

BUSINESS REFERRAL NETWORK FOR IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a global business referral network and system operated along industry line for improved productivity between manufacturers, distributors and retailers in selling and distribution of products where participants are incentivized for improved productivity by award of both monetary and non-monetary awards and bonuses. The present invention claims priority from SG 10201800374P filed on 15.01.2018.

BACKGROUND

There is always a gap in understanding of the business needs of manufacturers with distributors and retailers in any industry. The manufacturer finds that sales personnel in retail outlets do not fully know how each product works and all its features. Although sales brochures and sometimes even training in handling and selling a product is given, over time, the manufacturer finds that sales personnel are often not updated with latest product knowledge and features of new products. On the other hand, the distributor is also overwhelmed with the proliferation of many new products being offered each year and unable to thoroughly introduced and brief sales personnel in retail outlets. At the bottom of the marketing chain, the personnel at the retail outlets (hereinafter “sellers”) are not motivated to cope with the proliferation of products marketed by the manufacturers (hereinafter “vendors”) because these sales personnel are not directly compensated by the manufacturers.

While manufacturers have their own websites with product knowledge and information, the sales personnel in the retail outlets of sellers would have difficulties in finding time, scrolling through many web pages and motivation to get acquaint with the product knowledge in order to explain and sell the products of the vendors to actual users (consumers).

DISCUSSION OF PRIOR ART

The traditional method of manufacturing, distribution, marketing and selling a product involves different parties separated geographically. The manufacturer would produce goods, ship these products to a distributor in a certain region, and the distributor
5 would transport these goods to each sales location which is managed by different sales organisations.

With improvements in technology, manufacturers are able to connect with buying public through social media or even receive complaints through feedback forms (either
10 electronically or by telephone).

While the supply chain has been electronically linked, there is still much productivity to be gained from further improvements.

15 As the inventor studies the problems encountered by sellers and vendors, he discovered there were many deep-rooted problems of the traditional and current channels for production, marketing and sales could not solve: -

- Promotion of offline sales in real time
- 20 • Manufacturers/Vendor incurring advertising costs “blindly” without the ability to check the results
- Manufacturers/Vendors having unproductive warehousing sites with bad layout of products and updated stock information
- sales personnel left to their own ingenuity to promote products of vendors
- 25 • poor or no communication between vendor and sellers
- communication even among good sales performers are non-existent
- non-existence of detailed industry specific directories
- No effective system of training of sales personnel
- No feedback mechanism between sellers/sales personnel and manufacturers

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The inventor realises industry specific solutions which allows monetization of efforts put in by participants involved in the implementation of these industry specific solutions may solve the problems which have been identified. However, in order to bring all vendors, distributors and sellers together, a global business referral network has to be
5 created. This global business referral network would be able to solve the problems faced by traditional and current models of production, marketing and sales networks.

It is desirable that all disadvantages and problems presently faced by manufacturers with sellers based on current production, marketing and sales channels be overcome
10 by a system to link manufacturers/vendors and sellers and sales personnel working for these seller organisations, putting product knowledge and information from the manufacturers into the hands of sales personal in seller organisations and at the same time incentivize these sales personnel to learn about the manufacturers' products in order to be better sales persons, and resulting in improved sales and productivity.

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It is desirable that such a system be an internet based global business referral network in order to connect manufacturers in one country to all the vendors in different countries down to each sales personnel in each retail location in the sellers' organisation.

20 Such an internet based global business referral network can be realised with the use of mobile phone of each individual sales personnel enabling direct communication with the manufacturer.

However, the sales personnel in each retail location in the sellers' organisation has to
25 be incentivized and given productivity tools to learn about the products of the manufacturer and be kept up to date with the latest sales campaigns in order to be effective in selling the products of the manufacturer.

