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CAMERAS AND ELECTRONICS

Products to Inspire Performance

Awards that motivate program participants to do their best

By Leo Jakobson
October 13, 2010



Bulova Precisionist



People have not stopped driving, however, as both Maritz and Carlson Marketing joined Pine Brook, NJ-based Rymax Marketing, a leading manufacturers rep firm in saying Garmin GPS systems are retaining their drawing power.

Another immutable law of nature, Ivcich says, is that anything Lady Gaga puts her name on will explode; Rymax puts her Heartbeats by Lady Gaga in-ear headphones by Monster Beats on its list.

Apple iPad and iPod touch

Apple's iPad is one of the biggest hits in electronics this year, and, unsurprisingly, it's a sought-after incentive award. The 9.7-inch tablet, with either Wi-Fi or Wi-Fi plus 3G wireless service from AT&T, has Apple's usual intuitive interface and is great for on-the-go media. But the just-released iPod touch, with front and back cameras for Wi-Fi-based video calling (the rear one is a 720p HD video recorder/still camera) and even-better Retina display, is winning raves.

<http://www.apple.com/>, iPad \$499-\$829, iPod touch \$229-\$399

Bose MIE2 Mobile Headset

Bose headphones are traditional top redeemers, but there's a twist this year, as smartphones like the Apple iPhone and Google's Android models are melding the phone and music/video player. One of the most popular Bose headsets right now is the new in-ear MIE2 model with an in-line microphone with an answer/end call button, which allows the user to listen to music with high-quality sound, pause it to take a call, and resume the tunes with one button.

<http://www.incentiveconcepts.com/>, \$129

Kinect Add-On for Xbox 360

The Nintendo Wii has been one of the hottest video game consoles for the last couple of years, thanks to its interactive controller, even though the Sony PlayStation 3 and Microsoft Xbox 360 are far more advanced gaming platforms. The latter are fighting back with add-on devices that let the user's body movements control games. Due out in November is Microsoft's Kinect add-on peripheral; it uses three cameras and a microphone to read users' body movements and speech to control in-game actions.

The economy remains the biggest factor shaping the trends in what incentive participants are redeeming their points for. "Ideas that generate more time with the family are popular," says Carol Ivcich, head merchandiser for St. Louis-based Maritz, one of the largest incentive houses. "Anything that helps people enjoy time with their families. We see larger groups of people getting together."

At the same time, people are continuing to redeem for less extravagant items, she says. "We love big TVs, but we can love the TV we [already] have," Ivcich adds. Jim Valenti, merchandise operations manager of Chicago-based distributor Hinda Incentives, notes, "People are spending points on things they need, good basic items. They might not buy a big TV." Indeed, at Minneapolis-based Carlson Marketing, another leading incentive house, the list of items that the merchandise department is seeing trending big has only one television, and that is a Sony 32-inch LCD TV—which is a smaller screen size than what *Incentive* has heard mentioned as being current in several years. On the other hand, at Maryland Heights, MO-based Incentive Concepts, a manufacturers rep firm, LG Electronics' 42-inch LD450 LCD television, a 1080p resolution model, is the top draw.

And the nesting trend continues, with cooking gear—particularly chef-branded cookware and cutlery—remaining popular. And power tools are doing well as many people are realizing they will be staying in their current homes for a longer time, rather than trading up to bigger ones every five years. And even though winter is coming, Incentive Concepts is seeing interest in high-end gas grills like Broil King's Regal 420.

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Men's Bulova Precisionist Claremont Collection

This Bulova Precisionist from the Claremont Collection features black and charcoal gray dial with multiple levels and patterns. The Precisionist line is claimed to be the most accurate watch made with a continuously sweeping second hand.

<http://www.bulovaspecialmarkets.com/>, \$350

Nikon D3000 Digital SLR Camera

The marketing tag line of Nikon's D3000 entry-level digital SLR camera—"Incredible Pictures, Incredibly Easy"—speaks volumes to why it's a popular incentive award. It's not just that prices are falling, it's that entry-level digital SLR cameras are becoming simple enough to use for people whose skill levels are well below "serious amateur."

<http://www.nikonusa.com/>, \$549

Vera Bradley All in One Wristlet

Handbags remain a perennial favorite in incentive merchandise award programs. This colorful fabric wristlet from Vera Bradley has a back pocket suitable for a music player or smartphone and a front pocket for the incentive winner's ID. Between them is a pocket with a zippered compartment and three credit card slots. A strap clasp makes it easy to attach to another bag.

<http://www.top-brands.com/>, \$68

Cuisinart Brewing System

Keurig's single-cup coffee brewing machines have been a big hit in the incentive market, and now Cuisinart has partnered with Keurig to take its concept one step further. In addition to the single-serve K-Cups available from producers ranging from Green Mountain Coffee and Wolfgang Puck Coffee to Twinings (tea) and Ghirardelli (hot cocoa), the Cuisinart brewer comes with a dishwasher-friendly reusable K-Cup for your own special grind.

<http://www.keurig.com/>, \$199

Trek 7.2 FX Bicycle

Trek's FX line is its most popular platform, good for casual riders, commuters, fitness fanatics, and errand-runners alike. Zane's Cycles, Trek's incentive industry rep, will custom-fit each bicycle to its rider's body geometry and send it out nearly completely assembled—the handlebars just have to be straightened and pedals attached.

<http://www.zanes.com/>, \$529

Garmin nuvi 3790T GPS

No wider than a #2 pencil, this feature-rich GPS learns traffic flow trends on your route, receives subscription-free traffic alerts, has enhanced walking directions in cities, and uses its ecoRoute feature to select the most fuel-efficient route.

<http://www.rymaxinc.com/>, \$449

Mercado Global Jewelry from Helping Hand Rewards

In the last two years, the trend toward incorporating corporate social responsibility into branding initiatives has taken off like a juggernaut in the incentive award business (and, really, every other part of the incentive and employee motivation industry). Helping Hand Rewards, created by Hinda Incentives CEO Michael Arkes, imports Mercado Global's fair-trade-produced artisan jewelry from Guatemala, where a cooperative of 31 Mayan women in the poverty-stricken highlands make traditional crafts to support themselves and their families.

<http://www.helpinghandrewards.com/>, \$30-\$75

Citizen Blue Angels Skyhawk A-T

Like all Citizen Eco-Drive watches, this men's chronograph uses the company's green-friendly Eco-Drive technology—a solar panel under the dial face that converts any light source to power—to run without ever needing a battery. The watch features world time from 43 cities and is water resistant to 666 feet.

corporate_gifts@citizenwatch.com, \$699

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