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## Senior Ambassador Programs Installment 3

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### Discounts, Give Aways, Prizes and Bonuses

#### Discounts:

Most discounts are given as dollars off and percentage off. Both are virtually the same but are perceived differently by consumers. Obviously, the main question is discount off of what. One highly used value option is the discount off from a package that the studio selects (not the highest or the lowest). Key to the overall success of your ambassador program is value, i.e. *will seniors in your demographic market be motivated by your discounts, give aways, prizes and bonuses to sign up as an ambassador*. Results from our research show a huge variance in discounts from \$10 to \$100 awarded for each ambassador's referral.

Studios sometimes make the mistake in thinking that it costs \$100 to give a \$100 discount by relating profit and revenue as the same. Let us look at a simple example: most studios price 3-8x10 units at \$100 retail. Lab cost for the 3 units is \$5.55 or 3x \$1.85. So in reality you are only giving away \$5.55 not \$100. Now, let us assume that your studio does 4 mailings per year to 4 high schools. The third and fourth mailing is a simple postcard mailed out to 1200 seniors at a cost of \$500. Historically, each mailing results in 20 seniors photographed. You have spent \$25 (\$500/20) to obtain each of these seniors. Why not start your discounts at \$25 for each ambassador's referral?

Research indicates that \$25 is not enough incentive in some areas of the country. Some studios use their *sitting average* as a barometer to establish incentive discounts by answering a simple question. How much would they be willing to pay to obtain 25 to 45 additional sittings they would never have had if it were not for the ambassador program? Example: 25x\$400 sitting average equals \$10,000 revenue. Most studios would gladly trade the actual discount cost of 25 sittings (25x\$5.55 lab bill = \$138.75) for \$10,000 in additional revenue. Would you?

Notice: student athletes functioning as an ambassador may be in conflict with states' amateur status as specified by the Interscholastic Athlete Association. Check the rules in your state to save grief for both yourself and the athlete.

Some studios have used "give aways" to increase the interest for being an ambassador. The ambassador's display folio is often given away as a bonus or sold at a minimum charge for achieving certain levels of success. A free family wall portrait is sometimes used to get the parents involved. Parents can be motivated too. Make sure your ambassadors have plenty of ambassador wallets to hand out with your studios's name and telephone number on the front or on the back. Ball point pens with your studio's logo, name and telephone number always

make a good handout because pens will always be used and can serve as a constant reminder.

### **Prizes:**

For prizes we suggest using your imagination. Movie tickets or concert tickets are great motivators. Your top ambassador should receive a special prize. The idea behind prizes is to award successes and keep motivation at a high level at your ambassador meetings. You know the Mary Kay story.

### **Bonuses:**

Not all studios use a bonus plan. A money card from a good local department store works fine as a motivator. Dollar value is up to you.

Rule of thumb: at 10 referrals from an ambassador your appreciation needs to be demonstrated in great prizes and bonuses. Recruiting future ambassadors will be a lot easier if the junior class knows the rewards are high and well worth the effort. Do not worry that you may have too many ambassadors - you should be so lucky.

Be unique with your discounts, give aways, prizes and bonuses, especially if your competition is using ambassador programs.

## **Ambassador Sitzings and Means of Presentation**

Most consumers shop at retail stores by casually looking over the merchant's merchandise. In contrast senior consumers rarely just walk into a professional studio to look around at wall displays and frame selections. Your ambassador program places your photographic skills on display by means of folios that ambassadors take to school. Ambassador folios must illustrate your best skills in posing and lighting. New props are secondary.

From our lab's printing over the years we can share the following observations:

1. Each ambassador folio collection should contain at least 24 poses with multiple clothing changes to add variety. A mix of indoor and outdoor poses is preferred. *Note: the use of the word "collection" not proofs.*
2. Do not over use same props from one clothing change to the next.
3. Be sure to include several black and whites.
4. Use some of your new poses to assess acceptance. *Example: if close up head shots are the "in" pose in your area use it, but perhaps with a new twist.*
5. Some studios are opting for 8x10 collage pages vs. single 4x5's.

Photographing ambassadors in February and March allow you plenty of time to get the expressions and the look you want to illustrate to your local high schools. Adding a mix of model poses is also recommended. Check fashion magazines for poses. Keep several duplicate folio sets in your studio's waiting area.

Plan out your ambassador cards well in advance. A special pose might be required to allow for text data similar to that of a business card. Or you may have a special invitation printed up as a 5x7 with a 3x5 portrait image for your ambassadors to hand out. Being unique helps your studio stand out in all that direct mail clutter that mom has to wade through. Step out of the box and let your creative juices flow. Your ambassadors will need all the help and support you can muster.

## **Use of Website**

If your website will permit the addition of your ambassador's portraits categorized by school, do so. Obviously, this step will assist your ambassadors to promote your studio. If the gurus are right the marketing battle between studios will be between websites with less emphasis placed on direct mail.

A very special feature would be to permit voting for favorite poses of your ambassadors. The total high school can be encouraged by your ambassadors to vote. This vital step increases traffic on your website while at the same time building your studio's exposure to future senior classes. Let synergy work for you to produce spontaneous, profitable momentum.

## Ambassador Meetings

You must meet with your ambassadors every two weeks to tweek your ambassador program and to motivate. Have your ambassadors conduct *share and tell* talks of their experiences. Award prizes for measured accomplishments. Serve refreshments and pizza. Remember that failure to attend meetings is grounds for being dropped from your program.

As a side note some studios hire from past ambassadors for summer help during college years or full time studio employment. You may find a bright, key studio employee with photography interests, who has chosen to live local after graduation.

## Recruitment of Future Ambassadors

Recruitment is a vital step and should always be on your agenda list. Current ambassadors should be encouraged to recommend future ambassador candidates or be given the responsibility to recruit for interviewing.

Good luck with your ambassador program. If you have any questions do not hesitate to call us at 800-777-0221 or email us at [Customer Service](#).

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[If you think a friend or studio would benefit from our newsletter, have them contact Pechman Imaging](#) to sign up.

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