Such an internet based global business referral network linking each individual sales
30 personnel with the manufacturer must also offer incentives to the sales personnel to improve his product knowledge thus leading to improved sales productivity. Such

incentives which are to be maintained by the internet based global business referral network may be in the form of monetary and non-monetary awards.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DIAGRAMS

5 For a better understanding of the invention, its advantages, and the objects attained by its use, reference should now be made to the accompanying drawings. The accompanying drawings illustrate one or more embodiments of the invention and together with the description herein, serve to explain the workings and principles of the invention. The diagrams by no means restrict the invention to only what is shown.

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Fig 1 show a schematic presentation of global business referral network.

Fig 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E and 2G are a set of Mindmap® presentations of the problems of current sales and marketing networks and solutions offered by the global business
15 referral network to overcome such problems.

Fig 3A and 3B are a set of Mindmap® presentations of the participants in the global business referral network and their goals.

20 Fig 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E, 4F, 4G, 4H, 4I and 4J are a set of Mindmap® presentations of the components of the of the TIPS application.

Fig 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D are another set of Mindmap® presentations of the features of the global business referral network for the seller.

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Fig 6A and 6B are a set of Mindmap® presentations of the features of the global business referral network for the vendor (manufacturer) and distributor.

Fig 7 is another Mindmap® presentation of the features of the global business referral
30 network for the vendors (manufacturers) and sellers.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

The features of the global business referral network (called "TIPS") the roles and responsibilities of each party in this network and the bonuses or points awarded, recorded and maintained for each party and monetization of such bonuses or points would be explained with reference to the drawings. The global business referral network requires a global communication (Internet based) system to connect all parties within the global business referral network.

Meanings and terms given to different parties mentioned herein and who have roles/functions within the Global business referral network are given as follows: -

Seller

"Seller" is used herein to refer to a sales organization (such as retail outlet/branch of a retailer). A sales organization may be the retail outlets of a retailer or sales agent representing the manufacturer.

Sales Personnel

"Sales Personnel "refers to individual sales staff working in the sales organization. Usually such sales personnel are paid remuneration based on a fixed salary and based on sales achievement for the month.

Under the traditional sales and marketing network and channels, the manufacturer would send the products to a distributor who then sells it to the sales organisation. Any sales campaign initiated by the manufacturer in conjunction with the distributor is then advised to the sales organization which then prepares for the advertisement and promotion campaign. While there is some coordination between the manufacturer and distributor and distributor and sales organisation, the traditional sales and marketing network as well as current sales and marketing networks are static and not able to adapt to changes of the buying public. Furthermore, there is no feedback on products display, product sales and stock availability thus making the manufacturer unable to make adjustments to inventory levels and shipping plans.

Under traditional and current sales and marketing systems, the sales personnel has no contact with the vendor (manufacturer) whose products the sales personnel is tasked with promoting and selling. The sales personnel is therefore not equipped with product knowledge, nor informed about new features of new models of products nor aware of any marketing campaigns initiated by the manufacturer or distributor for the products made by the manufacturer.

Under this global business referral network, the sales personnel would be motivated and empowered to sell and promote the manufacturer's products as though the sales personnel is an extension of the manufacturer, being rewarded with monetary and non-monetary award for selling the manufacturer's products. Furthermore, the sales personnel is motivated to learn more about the manufacturer's products since even the task of learning is incentivized. Finally, under this inventive global business referral network, the sales personnel is no longer just working in a localized sales outlet, but knows there is a community of trained and well-equipped sales personnel in the region, or even in the country as well as around the world where ideas are shared through chat groups and forums, problems are shared in these chat groups and the manufacturers are able to provide inputs and receive feedback.

Vendor

The vendor is the manufacturer of products which are to be marketed by a distributor and sold through a sales organisation by sales personnel. The term "vendor "and "Manufacturer "is used herein interchangeably.

Under current and traditional sales and marketing channels, the manufacturer is distantly remote from the sales personnel and unable to motivate the sales personnel to find out more about the manufacturer's products and updates. The manufacturer is also unable to receive marketing and sales feedback directly from the sales personnel who are the best party to provide feedback to the manufacturer since the sales personnel deals with the buying public.

