

Insights on Incentives

Extole

Using Amazon Gift Cards to power referral and advocacy programs for leading brands

Christopher Duskin is the Vice President of Marketing at Extole, a company that specializes in referral marketing programs. Their system helps brands acquire new customers through their current customers by offering motivating rewards.

Christopher leads the Marketing and Client Services teams in vision, strategy and implementation. He is also in charge of creating and maintaining client relations.

Q: Why did Extole choose Amazon Gift Cards?

CHRIS: We're a referral marketing system used by brands to engage consumers. So, having a motivating reward is critical to the success of our solution and our business. **Nothing is more motivating than an Amazon Gift Card.** The Amazon option is essential for our customers.

Q: What results have you seen with the Amazon Gift Card?

CHRIS: Amazon Gift Card options have existed for four or five years on our platform. When our customers offer Amazon Gift Cards, it helps their referral programs to really perform well. In fact, **our highest performing referral programs all used Amazon Gift Cards. That should tell you something right there.**

There is a high level of trust with the Amazon brand and a real familiarity with how to use it. So, people know what they're getting and are excited about it. With the other alternatives, there is less trust and more uncertainty about the value or how they can use them. Also, **Amazon Gift Cards fit with how consumers behave today. There's always something available to them,**

whether it's a commodity purchase or a one-time treat for themselves or their friends. **The Amazon Gift Card works with how people shop because they know they can find something and it's going to be easy to use.**

Q: What effect has the Amazon Gift Card relationship had on your business processes?

CHRIS: Oh wow. **Amazon Gift Cards are a very easy and a powerful reward option for us.** As you know, we work with Tango Card. This combination gives us a gift card program that is integrated into our software technology. We have visibility into the whole process and can effectively manage our programs. **And from a marketing and value-delivery perspective, Amazon is unmatched.**

If you think about our business, a huge part of the value proposition of using Extole is that we automate referrals so that our customers can make it a big, scalable acquisition channel. **Being able to keep everything digital and connected via Amazon's API makes this process and our business work and work well at scale.**



Christopher Duskin
Vice President of Marketing

Q: What kind of feedback do you get from your customers and end users?

CHRIS: The feedback is tied to our customers' use and performance. **The fact that Amazon Gift Cards are tied to our highest performing programs is a testament to how much people value the brand, the gift cards and what they can do with them.** The other key metric for us is reflected in the referrals. **Amazon Gift Card programs have the highest frequency and volume of sharing or friend referrals. For us, that really speaks volumes on the power of having the Amazon Gift Card as an option.**

Another key element for us is that Amazon is a highly accessible gift card option and as everyone knows it's easy for the consumer to use. This is what our customers tell us. They like Amazon Gift Cards because they are simple to use and give them the option to buy almost anything. Amazon has made everything just work for everyone. Our customers appreciate that and want to offer it through Extole to their customers.

Q: What kind of trends do you see taking shape in your industry?

CHRIS: For us, a gift card is not a discount and, in some ways, it's not even a gift. In our minds, a gift card is starting to be treated as a relationship between two people.

In a system when you issue a reward and redeem a gift card reward, it really is a connection between two people because it's tied to a referral. When a person uses that gift card, it is a physical manifestation, even if it's electronic, of that relationship. So, we think about gift cards not as some sort of discount and transaction facilitator but something that really represents identity and relationships. That's a little bit of a mind shift. But if you go with it, you start to think about people and connections a little bit differently and how a reward ties them together. In fact, there's actually identity attached to this interaction and we think there is tremendous power for marketers to leverage this tangible manifestation of a relationship. Down the road, we can see people sharing

memories of their connections with gift cards just like Facebook does now. With identity associated with a gift card, there's also a history, and the gifting of a card reconnects to what you bought and did with that card. There starts to be more meaning when you attach an identity to it. We see people sharing these memories and saying, "Hey, thanks again for this. I'm still using it." This is the impact that you hear talked about with gift cards all the time, and it has more meaning than other types of rewards. That's certainly where we see things going as people are doing this already in their daily lives.



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