

Why sales teams need a **different approach** to rewards and recognition

Walter Ruckes

Vice President, Client Services
BI WORLDWIDE

Kari Hanson

Account Director, Life Sciences
BI WORLDWIDE

Rewards and recognition for sales teams need to do something different than a traditional all-employee recognition program.

Employee recognition programs are typically designed to reinforce culture, consistency, and everyday appreciation. Sales rewards and recognition programs are designed to drive measurable performance in a competitive, variable environment. The audience, motivation, and business goals are different.

If you're a sales leader using a platform designed to recognize corporate values, you might not have all the tools needed to drive sales performance in a competitive market.

BI WORLDWIDE has been a leader in employee recognition for decades, but our mission has always been broader than recognition alone: inspire people and deliver measurable business results. Today, several organizations use one vendor for their all-employee recognition platform and turn to BI WORLDWIDE for sales rewards, sales contests, and performance-based recognition.

Here are four examples of how sales leaders are using targeted rewards and recognition programs to drive short-term focus and long-term performance.

1. Global pharmaceutical sales force: **making progress impossible to ignore**

For one global pharmaceutical customer, BIW set out to make sales contest progress visible, personal, and hard to miss.

As part of the contest communications campaign, we designed personalized scorecards with vivid, eye-catching creative delivered through HTML emails. Each scorecard showed contest metrics by territory, district, region, and national view, so every rep could quickly see where they stood and what progress still needed to be made.

The result was exceptional email engagement. These personalized progress reports have since become a best-practice engagement tool for the customer's sales contests.

2. Leading pharmaceutical sales force: **rethinking top performer recognition**

For another leading pharmaceutical organization, BIW delivers an annual sales top performer reward program with both individual and team-based components.



Why
sales teams
need a **different**
approach to
rewards and
recognition

Top individual performers earn reward points they can redeem for merchandise, travel, or learning experiences. Top-performing teams also earn small-group travel opportunities, with more than 12 award trip destinations to choose from and flexible travel dates based on their team's preference.

These team trips are designed to celebrate shared success and strengthen camaraderie. Awards include airfare, hotel, ground transportation, activities, and a food-and-beverage card allowance, creating a recognition experience that feels both personal and memorable.

3. Top-tier pharmaceutical sales force: keeping sales contests fresh

For a top-tier pharma company, the goal was simple: keep the contest experience fresh so engagement stayed high throughout the first quarter and into the fiscal year.

BIW mapped a multi-phase sales contest plan that started with a fast-start month featuring on-the-fly airline tickets, then moved into monthly KPI-driven sweepstakes for individual travel opportunities. The first-quarter push finished with top-performer travel of the winner's choice.

In Q3, the program shifted to a market-share focus and monthly lifestyle and experience packages. That variety helped keep the field energized while giving leaders the flexibility to support local priorities and national goals.

4. Leading biopharma company: creating the WOW factor

When a leading biopharma company wanted a true “WOW” moment to support a product-launch push, BIW built a reward experience winners couldn't easily replicate on their own.

The program included a three-night destination celebration with a welcome reception, a high-adrenaline driving experience on a professional racetrack, and a behind-the-scenes tour of a major sports venue. The experience culminated in a private shopping event in an exclusive, access-only setting.

Winners received personalized jerseys and reward tokens redeemable for awards of their choosing, including electronics, jewelry, designer handbags, sporting goods, travel, and more. The experience earned standout feedback and delivered the once-in-a-lifetime feeling the client wanted.



Why
sales teams
need a **different**
approach to
rewards and
recognition

Why sales rewards and recognition need their own strategy

The most common mistake is trying to use one unified rewards philosophy for every employee audience.

Employee-wide programs can feel too soft for sales.

Sales programs can feel too aggressive or unfair for non-sales roles.

When organizations blur the two, both audiences can disengage.

The best organizations build a complementary culture through recognition while using sales-specific rewards, contests, communications, and progress tracking to drive measurable results in a variable and competitive environment.

Sales teams need more than appreciation.

They need programs designed to focus effort, create momentum,
and reward the behaviors that move business forward.

Visit our blog to read or share this article.