Traditional sales and marketing channels provide for feedback by members of buying public through letters and feedback forms or even through a feedback hotline. However, such feedback are not comprehensive and usually are negative in nature. Current sales and marketing channels have included complaints to the social media pages of the manufacturer but even then, this form of feedback are not comprehensive enough nor sufficient to include buying patterns and buying preferences to enable the manufacturer to make adjustments to on-going sales and marketing campaigns.

Distributor

The distributor acts as the intermediary between the manufacturer and the sales organization, representing the manufacturer in the region/country in dealing with the sales organization and attending to the physical tasks of shipping the goods of the manufacturer and working with the sales organization to physically send or distribute the goods of the manufacturer to each retail location managed by the sales organisation.

Operator

The operator is appointed by the industry to manage the TIPS system since the TIPS system is based by industry. Usually an Operator is appointed from one of the moderators.

The operator has the following functions: -

- a. Specifies the type of CPA companies
- b. Manages the on-line learning system
- c. Create Industry directory
- d. May also act as a moderator.

The operator has these responsibilities: -

- Vendors' database. Registering a vendor by phone number. An invitation is sent to email
- Dividing vendors by region and goods categories

- Database of regions / cities
- Database of stores. A store can be added. Checking stores for added vendors and sellers
- Goods' catalogue. Maintaining listing of goods and periodic update of items
- 5 • Moderation of payments to sellers
- Moderation of replenishing vendor's balance
- Statistics for a vendor or for a campaign.
- Use of budget, views – sales / tasks. Filtering by date or period of time
- Statistics for using the seller's application

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Moderator

A moderator is the party appointed by the vendor (manufacturer) to control tasks, sales campaigns and promotions.

- 15 It is also possible a separate moderator may be appointed for each campaign.

A Moderator manages the TIPS network or system, working with vendors to develop the TIP system for a particular industry and conducts general moderation of the participants within that industry. The moderator also specifies the types of Cost Per Action (CPA) campaigns, manages the on-line learning system, create industry directory and moderate professional communication channels. Since the TIPS system is based on monetization of effort and work, the Moderator receives a commission for managing the CPA and training systems.

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- 25 A moderator can view notifications about sales and tasks completion and can confirm or reject them. Another important function of the moderator is that the moderator acts to check and review the activities and sales records of sales personnel to counter any fraudulent or false sales reports and activity.

Other roles undertaken

The TIPS system provides for users to assume additional roles. These additional roles can be (but not limited to): cashier, consultant, etc. A retail staff may therefore select another role such as “cashier” since it is possible in a retail environment to have dual
5 roles. It is also possible for the distributor to act as “consultant “. A distributor may also take on an additional role as operator. However, some roles are disabled e.g. the role of manufacturer cannot be selected by a retail user. The selection during registration process is either granted automatically or approved by TIPS operator or moderator depending on the role selected. Depending on the roles, different parts and features of
10 the TIPS system will be enabled or disabled for the user. Consequently, the User Interface and User experience may be varied according to the user and system requirements.

Fig 1 show a schematic presentation of global business referral network. At one end of
15 this global business referral network are the consultants or retail staff in the stores of sellers. At the other end of this network are the distributors, manufacturers and vendors. The mobile application using this global business referral network links the sales personnel in the stores in the seller organisations to the manufacturers and vendors.

20 Each sales personnel joins this network based on the industry from which the manufacturer’s goods are promoted by the sales personnel. Each sales personnel would be rated by the network based on these factors: -

- By knowledge (number of tests passed)
- 25 By earned bonuses
- By expertise
- By utility to others

in the context of cities, regions, shops and store chains.
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The ratings of each sales personnel in the form of points are maintained in the network and monetised. These points may be changed at the current bank foreign exchange

rates and may be used to top up telephone balances or even to money and credited to credit cards. The points may also be converted to incentive trips to factories of manufacturers or other valuable prizes offered by vendors.

- 5 Just as there are incentives, there are also penalties when participants are dishonest. The penalties may be in the form of downgrades and the dishonest participant be even either temporarily blocked from the network or permanently banned from the network.

