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Behavior Changes

Create a Culture of Safety
with Incentives and Rewards



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Create a Culture of Safety with Incentives and Rewards

By CHRIS SANFORD



In the 90s when Mike Keeler was the Global Head of Safety for a company that owned fast food restaurants, he struggled to improve a safety culture plagued by a high turnover rate and difficult-to-execute safety rewards programs.

The company had “engineered out” our injuries, said Keeler. “We had to change behavior.”

He said the company was trying to improve its safety culture and felt that recognition was important to make it successful. It used cash and pizza parties as rewards for injury-free work. And though it worked initially, it was difficult to execute over time.

“We needed something less complicated,” said the trained loss prevention manager.

He turned to safety pins, which were popular items with large companies like Disney and McDonald’s at the time. Every quarter, pins recognizing safe work efforts were presented to select employees. Over time, however, they diminished in effectiveness.

As a safety leader, Keeler had to find a new way to execute his safety rewards program, which had a budget of \$200,000, at Yum! Brands, owner of the KFC, Taco Bell and Pizza Hut franchises.

“I was looking to create something different,” he said.

He turned to scratch-off cards, which built excitement and refreshed the program, but his vendor couldn’t keep up, and “we wound up with execution issues that resulted in unpleasant situations,” said

Keeler.

Keeler was still looking for a vendor who could provide “creativity and execution” that would allow us to “connect with our employees,” when he discovered in 2013 Online Rewards, a technology and marketing services agency that builds private label incentive and loyalty programs.

“What is most frequently missed in all of this?” asked Michael Levy, CEO of Online Rewards. “Execution, execution, execution. In so many failed instances, companies are executing their safety programs poorly and wondering why they are seeing lack-luster results.”

“Mike Levy’s team at Online Rewards had an answer for every question we had,” said Keeler. “They were able to provide data for safety messaging throughout the year.”

He credited the team for a flawless launch of a safety rewards program, demonstrated communication abilities, data access and a unique, brand-specific website.

“It is clear from our experience in building over 400 employee reward programs, that incentives are a highly impactful tool for driving behavioral change,” said Levy. “As it pertains specifically to safety incentives, a reward program will provide a platform of communication that can be leveraged to build a culture of safety. However, it is not all about the reward itself, but about the safety program as a whole, including its educational, engagement and analytical elements.”

For example, with Online Rewards’ help, Keeler realized that 71 percent of his employees were redeeming rewards via their smart phones. “A smart phone is our employees’ computer,” he said.

“We have a generation now that expects communication to be internet-based, mobile, multi-lingual and candid,” said Levy. “We advise clients that are considering a safety incentive program, to analyze their populations and make sure the execution addresses all issues and aligns with organizational culture.”

Messaging is critical agreed Keeler. He and Levy moved forward with a rewards program that included emails with safety messages on cut prevention, slip and fall prevention and other issues.

“It keeps safety alive,” said Keeler.

Tapping into the competitive nature of restaurant owners and managers, he turned to different metrics of safety, and instead of just rewarding injury-free work days, the company started recognizing decreases in medical expenses and workers’ compensation claims.

Keeler challenged his area-level managers with a reward and recognition program for them as well.

“By 2014-15 we saw more and more of our restaurants were becoming injury free,” said Keeler. “We recorded a 30 percent growth in the number of injury-free restaurants.”

He credited safety messaging, recognition and motivation efforts that lead to the opportunity for prizes for increased safety efforts at the restaurants.

Now with Bloomin’ Brands, Keeler said Yum! is still “very excited” with the resulting substantial reduction in workers’ comp costs.

“For 20 years we were working on it,” he said. “And now we’ve gone through



the floor of what we thought was possible. We were really looking for performance, but our claim frequency and costs went down.”

He added there was no evidence of under reporting of claims, which would be easy to determine because “providers will want payment.”

A safety rewards program can “create an elevation of safety importance; a value attribute,” said Levy. Creating the safest restaurant environment possible was the goal, he added, and “we want to celebrate that.”

Implementing the Program

Levy said that typical safety reward programs last four months and occur twice per year. As part of the program Online Rewards delivers kits to each area coach or regional manager who have eligible stores assigned to them.

These kits include: a letter to the restaurant’s general manager, restaurant award certificate with all employees’ names printed on the front, and individual prize cards for each employee with a code printed on the front.

Area Coaches are instructed to distrib-

ute the award kits to each of their assigned restaurants. Once at the restaurant, the manager is instructed to distribute the prize cards to each individual employee.

To participating in the program:

- Employees go to the program website and register themselves into the program;
- Once registered, they enter the code that is printed on the front of the prize card they received from their manager;
- Upon successfully entering the code, the employee gets to play an interactive online ‘instant win’ prize wheel to see what they’ve won;
- Prizes range from gift cards, to electronics, apparel and other exciting items;
- Once the employee wins, they have the option to choose from a variety of items at the eligible prize level.

When employees are informed and engaged in a company’s safety incentive program, workplace incidents are likely to decrease by promoting organizational awareness of safety policies and procedures and creating a positive culture of safety by recognizing safe work practices. **FSM**

For more about customized reward programs, go to www.online-rewards.com.

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