

Incentive Program
Assessment helps
GROWMARK Better
Support Member
Companies

The Challenge

GROWMARK, a leading agricultural cooperative providing agriculture-related products and services across North America, has been running its incentive programs for nearly seven decades with great success for both the business and employees who achieve their sales and marketing goals. However, GROWMARK’s executive leadership team — always with an eye on continuous improvement — wanted to validate they were getting the most from their incentive program investment and not just simply rewarding the same qualifiers year over year.

GROWMARK has worked with Design Studio, by Maritz Global Events for years, focused solely on the award experience for their incentive qualifiers. So, when it came time to assess overall program performance it was an obvious step for the GROWMARK team to seek Design Studio’s partnership.

THE GROWMARK ASSESSMENT TOOK A THREE-PHASE APPROACH

Phase 1: **Diagnostics**

First, the Design Studio team dove right in to diagnose current performance and satisfaction of the program.

To accomplish this, a Design Studio expert on incentive program design evaluated budgets, performance data and satisfaction reports to identify risks and opportunities. The findings of this were then validated in a series of interviews with key stakeholders.

This diagnostic touchpoint evaluated:

- 1 Business background, program objectives, challenges and opportunities
- 2 An in-depth review of GROWMARK’s strategic objectives, marketing materials and program materials targeted to member companies
- 3 Financial impact of member company attainment of targets in each product category

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We discovered that we had a big opportunity to do more onboarding of our incentive program participants. The research and analysis provided by Design Studio has shown how we can more effectively drive performance through goal setting and achievement.

DANA WEAVER, CIS, CITP

SR. MANAGER, MARKETING SERVICES
GROWMARK



Phase 2: **Insights**

At the Design Studio we believe deeply in the idea of applying the thinking of the product design & marketing lifecycle to event design and experience strategy. Great product designers are capturing and incorporating user feedback with regular cadence and using the insights gained to drive consistent improvement.

FOR GROWMARK, THIS MEANT THE DESIGN STUDIO UTILIZED A DESIGN STUDY TO GAIN VOICE OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANT. THE CUSTOM DESIGN STUDY FOCUSED ON GAINING THE INSIGHT NEEDED TO INFORM FUTURE STATE DESIGN.

The study was administered with general managers and salespeople within member companies, with areas of focus on:

- Attitudes toward programs as well as toward GROWMARK's products and brand
- Attitudes toward event experiences, programs, travel options and motivation preferences
- Building out participant profiles-based values and personality types which serve as the foundation for persona development.

What did the study tell us?

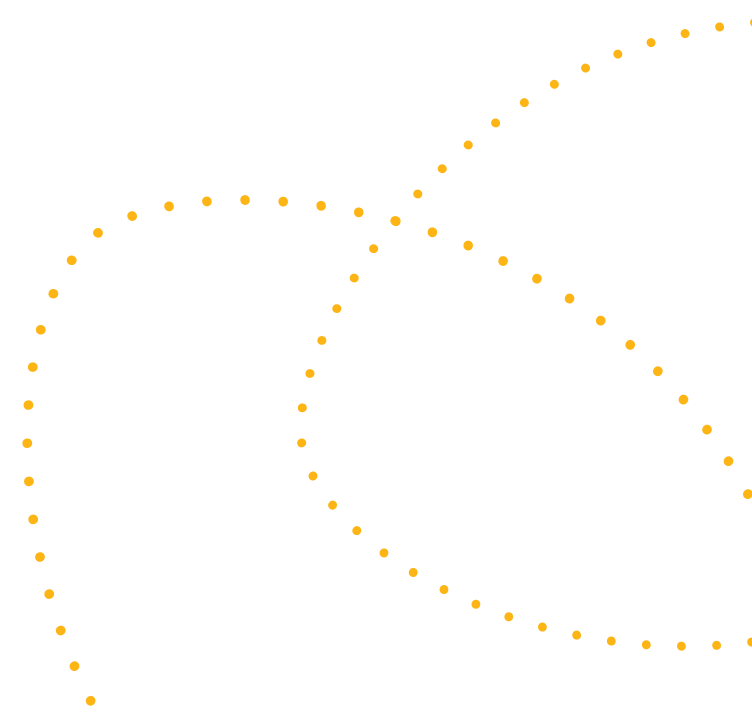
A total of 498 member company salespeople and managers — or 38% of all eligible travel roles — participated in the survey, which confirmed the popularity of GROWMARK's reward and recognition travel. Of all program elements reviewed in the study, award trip appeal and general program communications were rated highest. Appropriateness of rules and objectives, personal progress updates, promotional materials and timeliness of rules and objectives communications rated lowest.

The study indicated an opportunity to improve coaching to help individual salespeople plan how to hit a goal and the importance of communicating goals via a personal manager communication (vs. email or other methods).

These findings were in line with what the Design Studio team discovered in the interviews conducted during the assessing phase. They indicated:

- GROWMARK does a great job of communicating program details and operating a top-notch travel experiences, but member companies could do more to support the program.
- General Managers and individual salespeople felt better program focus could be attained through more consistent member company kickoff meetings, ongoing team meetings, personal communications of sales objectives and consistent tracking of progress toward objectives.

At the same time, most member companies acknowledged the importance of driving the right behaviors through the program — with the top behaviors noted as staying sales focused and delivering on customer experience.



Phase 3: **Design**

To help address gaps in member company implementation of program communications, objective setting, strategic planning, coaching, recognizing milestone achievements and continuous follow-up, Design Studio worked collaboratively with GROWMARK to create a Program Playbook with valuable program management guidelines for General Managers and other management levels at all member companies. This was developed to ensure consistency across all touchpoints and all organizations, while also focusing on addressing the program participants' biggest pain points.

AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE OF “DOING THE RIGHT THING” SAT AT THE CENTER OF THE PROGRAM’S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK.

With that driving the ideation, the following actions were taken to contribute to sales success:

- 1 Ensure salespeople have good target lists and they are getting to the right people who value what GROWMARK does, or who can be coached about our offer and become value buyers (vs. price buyers)
- 2 Build in accountability for ongoing sales development activities
- 3 Hold weekly conference calls to focus on who is being called
- 4 Pre-call planning: asking the right questions and understanding needs
- 5 Long-term planning: adopting technology, succession planning
- 6 Focus on customer experience, add value, focus on multi-product sales

Design recommendations included new program structure considerations that incorporate extensive clarity on desired success drivers and behaviors into the program scoring system, and a scoring methodology that benchmarked member company goals to share of market vs. one-size-fits-all growth goals for all companies.

The Incentive Assessment and Design Study results provided GROWMARK with valuable insights to strengthen and deepen its relationships with member companies. The Program Playbook provided member companies with valuable tools to improve the performance of their salespeople.

NEED MORE? LET'S CHAT!

Let's discuss your challenges and see how we can assist you in designing a custom journey that leaves the right impression at every step of the way.

[Schedule a free discovery call with a member of our team.](#)