

Putting fun back into work

Loyalty schemes that won't break the bank are an effective management tool

By ADAM GIFFORD

When staff at office supplies company Boise exceed their sales targets, they score points towards a trip to a mystery destination "Boise Island" - last year it was a week on a Fijian resort.

They can go to a website to check their total, and the league chart to see who they have to beat to win that tropical getaway.

The site was created for Boise by WinRewards, an Auckland company which has built a web engine and fulfilment system to run multiple loyalty programmes and reward schemes.

Boise human resources manager Peter Leathley says the site WinRewards created is also used as way to get information out to the 300 sales staff nationwide.

"It is an efficient, cost-effective way to communicate. It is easy to tailor and cheaper than print," Leathley says.

"It is effective for making sure our people are more target-focused. Early on in the programme there were people saying 'I am determined to go on this trip' and they focused on achieving it."

Leathley says the WinRewards approach fits with Boise's adoption of the strategy set out in popular organisational culture handbook: *When Fish Fly, Breakthroughs Happen* about the transformation of Seattle's Pike Place Fish Market.

"In terms of Boise's culture, we are about having fun and recognising effort. The way the site is designed fits with those aspects," he says.

WinRewards is the idea of Mike Williamson of TLC Marketing, which runs promotions for closed customer or staff groups - trade suppliers giving builders a toaster for lodging a big order, firms wanting gewgaws to give away, or customised loyalty schemes which won't break the bank.

"We were doing a lot of print-based work and not getting a good response. We thought the future was online, so we got a developer to build us a site," Williamson says.

WinRewards does the traditional part of TLC's business well. It can handle campaigns targeted at 10 people or 10,000, and it allows campaigns to be more flexible and responsive than the old way.

More importantly, the site gives the people paying for the campaigns instant feedback. They can see how many of the target group are signing up, what percentage of rewards are being redeemed, and other data which they can match with sales or performance targets.

Williamson says it soon became clear that WinRewards was about more than increasing sales.

"It is also a way to recognise other achievements, like improving responsiveness to customers. We realised the opportunity is strategic, that we are able to influence organisational behaviour," he says.

WinRewards has become a separate company to TLC, allowing other promotion or consulting firms to use it for their activities.

Business strategy consultant Dougie Beck of A42 says because WinRewards is easy to use and there is a chance of a reward, people will come back to the site. That makes it a useful tool for transferring institutional knowledge.

"It can become the portal for any changes a business is making. It becomes a place people log on to every day, so you can tell them things they might not read if it came in an email or on a bit of paper pinned to the noticeboard," Beck says.

"You can create trivia quizzes about new products or promotions, ensuring there is knowledge transfer."

Increasing staff knowledge means support calls can be dealt with faster - no more "I'll just get a supervisor with the answer to that."

"As a management tool, it allows you to drive team performance at a more granular level," Beck says.

It can also be used to solicit information, a sort of virtual suggestion box. "You get communication in both directions," he says.

Beck says the WinRewards' reporting functions could prove the most significant part for many organisations.

"A lot of performance management incentives are never reviewed once they are introduced, and you can find out too late they are driving the wrong behaviours in your staff."