

Incentive Travel IQ Survey 2015: The Employee Is Key

A growing focus on finding and keeping employees is reflected in the goals of incentive travel programs

By Leo Jakobson

Earlier this year, the Harvard Business Review reported that when it asked 24 CEOs of major companies like AT&T, General Mills, and McDonalds about their major concerns - the issues that keep them up at night - finding and managing employees was far and away the number one issue.

That concern was reflected in Incentive's 2015 Travel IQ Survey, with one-third (34 percent) of respondents saying that recruiting and retaining employees was one of the primary benefits of their company associates with its incentive travel programs, up from about one fifth (21.9 percent) the year before.

And while the top benefit was of course increasing sales (61.1 percent), recognizing performance came in second (55.0 percent) and building morale came in third (51.9 percent). Both were up slightly over 2014, and were the only other benefits to go above 50 percent. Improve employee loyalty was fourth (37.8 percent), up four percent from 2014.

Number two on The Conference Board's list of challenges this year was "customer relationships" and indeed, several factors that would affect this gained importance in this year's Travel IQ survey. "Increase Market share" climbed from 21.5 percent last year to 27.1 percent this year, while "create new markets" rose from 21.9 percent in 2014 to 26.3 percent in 2015. And "build customer loyalty" jumped from 31.1 percent to 36.6 percent.

Incentive planners also refocused on client/customer programs, with 43.1 percent running programs that included this group in 2015, up from 35.7 percent in 2014.

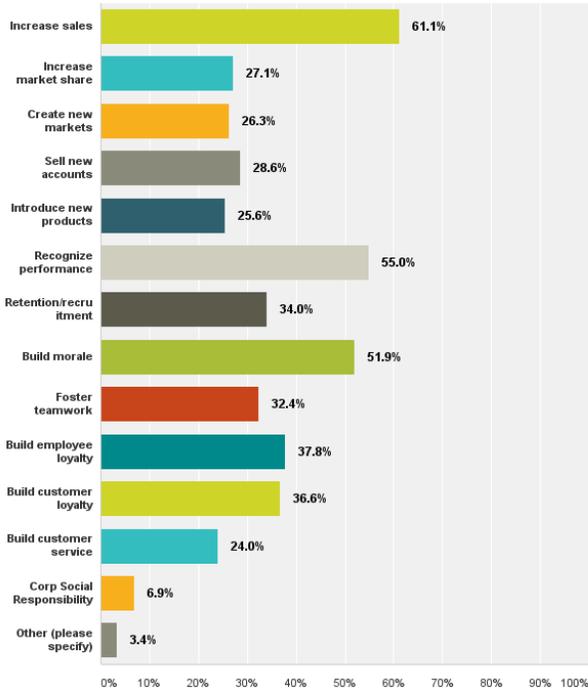
As for activities on those trips, golf and spa are still considered important by more than half of the respondents, with golf (54.2 percent) edging out spa (53.1 percent). But both are down from 2014, when spa (63.1 percent) edged out golf (62.0 percent).

A rapidly growing trend in incentive travel programs is the use of brand name merchandise awards like a camera, sunglasses, watches, or even electronics instead of (and sometimes in addition to) typical nightly room gifts like sunscreen or logoed apparel. In 2015, nearly one in four respondents (38.2 percent) said they included this type of award in their programs, and one in five (19.5 percent) said they offered attendees a "merchandise bar" offering a selection of brand name awards to choose from.

Another growing trend over the past few years has been the use of individual incentive travel. In 2015, nearly half (44.7 percent) of our respondents said they use both group and individual incentive travel programs, nearly double the amount that use only group travel (22.9 percent). Nearly one in five (19.9 percent) respondents said they replaced some group travel programs with individual travel, and nearly one eighth (12.6 percent) switched totally to individual travel.

