

GIFT CARD PIONEERS

the Delta Air Lines Gift Card Program

*By Matt Davies
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**OUR
MANTRA**

*Making Delta easier
to do business with*

RETAIL MERCHANTS HAVE WHOLEHEARTEDLY EMBRACED GIFT CARDS AS A TRAFFIC DRIVER, A REVENUE LIFTER, A WAY TO FIND NEW CUSTOMERS AND A POWERFUL CONSUMER PROMOTIONAL TOOL. GIFT CARDS HAVE BECOME A WAY FOR RETAILERS TO ENABLE THEIR CUSTOMERS TO EMBRACE AND GIFT THEIR BRAND IN A CHALLENGING AND COMPETITIVE INDUSTRY ENVIRONMENT.

Travel, on the other hand, has extremely limited gift card options and some of the biggest brands have underdeveloped or nonexistent gift card programs. Particularly for travel and hospitality brands, the complexity of their distribution networks and revenue accounting systems create a longer, more thoughtful path to launching a robust gift card program. Any travel company strategic enough to develop a gift card program at this point

IS A PIONEER IN THE INDUSTRY.

Delta Air Lines is one of these pioneers. In May 2013, Delta launched an online “eGift Certificate”, redeemable only for ticket purchases. With limited initial marketing and only a homepage image and link, the program allowed Delta customers to send the gift of travel digitally. The benefits of this eGift product prompted further exploration into the gift card scene with the advice and assistance of gift card consulting firm Powerhouse Brands, which prompted the addition of a physical card and a foray into the B2B space.

THE CARD HAS BEEN VERY POPULAR

said Heather Abbott, Director of Partnerships at Powerhouse Brands. “We have had incredible

response and excitement from B2B partners taking the card.”

“Great Lakes Scrip Center is proud to be one of the early B2B partners offering Delta Air Lines physical and electronic gift cards, launching in late April of this year.

DELTA IS CURRENTLY OUR ONLY PARTICIPATING AIRLINE

and the addition has been very well received by non-profit organizations utilizing scrip fundraising. Sales of Delta gift cards are off to a great start, and we anticipate continued growth as we move into the new school year. We believe there is considerable potential for the travel category as a whole in the B2B gift card space, and expect Delta’s efforts and success will lead to increased participation,” said Jill Whalen, Vice President of Retail Partnerships at Great Lakes Scrip.

To assist with the production and fulfillment processes of a growing gift card program, Delta chose MT&L, a prominent US card printer, to manage printing, personalization, and shipping. “We were able to craft a solution that allowed Delta to produce cards on demand onto pre-printed shells. It enables us to fulfill B2B orders very quickly and met Delta’s needs for a quick and effective solution” said Jeff Weatherly, MT&L.

Delta’s plan doesn’t stop with the introduction of the gift card into the B2B space. “We’re looking at all areas of the business. Our mantra is ‘Making Delta easier to do business with’” said Todd Richards, General Manager of Global Payment Acceptance.

“The vision is to offer a traditional gift card that allows consumers to redeem for any products and services that Delta offers including seat upgrades, in-flight food and beverage, entertainment, Delta Sky Club admission, baggage fees and other ancillary items.”

ENHANCING THE VALUE OF THE DELTA GIFT CARD IS VERY IMPORTANT

and we are committed to building awareness while keeping customer satisfaction high,” said Richards. “Our goal is to have a best-in-class program that is an industry staple.”

“The Delta team is a true pioneer and the team is very unique. They are heavily engaged in the industry, ready to make things happen, and interested in developing and marketing their program in a special and interesting way. The Delta program will do well” said Matt Davies, CEO of Powerhouse Brands. ■