The sales personnel would use their mobile phone and an Mobile Phone Application (or
10 “ App“) which allows participants to see these features:

- Distribution of personal bonuses for the sale of goods
- Notification of new products or important changes.
- Payments made by the vendor for viewing.
- 15 Distance learning sales and features of products through videos, texts and webinars.
- Fees awarded to the participant for passing each test successfully.
- Collection of feedback.
- Processing and sale to the vendors, carrying our surveys.
- 20 Carrying out checks of lay out and assortment of goods
- Opportunities for advertising.
- Possibility of job vacancies in other retail locations or seller organisations.
- Catalogue of goods
- Chat room, forums, interest groups and counselling of all by all participants
- 25 Access to sectoral media, electronic trade/industry journals

Sales personnel may also see news of manufacturers and other vendors, such as: -

- Vendor’s rating for generosity
- 30 Best teaching materials

Vendors may also be able to control unauthorized interregional unauthorized transfers and also have complete remote control over the layout of goods, appearance of display of goods and stock availability.

- 5 An operator is appointed to supervise marketing and sales operations and control a particular industry or retail sector within the global business referral network.

Fig 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E and 2G are a set of a Mindmap® presentation of the problems of current sales and marketing networks and solutions offered by the global business referral network to overcome such problems.

One problem of existing business methods is the promotion of off-line sales in real time with payment for the results of such promotion. The global business referral network proposes direct sales promotion based on the principle of Cost Per Action (CPA). The operator of the global business referral network would take a commission from the manufacturer's advertisement budget and the sales personnel is awarded points based on achievement of sales targets. Therefore, by using the Global Business referral network, a sales campaign initiated by a manufacturer would be more effective for the manufacturer since the sales personnel is now directly incentivized to market the products being promoted in the promotion campaign.

Another problem of existing marketing systems is sales personnel are often left to themselves and are "bored" waiting for customers to walk into the retail stores. Communication between the vendor and sales personnel and even the retail stores are also not existent. Communication and feedback and sharing of market conditions amongst sales personnel are also lacking. Sales personnel also do not have access to detailed industry directories. Sales personnel also lack training in product knowledge and knowledge in handling the products. By using the Global Business referral network, there is direct communication between the vendor and the sales personnel. A community of sales personnel is formed, and sales personnel with high sales performance are made visible to the community of sales personnel, providing recognition and motivation to such achievers. With an on-line learning system

accessible by sales personal, sales personnel productivity would be increased as they become equipped with proper skills in handling products and advising customers professionally. Even indirect monetization is possible through awards for passing tests and recognition within the region and even recognition within an industry. Other forms of indirect monetization may be recruitment into a more prestigious sales organization or special placement in directories. As for the operator of the global Business referral network, the operator earns a commission from the manufacturer's budget for administering the training.

10 Fig 3A and 3B are a set of Mindmap® presentation of the participants in the global business referral network and their goals. The main participants are: -

The TIPS operator

The vendor

15 The Seller

The roles and responsibilities of the TIPS Operator are: -

20 Manages the TIPS system, works with vendors, develop TIPS for his industry, conduct a general moderation of all participants in the network

Specifies the types of Companies using Cost Per Action (CPA)

Manages the on-line learning and training system

Receives commission with CPA and on-line learning and training systems

Creates industry directories

25 Moderate professional communication channels

The role of the Vendor would be to place CPA companies of different types (promotion, tasks, surveys and training materials for sellers, setting the budget for the system).