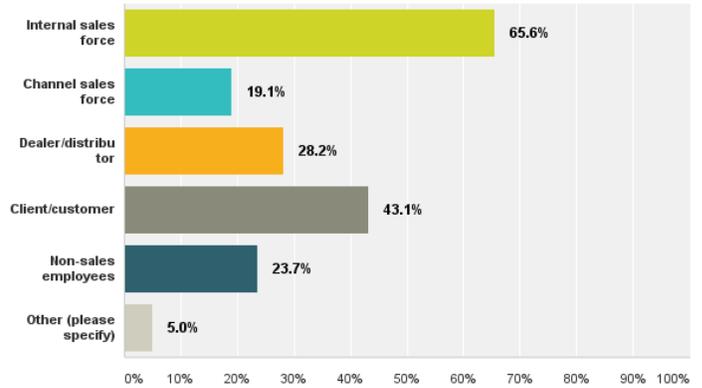
Q1 What are the primary benefits your company associates with incentive travel programs? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0



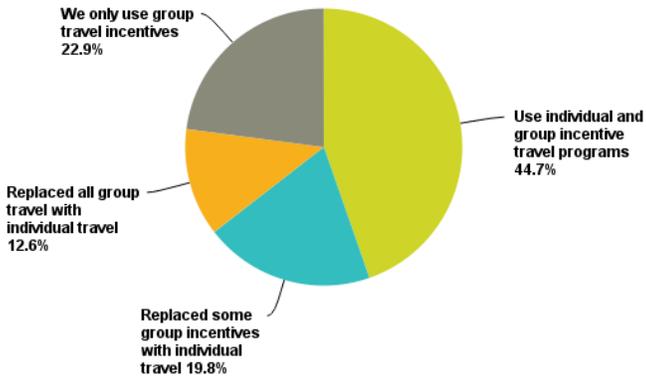
Q2 What audiences typically participate in your incentive travel programs? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0



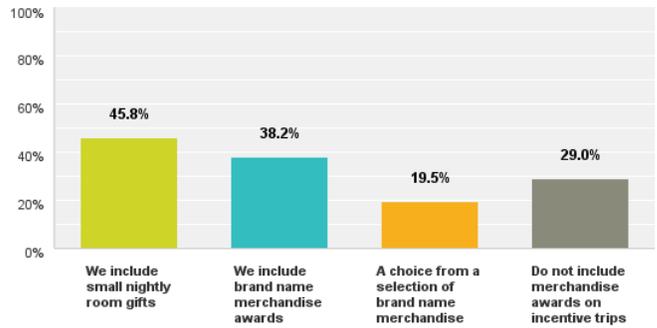
Q3 To what extent, if any, are you using individual incentive travel programs in place of group travel programs this year?

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0



Q4 How do you use merchandise in your incentive travel programs?

