

## IDIOSYNCRATIC FIT: THE SECRET TO MOTIVATING AVERAGE SALESPEOPLE TO ACHIEVE **TOP** PERFORMANCE

Walter Ruckes, Vice President, Sales & Channel Engagement,  
BI WORLDWIDE

According to behavioural economics professors Dr. Ran Kivetz and Dr. Itamar Simonson, a major reason individuals choose which incentive or loyalty programme to join is based on whether or not they identify an **idiosyncratic fit**.

Idiosyncratic fit is the feeling that you enjoy a unique advantage in achieving a goal, making a sale, beating an opponent, or completing a task. If you are a sales executive, this is a secret weapon you need to know how to use. Every time a salesperson on your team is offered a new incentive or opportunity, they ask themselves two questions to determine if the opportunity "fits" them:

- 1 Do I believe I have an advantage over others in the programme?**
- 2 Are the rewards worth the effort?**

When individual members of your team answer yes to these two questions they are most likely to join, and succeed, in a specific programme. Convert unproductive behaviours to productive ones using the two questions above, you will move your middle performers in the right direction in as little as two months.

Failure to find this idiosyncratic fit results in reduced confidence and lack of engagement by your sales team. Managers who celebrate and reward only top performers will find themselves frustrated in their efforts and wondering why they aren't hitting their goals.

### **Idiosyncratic fit:**

the feeling of enjoying a unique advantage in achieving a goal, making a sale, beating an opponent, or completing a task.

Here's an example: You announce an exciting new incentive programme for your team where the top salespeople earn an iPad. 80% of your sales reps don't pay attention because they don't have a chance to win. And 50% already have an iPad. No idiosyncratic fit. No behaviour change. No results.

### **Finding the fit**

Conventional wisdom says that top performers are intrinsically motivated to perform, achieve and win. But translating that motivation into action doesn't happen magically. Somewhere along the way, top performers find their idiosyncratic fit. They quickly and naturally identify how they have the edge over their fellow salespeople – and the competition.

It's not that average and low performers aren't intrinsically motivated to succeed, they just have a harder time translating their motivation into action. In other words, **they need help finding their own unique fit**.

As a sales executive, frame your conversations and discussions in a way that helps each individual identify the advantages they have to perform, achieve and win.

### **Ways to set your team up for success:**

#### **Segmented Communications**

Segment your communications to each individual with a personalised message about how they are performing. They will naturally compare themselves to others, but they need help challenging themselves.

#### **Account or Area Assignments**

Make sure each sales rep knows why they are being assigned specific accounts or areas, then work with them to identify what it is about those accounts that will allow them to achieve success.

#### **Choice of Goals**

Research shows that if you give sales reps a choice of goals for a short-term incentive, over 50% will choose the highest goal offered because they think it's achievable.

#### **Beating the Competition**

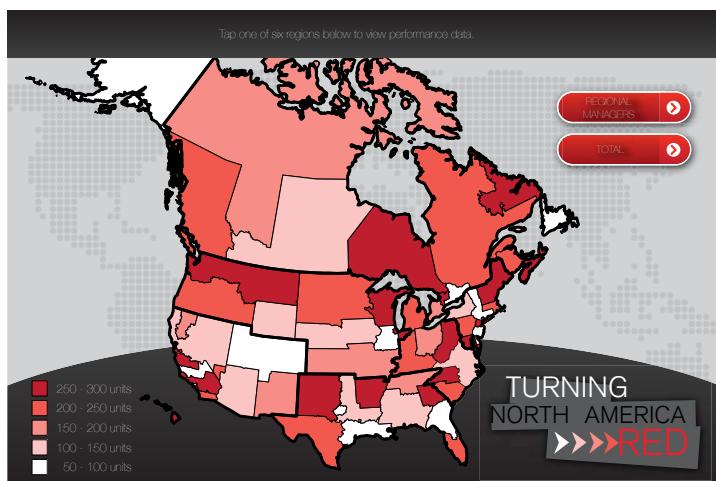
During the bidding and sales process, help salespeople identify differentiators that will allow your product/solution/company to beat the competition.