30 Fig 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E, 4F, 4G, 4H, 4I and 4J are a set of Mindmap® presentation of the components of the TIPS application. The TIPS application have these main features: -

1. Control of sale of goods
This would be using QR codes. The user would be able to access QR code database and print QR Codes. Through this, control of flow of goods, assortment of goods, connection with CPA and anti fraud would be achieved.
2. United authorisation and authentication system
The authentication and authorisation system allows for users to access data and provide specific rights of access to different parts and different parties in the Global Business Referral system.
3. Cost per Action (CPA) exchange for combined offers
Users may track offers of promotional goods off line, offers of on line learning, offers of special actions including display control, assortment control, polls of buyers and sellers. The operator may also track complaints (feedback) and send invitation for points. Vendors are also divided into regions and product groups and may be grouped as regional distributors for their protection.
4. Site management for point of sale of goods.
This is to allow for addition of sites, import of data from the databases of the network for management of point of sale of goods.
5. Vendors Information Portal
Users may receive notification on new products, reference information on the new products and all goods available for sale, promotions from vendors and trade and business news for the industry and on vendors.
6. System of communication for the specific industry
This would include notifications from system administrators, direct communication with vendors, industrial chat groups and forums.
7. On-line learning system
Users would have access to educational videos, educational materials, tests, and also in preparation for marketing campaigns in connection with CPA.
8. Internal payment system.
Users are given different levels of authorisation, depending on their functions. Users may have payments made to them to top up their mobile phone account

balances or to other payment systems such as payment cards or credit card or bank account.

9. Internal billing system.

This allow users to view vendor's balances, balance top up, financial reports and anti fraud checks and moderation.

10. Statistics and analytics system

Users may view statistics on ROI of offers, special actions, on line learning, application usage and special alerts

11. Rating system

This allow users to see ratings for sellers such as best sellers and rankings, in region, and special remuneration from vendors.

Fig 5A, 5B, 5C and 5D are another set of Mindmap® presentation of the features of the global business referral network for the seller.

Each sales personnel in the seller organisation would have access to the global business referral network based on the industry the user is categorised in. In so doing, the sales personnel is no longer operating without guidance nor selling without knowledge of the products to be promoted and sold. The sales personnel by using a mobile phone has access to this global business referral network: -

a. Quick start capability.

The sales personnel would be able to download application forms, and enrol with the global business referral network, called "TIPS". Upon enrolment, the user would have access to all features for sales personnel for that particular industry.

b. Get permanent payments

The user would continuously perform the tasks of CPA and with increased motivation and productivity, would be promoted to higher levels in the system. As a result the user would see increases in income to base salary received from the sales organisation,

c. Receive direct promotions from the vendor.

The user may even receive invitations to visits to the vendor and other bonuses.

d. Receive professional development

The user would be able to enrol in distance learning programs. In addition, details of sales achievement and sales competitions including ranking in leaderboard, awards such as “ Best salesman of the week“, “ Best salesman by vendor“, “ Best salesman for the region “ and so on.

The sales personnel is therefore equipped with updated product knowledge and trends within the industry, not only regionally but on a world-wide basis. The global business referral network also allows the user to find out his or her sales performance in comparison with peers. The sales personnel knows that his product knowledge, sales achievement and performance is rewarded by the vendor in addition to his salary received from the seller organization. The sales personnel is motivated to excel in sales and promotions since the sales personnel would receive points and bonuses (hence the system is called “TIPS”) knowing that there is a direct relationship between his or her efforts and the award of monetary and non-monetary awards for his or her hard work. The global business referral network therefore links the efforts of the vendor directly to the sales personnel in another country and working in another business organization, achieving synergies never reaped before in current and traditional sales and marketing networks and channels.

Fig 6A and 6B are a set of Mindmap® presentation of the features of the global business referral network for the vendor (manufacturer) and distributor.

The vendor and distributor would have access to these features in the network: -

a. Direct sales stimulation

The vendor may initiate CPA campaigns for specific products, have access to statistics of spending promotion and advertisement budgets in real time, analytics and ROI indicators and feedback on indicators of CPA campaigns as well as comparisons with past CPA campaigns

b. Training of sellers

c. Propose solutions to problems arising from feedback and analysis of statistics of on-going CPA campaigns, including problems with shelf layout, sales display and

product assortment issues. enabling adjustments to be made in order to achieve maximum returns for campaign spent.

d. Promotion of new products

This would enable the vendor to propose customised promotion programmes for each region as well as training videos for sales personnel of different countries/regions.