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0

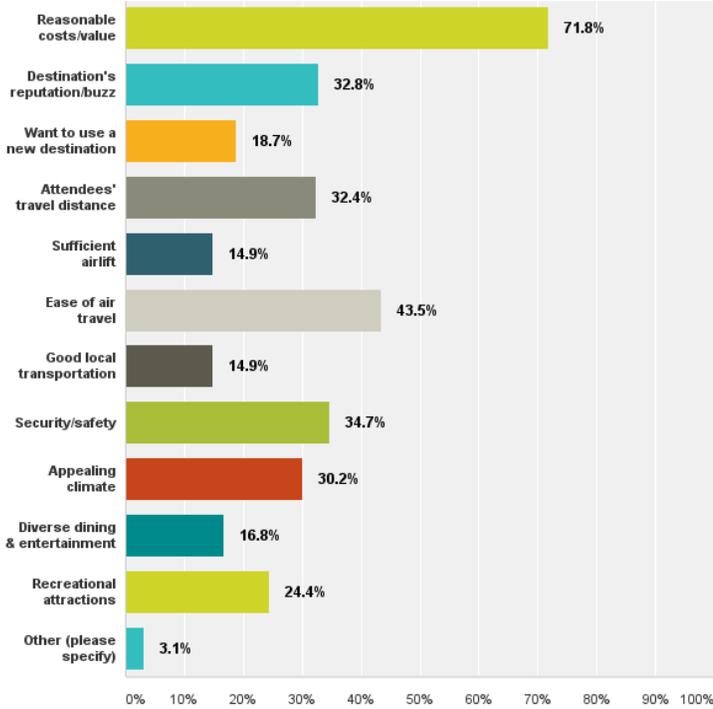


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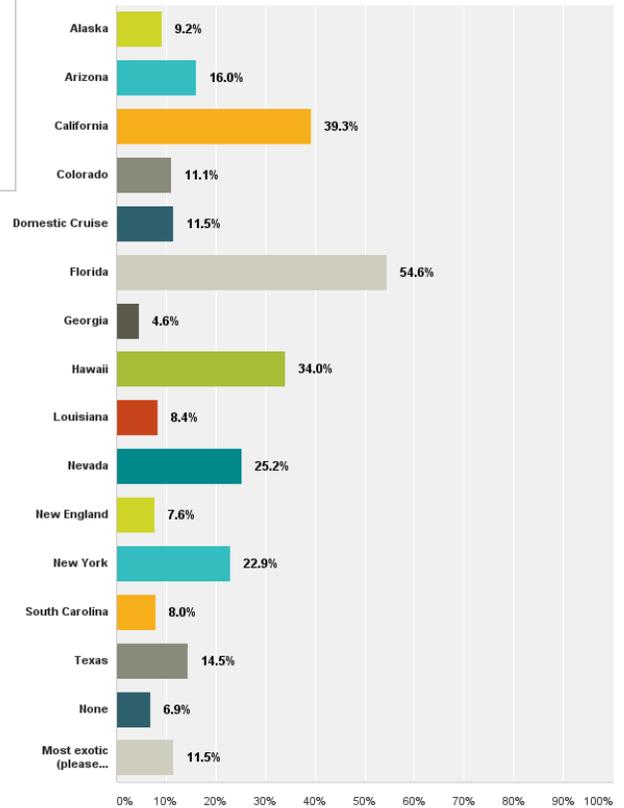
Q5 Which of the following are most important criteria when evaluating a DESTINATION for your incentive travel programs? (Select up to 3 responses)

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0



Q6 Which of the following DOMESTIC destinations are the most popular for your incentive travel programs in 2015? (Select up to 3 responses) In the blank space, please include the most exotic domestic destinations you are offering this year.

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0

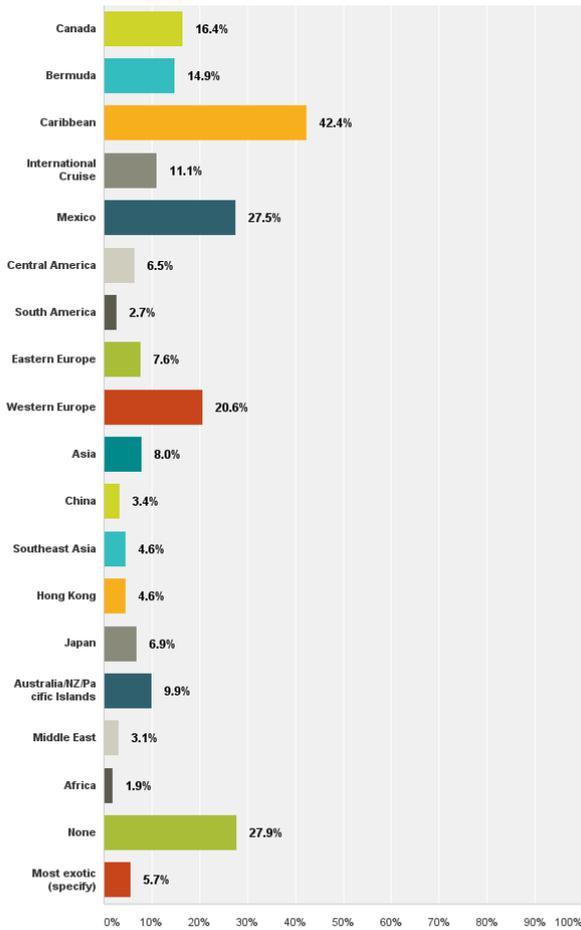


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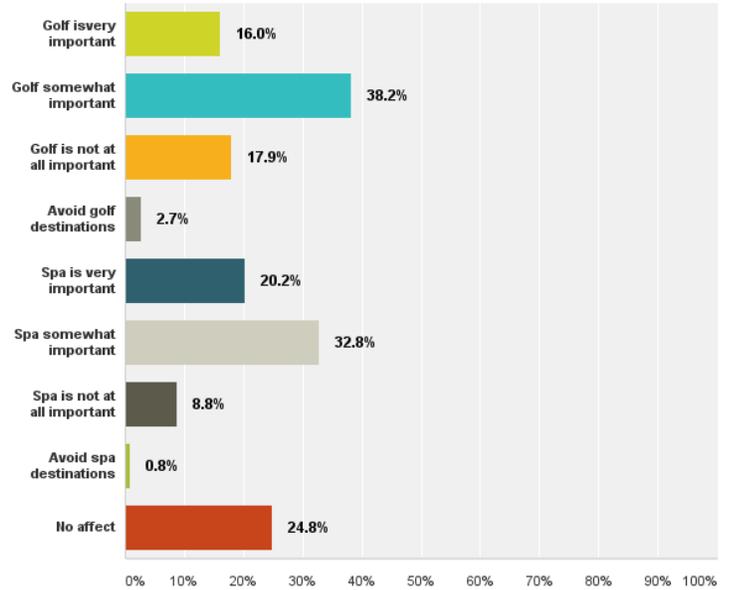
Q7 Which of the following INTERNATIONAL destinations are the most popular for your incentive travel programs in 2015? (Select up to 3 responses) In the blank space, please include the most exotic international destinations you are offering this year.

