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## **Solve Your Incentive Problems Online**

Sales organizations interested in new ideas and approaches to lighting a motivational fire under the sales team will often tap the services of an outside consulting firm. Unlike most upper-level sales executives, these consultants typically have a wealth of experience with people performance management and expertise in the best practices for developing effective programs suited to meet each client's specific needs.

As Vice President of Domestic & Global Sales for the Chicago-based Hinda Incentives ([www.hinda.com](http://www.hinda.com)), one of the nation's top incentives solutions providers, Bill Termini has consulted with hundreds of clients in a range of industries over the years. He says that the best customers are eager to take advantage of the expert advice that an independent firm can bring to the process. Not all customers are so open-minded, he notes.

"I remember a program we did a few years ago with a major pharmaceutical company," he says. "This company had a marketing manager who wanted to do a program that was not Web-based and he wanted to use an interesting media for the points, poker chips specifically. We tried to talk him out of it for a number of reasons, but primarily because these poker chips were so easily counterfeited. We advised them against this approach but they went ahead with it anyway, and, as we said they would, people wound up counterfeiting the chips and the program had to be terminated prematurely."

Such a program would be ideal, Termini acknowledges, if the organization's goal were to determine which members of a sales team are prone to dishonesty. But most sales organizations are more interested in achieving direct bottom-line results than rooting out potential cheaters.

Thankfully, Termini observes, Web-based solutions have helped alleviate the problem of finding an appropriate medium for registering and charting participants' progress. "The whole validation process has become a non-concern," he says, "thanks to the claim verification we do, along with all the other backups that we have for closely monitoring a program. There are no physical media like certificates or, thankfully, poker chips. Now participants just get a bank statement like they do with airline frequent-flier points. They're used to that kind of statement and reporting. The human element that can cause mistakes is taken out of the program."

In fact, Termini adds, online solutions offer sales organizations running incentive programs a range of advantages over traditional paper-based approaches. "With Web-based programs, clients can see more quickly who is succeeding, where the challenges are with the program, and where tweaks need to be made," he says. "They can do it on an hourly or daily basis. Then at the end they get the final results much more promptly,

so they can accurately assess where their return on investment has been.”

And since few clients claim any expertise in creating or running Web-based incentive programs, Termini says the problem of excessive client interference in proven methods has dropped considerably. “With electronic programs it’s a non-issue,” he says. “We’re now looked upon as subject matter experts and they’re much more willing to take our advice, with less client creativity and more agency creativity.”