

# Right-Sized Rewards...a.k.a the Art of Making Everyone Feel Rewarded When Team Member Contributions Range from Occasional to Significant

By Jennifer Katus, PMP

Team members' contributions to your project range from occasional to significant. Now it's time to hand out rewards. What should you do? Our sense of meritocracy and fairness tell us some people deserve a bigger reward than others, but how do we pull that off? Here are some suggestions.

## Think Tele-a-thons!

People are familiar with receiving bigger rewards for bigger contributions. Think about tele-a-thons. People who donate \$1000 get a more expensive and higher quality gift than people who donate \$10. In fact, charities use gift scales to solicit larger donations. How? They advertise completely transparent rules about who gets what. Big donors get a TV. Small donors get a t-shirt.

You can establish similar 'Right-Sized Rewards' for your project team. For example, team members who spent 50% of their time on the project get the gold tier reward. Team members who put in a few hours a month get a bronze tier reward. To manage everyone's expectations, communicate completely transparent rules about who gets what.

## Solicit Input

People will understand and appreciate the fairness of Right-Sized Rewards if you make sure each person's contributions are accurately categorized. If you are a Program Manager on a large initiative, it's very likely you do not have first-hand knowledge of each team member's contributions. In this situation, solicit the input of the project manager or team lead who is most familiar with each person's level of contribution. Utilize the same 'contribution scale' when assessing each person's contribution to ensure full fairness.

## Resist the Urge to Use Tokens

I once worked for a company that tried to make the Reward Task easier by selecting one representative from each team as the token who received the reward for the whole team. The reward was sizable and not easily sub dividable. The results were abysmal. Significant contributors who were not selected as the token felt slighted. The person who was selected as the token felt guilty. An honest gesture to reward employees turned into a point of contention for everyone involved. The company would have been better off giving the same small reward to everyone. Instead their shortcut created a lot of resentment.

## One-Size Does Not Fit All

A reward structure that works for one project in an organization may not work for another project in the same organization. Organizational traditions, budgets, project nature, and team preferences all need to

be considered and balanced to derive a custom approach for each project. This takes time, but it's time well-spent to maintain morale and to prevent rewards from backfiring.

### Some Options for Right-Sized Rewards

There is not absolute answer for Right-Sized Rewards. Tap into your creativity to devise the best approach for your situation. Here are a few options.

#### >Same Gift for All + Something Extra for Significant Contributors.

Set a tone of equality by giving the same appropriate gift to everyone. Then give an additional gift to Significant Contributors, so their extra efforts don't go unnoticed. The "Something Extra" can be an additional gift or a free lunch or dinner.

#### >Party for all + Gift for Significant Contributors.

Post-project parties are beneficial to team morale. To promote transparency, you can give a gift to Significant Contributors during a rewards ceremony at the party. Or the gifts can be openly distributed immediately before or after the party.

#### >Similar Gifts for All but an Upscale Version for Significant Contributors.

For example, everyone gets a time piece. Occasional Contributors get a digital desk clock. Significant Contributors get a personalized wrist watch.

#### >Subdividable Gifts.

A gift basket filled with goodies can be shared by all members of a team. Just make sure it's large enough and delivered on a day and time when everyone is around.

### Challenging but Worthwhile

It's no wonder many managers shy away from giving rewards. When you consider all the nuances to balance and the time required to find and select a reward, gift-giving can be downright daunting. However, a team that's well rewarded will continue to excel for you and your organization. Morale matters - and that's what makes Right-Sized Rewards worthwhile.



**Gifts, ideas, and mementos to inspire and reward project teams.**



- Kick start your momentum
- Establish a team identity
- Celebrate milestones
- Reward success

**promomento.com**    **1-877-628-4646**

Promomento is a division of ClearLaunch Consulting LLC.  
Owned and operated by a PMP.