards or gifts
  - \$10 – 100 for celebratory events such as cake and coffee at a meeting

# Keep Costs Down

- 3 Compare your costs.** How do your awards costs compare to the standards? Are you spending significantly more? Less? You may find opportunities to save costs based on industry benchmarks if you are currently spending well in excess of these amounts. For your administrative costs and other program expenditures, does anything seem excessively high? What surprises you? These may be areas to target for cost-cutting.
- 4 Analyze staff time.** Think through all the time you, your staff and other company managers spend to implement the program. What tasks are taking up most of your time? Are there process improvements you could implement to make things faster or avoid a duplication of efforts? Is it time to invest in new technology to improve your system? Would manager training make things more efficient? Are your methods of communication efficient?

# Time well-spent

## IMPLEMENT A WORLD-CLASS PROGRAM

While using the tools, checklists and processes described in this guide will require a bit of effort on your part, it could be the ticket to improving your service awards program, building employee engagement and unlocking additional budget for other initiatives. Making the time to really examine your entire initiative can give you the insight you need to make changes resulting in The Ultimate Service Awards Program for your organization that:

- 1 – Uses the latest technology
- 2 – Optimizes social tools
- 3 – Offers the best awards selection
- 4 – Provides effective reporting metrics
- 5 – Delivers a hassle-free fulfillment process
- 6 – Communicates throughout the organization on an ongoing basis
- 7 – Maximizes funding

# The ULTIMATE GUIDE to Service Anniversary Reward Programs

BI **WORLDWIDE** is a global provider of service awards programs. Our programs drive results for our clients by using the latest technology, optimized for mobile and social, using our patented PURL social recognition technology, creating custom awards catalogs from our selection of more than 100,000 items, harnessing the power of a full reporting suite, delivering a 100% satisfaction return policy with no questions asked and using award winning custom-print communications.

For more information on BI **WORLDWIDE** service awards solution, ME!, visit [biworldwide.com/me](https://biworldwide.com/me) or email [information@biworldwide.com](mailto:information@biworldwide.com).



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