Fig 7 is another Mindmap® presentation of the features of the global business referral network for the vendors (manufacturers) and sellers.

A region grouping of sellers begins with the appointment of a seller as an operator who would initiate implementation of a group within an industry for the region. The vendor and sellers would have access to these features in the network: -

- a. Vendors would have personal communications and possibly with the operator
- b. Sellers would be given recommendations and bonus attractions, advertisements on boxes and packaging of goods (customisation) .
- c. Customised targeted advertising and promotion may be initiated by the sales department of the operator.

The TIPS App

The global business referral network which links the manufacturer at one end of the production, sales and marketing network and the sales personnel at the other end works through use of an Internet based dedicated electronic network connecting servers of the manufacturers, distributors and selling organisations with the mobile phone of each sales personnel. Access to this network is through Personal Computers, Tablets, Laptops and Mobile Phones.

In order to use the TIPS Application (hereinafter “ TIPS App”), a user must download the App from either Google Playstore™ or Apple Store™. After download, the user would have to register with the App provider, providing basic personal (or business information). The user or each user (in the case of business App) would have to sign up

– via Google™ or Facebook™ or email and create a username. Other users such as distributor or regional sales agent would have to download the TIPS program from the Internet.

- 5 The camera in each mobile phone is used to scan the QR code for each product item. The sales personnel can scan the bar code or QR code on the goods the moment they are sold. The sales personnel can also scan the payment receipt. If it is scanned correctly, the seller will see a message on the screen confirming that the information has been sent (a request for moderation by the respective vendor has been made).
- 10 Image of the goods and the payment receipt must be submitted for moderation as additional information. The sales personnel's records in the TIPS system is then updated and sales activity reports generated from which points or bonuses are awarded to the sales personnel. After successful moderation, points are transferred to the seller's main account, from which they can be paid or transferred further. The TIPS App is thus
- 15 able to monetize the sales efforts of the sales personnel directly between the manufacturer and the sales personnel in the sales organization.

The camera in the mobile phone of the sales personnel is also useful for other activities:-

- 20 a. at the warehouse (a task related to controlling assortment)
- When the seller begins working on a task, scanner of line codes is launched in continuous mode (video stream). The seller points his/her camera at the goods, the phone notifies about successful scanning with a sound signal, then the seller points camera at the next object, etc. After the seller has scanned all goods,
- 25 he/she can see the list of them and their photographs on the screen. At the end of the assignment, the completed list of goods is sent to the respective vendor for moderation and the seller receives points to his/her temporary account. After successful moderation, the points are accrued to the seller's main account.

b. Layout control task

Using his/her camera of his/her mobile phone, the seller takes a picture of layout of the specified goods in each category and sends a request (photographs) to the respective vendor for moderation.

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The TIPS App would also empower the sales personnel in these ways: -

a. Questioning task

When the seller begins the task, he/she can successively see questions, which he/she must ask a customer. He/she can choose one of multiple-choice answers to each question or (if available) he/she can come up with his/her own. After filling in the answers, the seller sends the task to the vendor for moderation.

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b. Learning tasks

The seller watches educational videos, materials and/or takes a test. After taking the test, the seller receives points to his/her account.

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c. News

The seller can subscribe for a vendor's news. As the result, the seller will receive notifications about new goods, special offers and other news from this vendor. However, some news may be received without a fee subscription.

d. List of special offers and tasks

The seller can see current special offers and tasks, which he/she can fulfill. They can be sorted by yield, date, brand and type of task.

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e. Rating

The seller can see his or her place/ranking in the rating of sellers participating in TIPS. Rating by city (region) or by brand is available.

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Although registration of each sales personnel would be by mobile phone, sales personnel may use tablets or other electronic devices in lieu of mobile phones. Other users such as operator or moderator would have to use Personal Computers due to system requirements.

