

2011 BEST PRACTICES

The 'Irrelevance' Issue

VacationLand FCU Seeks To Move To Top of Mind

KY, Ohio—Credit unions may struggle with awareness and misconceptions about their products, but one CU believes it's actually a competitive advantage that is often overlooked.

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more current in the

and banks and why credit unions are a better

alternative.

The CAS goes out into the community distributing

incentives that range from pizza for kids after school,

to movie tickets, to gift cards.

The group rides in the cube—a small van with glass walls

that allow people to watch what's going on inside,

like teens playing Xbox 360.

Ralofsky said "guaranteeing the union's future success."

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TruStone worked with Eden Prairie, Minn.-based vendor Incentive Services to come up with a program designed specifically for the CU. As part of that TruStone has a website (designed by IS, but with TruStone's branding) where employees can log in and keep track of their progress.

the credit union on Facebook, has 263 Twitter followers, and its 23 YouTube video uploads have netted 2,564 views.

CUSO is Formed
VacationLand FCU has successfully re-

... "We're having a very good year," said Stahlmann. "It's working very well for us, and the staff seems to be very happy with the programs, so it is definitely assisting us in planning ahead."

provides marketing services to credit unions. Ralofsky emphasized that CU* Answers played a key role in VacationLand's success, particularly around the social media components.
For info: www.cuanswers.com.

—Ray Birch

Tru-ly Rewarding

Show Me The Money? Nah, What Else You Got?

PLYMOUTH, Minn.—After instituting a new sales and service culture in January and tying it to an employee-incentive program, TruStone Financial FCU here has seen a 56% year-to-date increase in its membership numbers—and that was prior to all the hubbub around Bank Transfer Day.

As a result, TruStone is being recognized as a *Credit Union Journal* "Best Practice" winner in the Incentive Programs category.

Jim Stahlmann, COO at the \$678-million, 58,000-member CU, explained that while the credit union began life as Teacher FCU, in 2009 it rebranded itself as TruStone as a way to expand beyond its teacher-teachers' union member base.

"But we discovered once we did change the name that we didn't find the growth we were looking for, and last year, in 2010, we shrunk in membership."

Stahlmann and CEO Tim Bosiacki were brought on in 2010 to help turn the ship around.

Stahlmann said TruStone recognized that "money isn't always the best motivator," and as a result sought to develop an incentive program based around specific prizes. It seems to be working, according to Stahlmann: "I might say we're having a very good year."

As of Oct. 31, TruStone has increased its total business portfolio by \$23.1 million, grown its loan portfolio by \$11.9 million, upped its deposit portfolio by \$11.2 million and added 3,000 new members. The average total relationship per member is \$7,715.

Employees earn points for referring new members, referring loans, opening accounts and more, and points go toward specific prizes. Since the program was instituted, TruStone reps have earned barbecue grills, iPads, Bose sound systems, Dyson vacuum cleaners, laptop computers and more.

"The idea of this is to get something really cool for yourself that you wouldn't normally get," said Stahlmann. "If you get paid in cash, you end up spending it at the grocery store."

Ability to Tweak

TruStone worked with Eden Prairie, Minn.-based vendor Incentive Services to come up with a program designed specifically for the CU. As part of that TruStone has a website (designed by IS, but with TruStone's branding) where employees can log in and keep track of their progress. "People can look on an hourly basis if they feel like it and see where they are and how close they are to that item they want," said Katie Grindeland, TruStone's marketing manager.

Stahlmann pointed out that one of the benefits of the incentive program is that it can be tweaked depending upon the CU's needs.

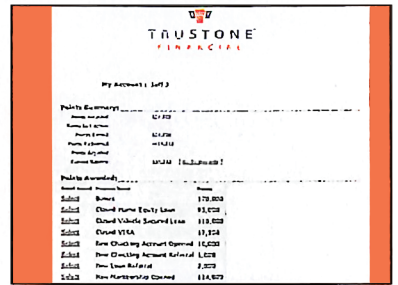
"If all of a sudden we're getting plenty of car loans but need equity loans, we can change the points," he said. "We started simply, with just memberships, feeling that if you just gain the members, the rest will come."

TruStone officials have made minor changes to the program throughout the year, and will continue to shift things around moving into 2012.

"We're having a very good year," said Stahlmann. "It's working very well for us, and the staff seems to be very happy with the programs, so it is definitely assisting us in planning ahead."

"Originally we started with just membership referrals, and as the staff is getting used to the sales culture we're laying out, we're starting to add more parts," added Grindeland. "So all of a sudden they get points for checking accounts; as they get used to this sales culture they've never really had before, they can start strengthening their own sales skills."

—Aaron Passman



A sample rewards statement at TruStone Financial FCU.



FCU's 'cuBe' vehicle.

"Otherwise they will

edit union updated so

se brighter colors for

ts logo, revamped its

ent, fun, and entertaining, and made