

25 Essential Features of Reward, Gift, and Incentive Delivery Platforms

There are many incentive and reward delivery solutions available on the market. Choosing the right platform with the features your business needs is crucial. Incentive Delivery platforms deliver awards, gifts, incentives, and more to employees, customers, participants, and partners. When selecting the ideal incentive delivery platform for your business, it's important to consider the following features to help you find the best fit.

Here are 25 essential features to consider when choosing an Incentive Delivery solution (in no particular order):

1	EASE OF USE
	The Incentive Delivery platform you choose should be user-friendly for both administrators and recipients. For administrators, the system should have an intuitive interface that simplifies setting up, designing, and tracking multiple programs simultaneously. It should enable the management of multiple projects and provide granular control over access to projects, funds, and reporting. Your chosen platform should give you the ability to quickly identify an individual recipient and re-send, cancel, or change their delivery email or SMS number. Incentive recipients should receive a great end-user experience that is both rewarding and easy to redeem. It should be branded with your identity rather than the branding of the vendor.
2	INCENTIVE CATALOG
	A platform should provide a wide and diverse catalog of incentive options, offering both worldwide coverage and hyper-local choices. Additionally, it should allow the creation of custom-curated incentive sets tailored to the theme or purpose of your project. Options should include something for everyone, including the ability to select the preferred delivery method, including the ability to print a digital delivery, add the regards to a digital wallet, or make a physical card available to be delivered to the recipient's desired address. National and International gift card options should provide worldwide coverage. Local gift cards let recipients choose by zip code from tens of thousands of local merchants. The sender can also curate buy-local opportunities. Visa and MasterCard cards offer flexibility to purchase at over 10 million merchants in the U.S. alone. Merchandise options should cover a broad range of occasions with options ranging from personal care to fun gifts and tech items. Swag options should include the fundamentals, shirts, cups, hats, etc. On-demand delivery with the recipient choosing size or color is a great time saver and eliminates waste and embarrassing mistakes. Payments should offer flexibility, including popular solutions like PayPal and Venmo, as well as options that don't require an online payment account, like depositing to a recipient's own debit card or bank account. Senders should be able to mix and match incentives from all categories and arrange them in the desired order that best fits their theme or messaging.
3	DESIGN FLEXIBILITY
	It takes more than adding a logo and a short message to deliver memorable incentives. Emails, Landing Pages, SMS messages, Reminders, and Follow-up messages should be completely and uniquely customizable to maximize the perceived value of your award, gift, or incentive. Your delivery should carry your brand, meet your organization's style guidelines, and be designed to elicit enthusiasm and delight from the first email or SMS delivery through reminders and your follow-up message post-claim.
4	PERSONALIZATION
	Personalization builds stronger connections with recipients and enhances the value of the engagement. Whether you use just the recipient's first name or add custom data, such as a personalized message for each recipient, personalized deliveries show that you understand and value your audience's individual preferences. Personalization leads to higher engagement rates, better redemption rates, and increased delight. By tailoring content to each recipient, you make your communication more relevant and meaningful, significantly improving the effectiveness of your award, gift, and incentive program and strengthening your overall relationship with your audience.
5	SEND-READY PROJECTS
	A robust platform should include more than simple "design" templates. Send-Ready projects should be included with design and messaging for the specific occasion. They must be automatically personalized for the recipient, and automatically include your organization's logo, suggested incentives, and pre-configured reminder messages. Project sharing allows for multiple people in an organization to use the assets from successful campaigns in subsequent incentive campaigns. These projects make it easy to get set up to send incentives in just minutes and quickly create and execute full incentive programs just by adding recipients to the project.
6	AUTOMATION
	Look for features that automate routine tasks, such as reward distribution based on certain triggers or achievements, to save time and reduce manual efforts. Sending gifts and incentives for repetitive events including birthdays or employee, customer, or partnership anniversaries are one of the most popular applications for incentive automation. To maximize the memorability and positive impact of your incentive programs, make sure you can easily manage a list of contacts and dates and can automatically add them to an appropriate project such as birthday incentives, or partnership anniversary on a specific date and time of day. Every contact should be able to have multiple date options for anniversaries, birthdays, or other special events. "Celebrating work anniversaries and birthdays can significantly increase employee engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive and stay with the company longer." ~peoplestrategy
7	REMINDERS & FOLLOW-UP
	Reminders to redeem awards are critical to the success of incentive programs. When a recipient has not claimed their incentive, sending them a reminder at specified intervals (one day, three days, etc.) after the original email or SMS message is important for three reasons: - First, it assures that the recipient sees your delivery and can take steps to claim it. Programs that include three reminders have a 13.2% higher claim rate. - Secondly, reminders increase the number of positive impressions that your message and award, gift, or incentive have on that recipient. The most common reason incentives are not initially claimed by recipients is simply because the recipient forgot. Studies show that more impressions make deliveries more memorable and increase redemption. Follow-Up Messages: Messages sent after an award or incentive is redeemed gives you another powerful opportunity to make an impression. "We hope you enjoy your gift!" Post-claim messages can reinforce your message of congratulations, thanks, etc., or induce a recipient to engage in a secondary call to action. Asking an award claimant for additional engagement right after they have selected an incentive increases the likelihood of a positive response. Whether it's to provide you with feedback or take a quick survey, response rates go up when recipients feel upbeat about your relationship.
