

# Zebra Technologies Promotes

## Engagement with Unique Incentives



### The Company

A provider of state-of-the-art printer technologies and solutions to identify, track, and manage the deployment of critical assets for improved business efficiency.

### The Goal

To motivate employees to become involved in their company's innovation efforts, and to encourage them to consistently put their best ideas forward.

### The Results

Employees are driven to continue partaking in the innovation program at Zebra; in the process they "earn their stripes" as the company's most prolific, effective innovators.

Rewards and recognition perform a number of important roles in an idea management program. By rewarding contributions, people are encouraged to take part in the program, and keep coming back again and again. Recognizing contributions, on the other hand, results in participants who generate high quality ideas and insight.

Zebra Technologies has participants literally

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- Dean Lodwig, Director, Engineering Ideation, Zebra Technologies

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earning their stripes in a recognition program that demonstrates a key distinction: in the end, people should be recognized for their achievements, not just paid for them.

### Creating value

Zebra Technologies provides innovative bar code and specialty label printing solutions, including printers, supplies and software. It has sold more than 7.5 million

printers to customers in more than 100 countries. Since 2005 Zebra Technologies has used Imaginatik's software solution, Idea Central™, to host online events to improve employee morale, create and improve product, and improve customer service. Zebra hosts three types of events: Targeted, with 90 to 900 employees participating; Company Wide, involving about 2,500 people; and Ongoing, an "any idea at any time" event. All three types are promoted with posters, newsletters, e-mails, and through the Zebra Intranet site.

Dean Lodwig and Dennis Slattery, engineers at Zebra, are part of Zebra's innovation team that has implemented the unique reward system to spur people's contributions. The currency that participants earn is called "stripes," a natural for a company like Zebra. A person will earn 10 Stripes for each comment or idea, and 100 bonus Stripes for the top idea in an event. The more that associates contribute to the program, the more "Stripes" they earn. Once earned, Stripes can never be lost.

When the innovator attains 250 Stripes, he or she receives a Zebra Innovator trophy consisting of a base and four "Zebra unique" Lego bricks. They started with black and white Lego blocks, then used a special prototyping machine to etch the Zebra logo into the blocks.

"We created something unique that you couldn't just get anywhere...that meant something to our people," Lodwig said.

As a result, the company has a few "Idea Champions" who regularly contribute their innovative thinking, while many more employees add to the collaborative environment at Zebra, called the "Innovation Station." To date, Zebra associates have earned more than 52,000 Stripes. The top contributor has earned more than 1,300.

## Rewards done right

At Zebra, individuals are given recognition in a consistent manner. This is because Stripes are awarded partially based on general contribution activity, rather than solely on the quality of ideas. A points-based (or in Zebra's case, Stripes-based) system will not only reward new ideas but also encourage people to build on others' ideas and remind them they are a key part of the overall idea-generating activity.

Using Idea Central's Rewards Module, Zebra has created an ongoing tracking system for each user's Stripes. The module can be configured to automatically alert administrators when configured thresholds have been reached. The administrator can also define specific rules to stimulate a desired type of behavior among participants.

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