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Taking on roles of other parties in the TIPS System

The TIPS System provides each user with an option to select and step in to assume various roles of other parties in the system e.g. seller, cashier, consultant, distributor, etc.), which allows the user to perform distinctive functions and receive certain points

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During registration a user is asked what role he/she would like to play in the TIPS System. These roles can be (but not limited to): seller, cashier, consultant, distributor, etc. Depending on the roles, different part of the TIPS System will be enabled or disabled for the user. In addition, UI/UX experience may be varied. Some roles (e.g.,
10 the sellers) are granted automatically upon completion of registration in the TIPS System. However, some other roles (e.g., distributors) have to be approved by the operator or moderator of the TIPS System.

The procedure of enabling a user to assume other roles besides the initial role assigned
15 to the particular user takes place during the registration process of the user. In the course of registration process, the user is able to select what other additional role he/she would like to play in the TIPS system. These additional roles can be (but not limited to): seller, cashier, consultant, distributor, etc. Some roles are disabled e.g. the role of manufacturer cannot be selected by retail user. The selection during registration
20 process is either granted automatically or approved by TIPS operator or moderator depending on the role selected. Depending on the roles, different parts and features of the TIPS system will be enabled or disabled for the user. In addition, UI/UX experience may be varied.

25 This option of selection of other additional roles delivers to the other modules of the TIPS system registration data and profile of the user. The exact configuration how each module should work is then implemented by the corresponding modules the user is enabled to access. Exact implementation may vary depending on the vendor and TIPS configuration.

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Example: CPA module will work for the “seller” in full featured mode, while it will work in the demonstration mode (no real goods being sold) for the “consultant” or demonstrator”

role. The above however is subject to configuration, i.e. actual role names and TIPS modules capabilities are configurable.

Disruptions in Business environment

- 5 While the Global Business Referral Network connects all parties from manufacturer to retail staff seamlessly, there would be occasions when one party, for their own commercial reason(s) decide not to stick with the recommended retail prices of goods (set by the manufacturer) in retail stores.
- 10 One of the functions of the moderator is to check and review the activities and sales records of sales personnel to counter any fraudulent or false sales reports and activity.

The Global Business Referral Network has planned procedures to allow a user (in this case, the manufacturer or the moderator) within the TIPS system to handle such
15 eventuality. The planned procedures and module allow a user such as the manufacturer or moderator (upstream) to remotely review and monitor conformance of retail prices of goods in stores (downstream) with those that are recommended by the manufacturer.

The manufacturer would enter into the TIPS System price range for the goods in retail
20 stores together with the region where the retail stores are located. When TIPS system is performing other action related to the indicated goods (e.g., CPA campaign), additional module is executed which extracts the price for the goods. This extracted price is matched against the target price range of the manufacturer and can be presented to the manufacturer via reports.

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The TIPS system would also have a facility to set up an alert that will be received by the manufacturer if the price differs significantly. The Alert Reports will indicate region and (optionally) exact store location where such a sale was performed.

- 30 To make use of this feature, the manufacturer has the option under his “vendor” account to enter recommended price ranges for the goods being sold. If this feature is selected, the “vendor” would be able to see a report on the price range and (optionally) may

receive alerts if retail prices of goods sold by a retail store in a certain location have been changed significantly outside the recommended price ranges. The manufacturer (upstream) upon receiving such alert reports may wish to remotely view and monitor the retail prices reported from this retail store or location (downstream) and take action to maintain price stability in the market.

This review and monitoring of prices module uses other modules (e.g., CPA campaigns) to get real prices information. Other modules can utilize information about recommended prices to improve scanning accuracy or for other means.

All the above list of events are not exhaustive and may result in the decision of the upstream party to communicate with retail staff (at the downstream) to bypass the normal channels.

While an embodiment of the global business referral network system has been described, it should be apparent, however, that various modifications, rearrangements, substitutions, alterations and adaptations to those embodiments may occur to persons skilled in the art with the attainment of some or all of the advantages of the present invention. Accordingly, it should be clearly understood that the present invention is not intended to be limited by the particular features and structures hereinbefore described and depicted in the accompanying drawings. It is therefore intended to cover all such modifications, alterations and adaptations without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.