8	USER ROLE MANAGEMENT
	User management at the account and project level is key to controlling administrative access to projects, information, and funds. Make sure your platform allows adding users and administrators and can send invitations to join specific projects with granularity to set different roles based on responsibilities. Designers don't need access to funds. Finance personnel don't need to access design capabilities. Roles should be available for staff to add recipients but require approval before any funds are spent. Look for other roles that may be useful in your organization at the account or project level, such as administrator, auditor, and approver. Large organizations often require multiple accounts for different departments or cost centers. Having Enterprise Accounts Administration capability allows your organization to have individual account administrators as well as an Enterprise Administrator who can roll up reports, move funds from account to account, and manage users across the entire organization. Limiting access to areas of the incentives application to only those who need it is a good security policy. For example adding addresses to be used to send incentives through emails and SMS messages for specific awards can be accomplished via integration with CRM systems where incentives can automatically be triggered. Examples might include incentives sent from sales or awards or gifts from the company's CEO. Managers can accomplish that without having direct access to the system, further enhancing security.
9	BUDGET MANAGEMENT TOOLS
	Managing and tracking incentive budget allocations across projects and across organizations ensures that your programs stay within financial constraints. Administrators can allocate funds to specific accounts and projects at the account level or in specific projects. Security capabilities allow limiting administrative access for specific users to only allow them to access specific projects, so account-level funds and account-level financial information remains secure. Managers can then act as users for just a specific project without having access to organization or account-level funds or account financial information. Be sure your chosen platform allows for tracking overall expenditures also acts to enhance security. Unclaimed and unspent funds are returned to the account and may be managed by administrators.
10	MULTI-ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT
	Incentive systems should allow for multiple accounts within the organization to be used by different departments. Project-level controls alone may not meet the needs of all organizations. Having accounts for each different department is an effective means of managing funds, allowing for user access control and enhancing security. single Enterprise Account Administrator can effectively manage multiple accounts, grant access, and transfer funds to as many departmental
11	REPORTING & ANALYTICS
	Comprehensive reporting tools are essential for tracking the effectiveness of your incentive programs. Look for platforms that offer detailed analytics to help you understand recipient participation rates, and the success and overall impact of your incentive campaigns. Reporting at the account and project levels is key to continuous improvement and ROI reporting. Keep track of budget utilization and where programs are succeeding. Users should be able to easily identify claim rates and the overall spend down to the project level. Look for platforms that use a double entry approach as you would expect in your accounting system.
12	SMS, EMAIL, EXPORTABLE LINKS
	Incentive platforms should be able to send incentive awards via customized SMS messages, or email messages alone, or simultaneously for maximum impact. Not every award, gift, or incentive delivery lends itself to sending via email or via email only. In many organizations, not all employees have email addresses, so sending incentive awards to their mobile phone numbers is a great option. Alternative delivery methods should include exporting incentive award links for inclusion in printed cards or printed sheets utilizing URL's or QR codes. These QR coded links may be generic, per project, or generated specifically for each individual recipient, with personalization for each recipient.
13	BRANDING & SENDING DOMAIN
	Make sure you have the option to send from your organization's domain. Success depends on your recipients trusting the sender of the email. If they know it's you, and you have a trusted relationship, it has a higher likelihood of being opened, and you'll get a higher success rate. Send from your organization's own domain, not the domain of the delivery company. It's crucial that the spotlight remains on your brand and your message rather than confusing it with the delivery company's branding. Ensure that the incentive delivery accentuates your brand and message to significantly increase the value and success of incentives, compensation, and rewards. Rewards and incentives help your business boost its brand and customer and employee engagement. The goal is to build goodwill and memorability for your organization and your success.
14	INTEGRATION CAPABILITIES
	Integration with other systems used in the organization. Survey, Human Resources, CRM systems, and financial tools, can streamline processes and improve efficiency. Ensure that integration options using native integrations, the platform's API, or an integration platform such as Zapier can be accommodated. Make sure integrations maximize the value of your platform by taking advantage of features like automated reminders that stop when a recipient has claimed their incentive.
15	WORLDWIDE COVERAGE
	Platforms should accommodate global use with geographic-specific incentive options. This is vital for organizations that operate internationally, and for any organization that has even a few global constituents. Features that are important include automatically converting currencies and supporting international character sets in email, SMS, and landing pages. For incentive recipients, geo-location is important so that their first award options are specific to their current location, and they should be able to choose and select the country of their choice for localized incentives and gifts. To ensure that your offers are understood, landing pages must support standard in-browser translation tools if you decide not to send to recipients in the recipient's own language.