#### **Sales Training**

Ensure that salespeople understand how the training can help them personally. Be sure they leave each learning opportunity with a personalised plan and an understanding of how the training can help them succeed.

#### **Compensation Plan**

Ensure you have the right mix of salary, commission, benefits and incentives. Different industries and types of sales positions have a different "mix." The research is clear: people work for much more than just a paycheck.



### **Gamification & Idiosyncratic fit**

These days, everywhere you look sales managers are using game mechanics with their sales teams. It's a great short-term engagement strategy, but long-term, 80% of gamified applications are predicted to fail, according to Gartner. The bottom line is these efforts won't pay any dividends unless they are grounded in long-lasting behaviour change. They will be the equivalent of feeding sweets to kids to produce a frenzy of activity – but the only result will be the inevitable sugar crash shortly after.

And just like kids in a sweet shop, you need your middle (average) performers to FOCUS on short-term goals that will ultimately produce long-term success.

Short-term challenges can include; rewards for selling a new product, taking a specific training course, doing field research, increasing sales presentations, or conducting a strategy session.

Including these behaviours in a short-term incentive programme can produce huge return on your time and money. These challenges will work even better if you have top performers compete against other top performers, middle against middle, and low against low. Or, have different areas of the country challenge each other. Each of these strategies gives individuals the feeling they can beat their competition – especially if the competition is internal.

Game mechanics, when applied properly, can help identify the idiosyncratic fit that's needed by your middle performers. You'll increase their confidence, and drive short-term goal achievement and long-term behavior change.

## SUMMARY

If you break down long-term goals into achievable and realistic opportunities, you'll build confidence in your average performers and allow them to answer a resounding YES to these questions:

- 1 Do I believe I have an advantage over others in the programme?**
- 2 Are the rewards worth the effort?**

Only when they identify their own idiosyncratic fit will they become more confident, more engaged and start on the path to top performance.

## Behavioural Economics 101

The graphic below shows the three keys to engaging your sales team and achieving long-term behaviour change. Accompanying each of these keys are the behavioural economics concepts that support it.

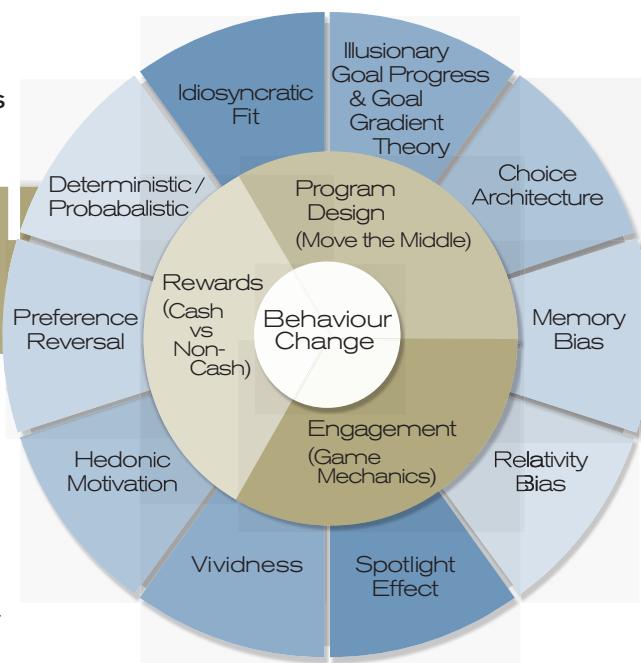
- 1 Programme Design**
- 2 Segmented Communications**
- 3 Meaningful Rewards**

### BIWORLDWIDE Approach

- Strategic + Tactical
- Tie to Behavioural Economics
- Drive Business Results

BI **WORLDWIDE** applies the science of behavioural economics to design, communicate and reward salespeople for the behaviours and results that make your organisation successful.

We offer a number of solutions to help our clients drive results.



For more information on **BI WORLDWIDE** visit: [BI WORLDWIDE.co.uk](http://BIWORLDWIDE.co.uk) or email us at [enquiries@eu.BIWORLDWIDE.com](mailto:enquiries@eu.BIWORLDWIDE.com).