

5 experiences

that can transform your incentive program

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Running sales contests requires planning, but once the program is announced, it's often energizing to watch what happens. Sales reps and managers rise to the occasion, spark friendly competition, and put in extra effort to earn the awards offered.

When a contest doesn't generate engagement or measurable business results, the issue is often the reward, not the effort. If your last contest didn't drive motivation, momentum, and impact on the bottom line, it may be time to rethink what you're offering winners.

Why are experiential rewards more motivating than traditional incentives?

Humans are driven to excel when they are recognized and rewarded through memorable experiences: **experiences they can talk about with friends and family** and **experiences they remember long after a contest wraps up**.

The New Rules of Engagement® survey reveals compelling reasons to run sales incentives or contests that reward experiences instead of traditional merchandise or cash. Experiences create emotional connection, elevate meaning, and reinforce the behaviors organizations want to see repeated.

How do leaders design meaningful reward experiences at scale?

Crafting engaging experiences as an individual leader can be challenging. Designing the right experience requires intentional planning from concept and inspiration to execution and delivery.

To maximize impact, organizations should also leverage behavioral science principles when creating reward experiences. Concepts like re-consumption (reliving the experience) and sociability (sharing it with others) amplify the emotional value of the reward.

These hedonic luxuries make people feel genuinely valued, attributing their success to both their own effort and the organization that recognized them.

Ready to inspire your team with unforgettable experiences? Here are five experiential rewards that consistently earn five-star ratings from top performers.

Experience #1: Small team travel

- Small team travel works because shared experiences build stronger bonds and long-term collaboration. •



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Work hard as a team and celebrate achievements together. Small group travel programs bring teams of 10–12 people (and their guests) together outside the office, allowing them to form deeper connections and build loyalty through shared experiences.

Team travel creates visible impact, delivers lifelong memories, and strengthens ongoing collaboration. Curated travel packages aligned to budget allow winning teams to select destinations and timing that fit their needs. Packages often include airfare, hotel accommodations, transportation, and activity options, supported by personalized travel services that ensure everyone feels like a winner.

Experience #2: **Earn-and-learn rewards**

- Learning experiences motivate performance by **investing in personal and professional growth.** •

Sometimes the most powerful reward is the opportunity to learn. Earn-and-learn experiences allow participants to use reward points for upskilling and reskilling opportunities, with access to thousands of courses taught by world-class instructors.

Participants can study a foreign language, learn a musical instrument, focus on wellness for mind and body, or develop new professional capabilities, turning recognition into long-term value.

Experience #3: **Curated shopping events**

- Curated shopping turns reward redemption into **an immersive, high-energy experience.** •

A curated shopping event can transform a hotel ballroom, nightclub, or even a professional sports locker room into a full-fledged shopping experience for top performers. These events can stand alone or be incorporated into larger meetings, such as a National Sales Meeting.

Top performers receive customized award tokens that can be redeemed on-site for rewards across categories like tech and electronics, fashion and jewelry, travel and leisure, home furnishings, and health and wellness. Additional nights, events, or exclusive experiences can elevate the reward even further.

Experience #4: **Virtual reality rewards**

- Virtual reality experiences drive excitement through **novelty, competition, and visibility.** •

Virtual reality reward experiences are designed to motivate, inspire, and recognize performance in a highly interactive way. Winners receive a set

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amount of time in a virtual mall to acquire as many awards as possible, creating an energetic atmosphere that builds engagement and connection.

These experiences integrate seamlessly into in-person events like National Sales Meetings or function as standalone programs. Teammates can watch winners on local monitors, cheering them on and amplifying the recognition moment.

Experience #5: Game-based digital experiences

- Game-based rewards motivate teams by tapping into **competition, strategy, and play.** •

Game-based digital experiences play like popular video games, inviting participants to enter a virtual environment where they race against time to collect awards or points. Awardees receive a link to enter the game and navigate the experience within an allotted time window.

Designed to engage a broad range of participants, these experiences rally entire teams toward the winner's circle while honoring top performance in a fun, memorable way.

How do five-star rewards impact engagement and performance?

- Five great rewards add up to **five-star experiences and measurable results.** •

In today's competitive landscape, recognizing and rewarding performance is essential to building a motivated, engaged workforce. Five-star experiences offer innovative ways to inspire performance, reinforce desired behaviors, and create lasting emotional connections.

By integrating experiential rewards into your recognition and incentive strategy, organizations can move beyond transactional motivation and create moments that truly matter.

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