

## How I Used My Gift Catalog

As part of the incentive services offered by Russell Associates, a company's employees can be rewarded and recognized for achieving specific goals and measurable good behavior. The benefits of rewarding employees include increased morale and loyalty along with performance and productivity.

Not only is the Rewards and Recognition service *offered* by Russell Associates, it is also *used* by Russell Associates, to reward its own employees! As an employee of Russell Associates myself, I'm writing this article as a testimonial; I have firsthand experience as to how much fun receiving a gift catalog can be.

I have received several gift catalogs over the years I've worked for Russell Associates. The experience is a little like looking through the Sears Christmas Catalog, as a kid. Picking out your favorite "toy" can be challenging; there are so many cool-looking things jumping out at you! The difference, of course, is that as a kid you still had to be good in order for Santa to deliver. With gift reward catalogs, you have the satisfaction of knowing you've *already* been good!



But like I said, it's never easy deciding what gift you'd like to receive. For me, always being the health-conscious (with as little work as possible) person, I tend to notice the fun-looking exercise gadgets and gizmos, first.

I'll never forget when my first gift was delivered to the townhome my family and I lived in. It came in a box about a foot long, less than that in height and width. I hadn't told Deb, my significant other, what I had ordered from the catalog, but I did tell her she'd be able to use it too. She was as excited as I was! I made her leave the room while I opened the box and assembled the item, to heighten the anticipation and add to the surprise. I called her back when I was ready. When she saw what I had, her face went from a look of excitement to disbelief. I believe her first response was "You've got to be kidding me."

"What do you mean?!" I said. "It's a standup punching bag!"

It was a blowup punching bag that stood in a water-filled base. It looked like so much fun, in the catalog! I thought surely I would get a lot of use out of this. It would be good exercise, and what macho guy doesn't like to practice the ol' one-two, left-right combo?

Well, it was fun. But after about two months the punching bag was in back in the box and stored in the garage. The next time I was given a gift catalog I thought it would be best to choose a gift a little more functional for everyone in our household. We agreed on the Pilates workout ball. I kept with that one for nearly four months! At least Deb still gets use out of it....



With the most recent gift catalog I received, I wanted to get something I could use out doors, and something that I could do with the kids. When I saw the 15-speed mountain bike, my decision was made! The bike was delivered this past winter, and when we had our first nice, spring day a few weeks ago, my 9-year old daughter begged to go on a bike ride. So, we hit some bike trails near our home. At first I was worried she wouldn't be able to keep up. I wanted to go FAST on my new bike! She also has a 15-speed mountain bike, but it's still a little big for her; her seat is set as low as it can go.

Well, we got on those trails and she was off to the races! I hadn't pedaled a bike in 10 years. It's true, you never forget how to ride a bike, but flipping through gears will take some re-acquaintance. It also takes time to get used to sitting on a skinny bike seat again. My daughter begs to go on another bike ride every day, and as soon as the feeling returns to my *gluteus maximus*, I'll get back out there with her.

Despite my lack of stick-to-itiveness when it comes to exercise, the gift and incentives catalogs have been something I've really enjoyed. From a user point of view, being able to choose items that you or your family wants is a great way to be recognized. When you use the item, you will remember why you received it and whom you received it from.

The merchandise is high quality with a wide variety of categories to choose from. Because of my personal experiences, we often use the gift and incentive catalogs for wedding gifts, birthdays, anniversaries, and new babies. They are very versatile and easy to use. The recipient will select something they really want and will remember who gave it to them. It's a "win-win combination".

Incentive catalogs are a great way to recognize employees. I'm already looking forward to being rewarded with another gift catalog. I've got my choices narrowed down to the hand weight set.... or the box of New York Strip steaks. If only I had more incentive to stick with the exercise!