

# VISA INCENTIVE CARDS



**J**im Campanella, owner of Lawn Dawg Inc., spent 27 years in the landscape business before striking out on his own in 1997. He started with one office in New Hampshire, and now serves 17,000 customers from seven locations in the Northeast.

“It’s going well,” he says. “We’ve been very fortunate. We’re surrounded by good people.”

The company uses non-traditional lawn care treatments. All their fertilizers are custom-blended with organic biosolids and synthetic fertilizers to help improve the quality of the lawns over the long term, rather than just feed the grass.

Lawn Dawg is also community-minded. They participate in GreenCare for Troops, which cares for the lawns of service men and women who are deployed overseas — free of charge.

Since the beginning of 2011, Campanella has been experimenting with a non-traditional marketing program.

## Non-traditional marketing builds loyalty among customers and employees.

BY JANET AIRD

“We’ve always had a referral program for our customers and an internal recognition program for our long-term employees,” he explains. This year, he’s been rewarding some of his customers for referrals with customized, prepaid Visa incentive cards from Incentive CardLab instead of gift certificates. He’s also giving the Visa cards to employees to reward them for their years of service. Other companies use the cards to build customer loyalty and reward employees for their attendance, sales milestones or other accomplishments, according to Incentive CardLabs.

“We’ve probably given out a few hundred

cards to customers,” Campanella says. The cards for a referral were prepaid with \$50 in the early spring, and \$25 later in the season. Employees receive \$20 cards on their first anniversary and an additional \$20 every year they’re with the company.

Gift certificates for customers have always been redeemable for Lawn Dawg’s landscaping services. But recipients of the prepaid cards can use them to buy anything, anywhere Visa debit cards are accepted — in restaurants, in stores and online.

“This adds more value for the customers,” he says.

For the company, the main advantage of the cards is the marketing opportunity. Lawn Dawg’s colors and logo are on its Visa card, so they’re displayed whenever customers use it. For customers who don’t use their own design, Incentive CardLab has a selection of templates, and the company also custom-designs cards. The cards are available in denominations from \$5 to \$2,500, and arrive in a personalized envelope — another marketing opportunity.

Campanella orders them online, from a few to a few dozen at a time. They take a few weeks to arrive. The recipients activate them.

At \$5.95 plus the prepaid amount, each card costs a little more than a gift certificate, Campanella says, but the value of a referral is much greater. He’ll decide whether the program is a success when he compares the number of referrals the company received in the first six months of this year with the number it received in the first six months of 2010.

“If it’s the lowest cost per sale, it’s still the best value for us,” he says.

For more information about Incentive CardLab, visit [IncentiveCardLab.com](http://IncentiveCardLab.com).

*The author is based in Altadena, CA.*



Incentives like these gift cards build customer loyalty and create referral opportunities.

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