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0



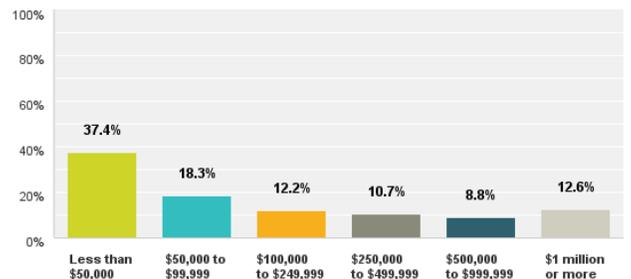
Q8 How do the availability of golf and spa affect your choice of a destination? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0



Q9 What is your entire organization's annual incentive travel budget for 2015? If you plan incentive travel programs for other organizations (i.e., you are an independent planner), please consider the budgets for all of the incentive travel programs you plan.

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0

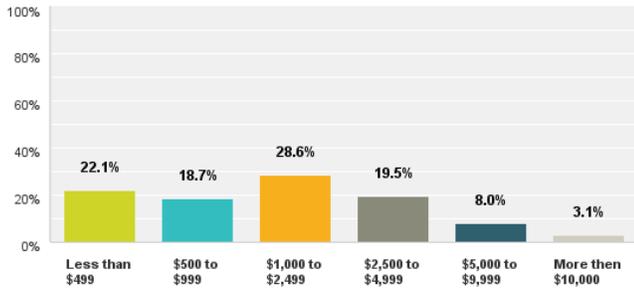


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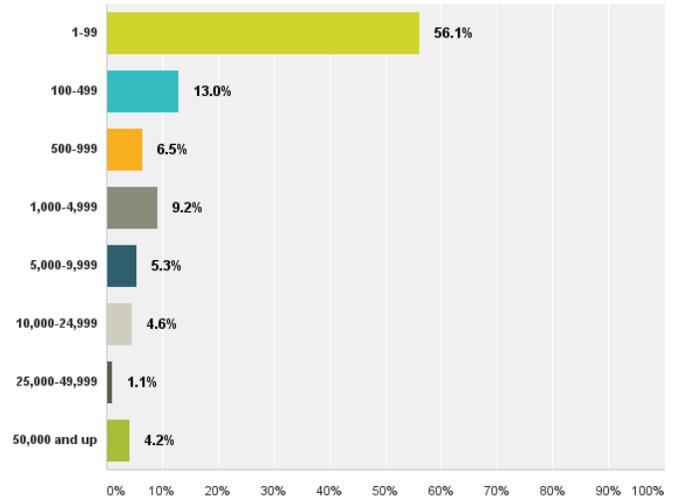
Q10 On average, how much will you spend on incentive travel awards per recipient in 2015?

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0



Q13 Approximately how many people are employed by your company?

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0



Q11 Which of the following best describes your organization's business/industry?

Answered: 262 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
Advertising /Promotional agency	5.0% 13
Full-service incentive house	5.7% 15
Full-service incentive marketing	4.2% 11
Incentive travel fulfillment company	5.3% 14
Manufacturing	12.2% 32
Wholesaler/Distributor/ Retailer	14.9% 39
Service/Institution /Utility/Transportation	8.0% 21
Medical/Healthcare	6.5% 17
Insurance/Finance/Banking/Real Estate	9.2% 24
Social/Government/Military/Education	3.1% 8
Communications	3.8% 10
Pharmaceutical	1.1% 3
Technology	6.9% 18
Other (please specify)	14.1% 37
Total	262