

## REDEEMING

*experiences*

Good marketing communications can turn vouchers and gift cards into exciting and inspiring incentives in motivation programmes, reports Mark Ludmon

Leisure Vouchers focus on the redemption experience rather than logos



At first glance, a slip of paper or a wafer of plastic are not that inspiring. But when they are vouchers and gift cards in motivation programmes, it is essential to turn them into an inspiring and sought-after incentive. "It's what you can do with the card or voucher that is important," says Andrew Johnson, director-general of the industry's trade body, the VA.

Chris Smith, marketing manager for Leisure Vouchers and Virgin Vouchers, says it is vital to focus on what the piece of paper stands for, whether it's a family day out or dinner for two. "We always say the voucher itself is just a vehicle and push the redemption opportunities of what you can do with it. We provide images to agencies so that, rather than show just a logo, they have a picture of a family enjoying a meal or a holiday."

The key to any motivation programme is the

communications, keeping participants engaged and excited about the incentives, and this extends to the use of vouchers and gift cards from launch to delivery.

Reward managers who are working without the support of a marketing communications team or agency may be able to turn to the supplier for help. Tracy Aslam, head of incentive business at Kingfisher Gift Voucher (KGV), says: "As a potential or existing gift voucher user, you should, without exception, expect your supplier to provide a comprehensive mix of support services, be it at the planning stage, the creative level, implementation, execution or evaluation phase. And that applies whether you are the user or an intermediary such as a marcoms agency."

KGV works with customers in a number of ways, including its Voucher Vortex roadshow that can be taken into workplaces [see Norwich Union case study]. "We'll help devise the programme, from an initial survey of the recipient base to providing



InComm Europe: good designs bring gift cards to life



creative support, whether design, copywriting or image loan, through to fulfilment and delivery and finally evaluation."

Gift cards have even more flexibility for being integrated into the communications activity, capable of carrying branding and messages relevant to the programme. "Give a designer a gift card as blank canvas and a world of possibilities opens," explains Chris Burrett, head of marketing for gift card specialist InComm Europe.

This also extends to the packaging that the card (or voucher) is delivered in. "Brief your designer to design accompanying packaging and the result will be an incentive at least as attractively presented as anything else in the market," says Burrett. "Add the ability to change designs whenever you want, and the versatility grows."

Creative packaging is not the only way to bring cards and vouchers to life. Rather than sending them in the internal mail or by post, managers should be encouraged to hand them over in presentations in front of other staff, says Johnson at the VA. "It doesn't have to be a big corporate event. You can't underestimate the 10 o'clock meeting with everyone in the department. The person receiving it feels special and other people feel something to strive for."

He adds that the package should include a covering letter or materials that communicate why the person is receiving the reward and how they can use it. "If it's a card or voucher from a well-known retailer, suggest things they could spend it on. It should be about treating yourself – it's very easy

sometimes to just spend it on everyday things."

Paul O'Brien, managing director of Virgin Vouchers and Leisure Vouchers, notes that, especially with experience-based vouchers, it adds to the momentum if staff are encouraged to tell their colleagues about it afterwards and maybe post pictures on noticeboards and intranets. "It extends the value and feelgood factor of the presentation of the reward and stimulates other people too," he says.

However, to ensure staff do feel good about the incentives, employers should choose the right voucher or card for the target audience. "Not everyone wants to drive off track in a 4x4 or go paintballing, as fun as these activities are," says Kevin Harrington, research and development director at Sodexo Pass, which is behind the multi-choice Say Shopping voucher. "Understanding the demographics, gender, age and lifestyle needs of the recipients is essential. Our research has shown that a voucher that has an impact on the recipient's family is going to be very welcome."

However, Johnson at the VA adds that organisers of reward programmes need not be deterred if they are unable to carry out detailed research. "One of the advantages of cards or vouchers is that they can match the high-street brands," he explains. "If you know your audience, you can make an educated guess what will appeal and not necessarily have to do masses of research."

## Norwich Union



Norwich Union is running a points-based reward programme, called NUB, targeted at 3,000 call centre staff at offices across the UK. Created by motivation company P&MM, it aims to increase sales of policies and renewals on each of its core products and improve customer service.

Each member of staff is allocated a points bank account, which allows them to redeem points for vouchers and merchandise. However, 97 per cent of people have chosen vouchers.

Kingfisher Gift Voucher (KGV), one of the offerings, brought the incentive to life by taking its Voucher Vortex roadshow to four of the six call centres. At 2.30pm every day, staff who had chosen to redeem their points for KGV could stick their hand into a whirling mass of prize-winning slips and pluck one out. Prizes ranged from the vouchers to iPods and games consoles.

"After launching a scheme of this type, it's critical you don't lose momentum," says P&MM account manager Lyn Gurner. "The Vortex creates theatre and drama and is highly memorable so achieving their objective to reinforce awareness of their brand and achieve our objective of keeping the campaign alive."

## Manweb Communications

New telecoms company Manweb Communications used vouchers in a creative way to reward staff canvassing for appointments by phone.

It devised a giant advent calendar-style chart with 21 blank squares, behind each of which was an amount of Leisure Vouchers ranging from £5 to £25. When someone made an appointment, they chose a square to write their name on until the prizes were revealed at the end of each week.

Manweb managing director Peter Singleton said: "Telephone canvassing can be an unrewarding task at times but the Leisure Vouchers incentive programme has introduced a great office banter and competitiveness between the team, particularly as we get closer to the weekly unveiling. Obviously the more appointments you make the more chance you have, but there are plenty of red herrings on the board to keep everyone on their toes."