16	LOW NET COST
	You should only pay for gift cards, merchandise, and payments that are claimed by recipients. According to Paytronix, 32% of gift cards are never redeemed. Similar statistics apply to all types of awards, gifts, and incentives. If you choose a service that delivers gift cards for "free" you could be over-paying up to 32 cents on every dollar sent, allowing your provider to make a 32% profit margin. Choosing a platform with a known delivery fee is far better. These charges are typically a 6-10% fee. These platforms return 100% of the value of unclaimed incentives. The funds should automatically revert to your account. So-called "free" delivery platforms succeed when you fail. They don't typically offer features that maximize delivery, like multiple follow-up messages or sending from your own email domain, a feature that substantially increases claim rates.
17	FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY
	Knowing the status of every project and every project dollar is crucial for informed decision-making. Quickly determining the claim rate of your incentives and seeing which of your incentives are most effective gives you valuable insights into audience preferences, enabling you to drive continual improvement. Can you easily determine your most popular gift card, merchandise, or payment choices? Incentive platforms that deliver gift cards, merchandise, and payments for "free" usually make it difficult to quickly determine specific claim rates. This may also make it more difficult to see the potential savings inherent in fee-based
18	SECURITY & COMPLIANCE
	Incentive platforms must be secure and comply with relevant regulations. Consider your specific needs. Ensure that your platform provider is SOC-II certified. The system should also include the capability for HIPAA-compliant de-identification for health-related compensation and reimbursements. User and administrator roles should be available to ensure that you may limit access at both the account and specific project level. For enhanced security ensure that you have an option for multi-factor authentication for system access, trust and redemption rates. Unclaimed incentives maximize the vendor's profit margins and cost you more.
20	CUSTOMER SERVICE
	Reliable and effective customer support is crucial. An incentives platform provider should offer timely technical support and customer service to address issues or questions. Giving your recipients a delightful experience is an important part of your relationship with them. High-quality support makes that possible. If a merchant is having issues with their gift cards or merchandise deliveries, it's critical that your platform vendor makes sure the recipient's issue is resolved quickly and that the recipient knows the issue is not related to you or your program.
21	SUSTAINABILITY
	Turn your sustainability ambitions into actions by using incentive automation. Digital messaging and delivery allow you to do your part to eliminate waste. Many award and incentive choices are electronic in nature so no extra packaging is generated by you. In cases where physical merchandise is warranted as incentives and gifts, shipping delivery from suppliers means that no additional warehousing, repackaging, or unnecessary handling is required for the incentive to delight your employees, partners, and customers.
22	MOBILE COMPATIBILITY
	Are incentives and awards simply and easily redeemable via mobile devices? Emails and landing pages should be mobile-friendly, and adding digital wallet-enabled incentives should allow for simple redemption via one-click access. Many users and recipients access platforms via mobile devices. It's important that the incentives platform be mobile-friendly and should not require a dedicated mobile app to use.
23	SCALABILITY
	The platform should be able to scale to handle your incentive and award needs as your organization and audience grows. Managing a larger number of users and transactions should not come with performance issues. Systems must be able to support multiple projects and multiple groups within your organization. Project sharing, account and project user access, and multi-account management should accommodate how your organization wants to manage access to projects and funds.
24	GATED DELIVERIES
	Gated or locked deliveries are password-protected incentives that require either a single group password to unlock incentives for redemption or a unique password for each incentive delivery and redemption. Common use cases include offering a promotional gift incentive that is sent to all attendees at a meeting with the password for the gift and incentive revealed at the event. Attendees are given a set period of time to claim their gift before the gift expires. Trade show meetings and online meetings are common use cases where customers or prospects are offered an incentive to attend. During the meeting, attendees are provided with a unique code that allows them to claim the incentive gift.
25	DELIVERY TIMING
	The ability to time the delivery of incentives should be available for a single incentive, for a small group or for a large list. Flexible timing gives you control over the timing of the incentive to have the greatest impact on recipients. For example, ensure that you can time incentives to match the time of a webinar or online meeting. When lists are loaded into the incentive system, they should include the option to include the specific time to deliver. This information can be in a column along with other delivery information, such as amount, and custom field information, which may include personal notes or any other personalization information you would like to include in your messages.

Considering the features of an incentives automation platform carefully is crucial to ensuring it meets your current requirements and aligns with your future needs and those of other departments within your organization.

A well-chosen platform can streamline processes, enhance employee engagement, and support seamless collaboration across departments. By selecting a system with robust, scalable, and customizable features, you can ensure long-term success and adaptability, ultimately driving greater efficiency and satisfaction throughout the organization.