ADVANTAGEOUS EFFECTS OF THE INVENTION

The present invention electronically links the production at the beginning of the production, distribution, marketing and sales channels to the sales personnel at the other end.

The use of a Mobile App allows the individual sales personnel to be linked to the manufacturer and allows the sales personnel to learn about the features of the products to be more effective and productive sales person. The sales personnel may also provide

feedback on sales and promotion campaigns directly to the manufacturer, seeking solutions to display of goods using the camera of the mobile phone. By scanning the QR code of the product, the sales personnel is instantly able to assist the customer in situations where the sales personnel is unable to provide solutions to the customer.

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Incentivization of sales efforts by use of points, bonuses and recognition of sales efforts amongst peers and in a community of sales personnel in a region and worldwide would also provide motivation to the sales personnel to excel for not only the sales organisation but also the manufacture.

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Thus this present invention gives it a massive advantage over current and traditional forms of production/ distribution, marketing and sales networks and channels.

CLAIMS

1. A system of business referrals linking a plurality of manufacturers to a plurality of distributors and a plurality of wholesalers and a plurality of retailers to one or more sales personnel in the plurality of retailers, all of whom are registered in the business referral system, all using a global communications network, wherein the manufacturer communicates marketing, promotional, product information and selling programmes to the one or more sales personnel in the retailers directly to synergize and add-value to these programmes and wherein said sales personnel are in turn rewarded with monetary and non-monetary awards and recognition for their selling and product knowledge efforts, resulting in increased productivity and motivation of sales personnel and increased return on sales, marketing and promotional costs of the manufacturers.

2. A business referral network using a global communications network to connect one of more manufacturers of goods, one or more distributors of the goods, one or more wholesalers of the goods, one or more retailers and one or more sales personnel of the retailers participating in the business referral network, using a variety of electronic devices wherein all participants use a global electronic network system in the business referral network to communicate with each other, to learn about the goods of the manufacturer, to promote and sell goods of the manufacturers, to receive rewards, points and other forms of incentives, both monetary and non-monetary and thereby being incentivized to excel in product knowledge of the goods, to increase productivity in marketing, promoting and selling the goods.

3. A business referral network as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, the business referral network having an Operator, appointed from the industry in which the goods are marketed, and work with the wholesalers and retailers to: -

Manage the global electronic network system, works with wholesalers and retailers to the network for the industry;
Conduct a general moderation of all participants in the network;
Specifies the types of Companies using Cost Per Action (CPA);

Manages the on-line learning and training system;
Receives commission with CPA and on-line learning and training systems;
Creates industry directories;
Moderate professional communication channels.

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4. A business referral network as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, using a global communications network to connect a plurality of manufacturers at one end of the production, sales and marketing network to a region grouping of wholesalers and retailers beginning with the appointment of a wholesaler or a retailer as an operator who would initiate implementation of a group within an industry for the region, allowing the manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers to have access to these features in the network: -

Wholesaler to be appointed as possibly the operator of the network;
Retailers to be given recommendations and bonus attractions, advertisements on boxes and packaging of goods (customisation);
Customised targeted advertising and promotion may be initiated by the sales department of the operator.

5. The system of business referral as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, using a global communications network to connect a plurality of manufacturers at one end of the production, sales and marketing network to a region grouping of wholesalers and retailers, and to the sales personnel in the retailers, the said system comprising these sub-systems in the network: -

System of industrial communication;
Vendors information portal;
Control of sale of goods;
Cost per Action;
On line learning system;
Internal payment system;
Internal billing system;
Statistics and analytics; and

Rating system

- 5 6. The system of business referral as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, using a global communications network to connect a plurality of manufacturers at one end of the production, sales and marketing network to a region grouping of wholesalers and retailers, and to the sales personnel in the retailers, wherein some of the users may undertake additional roles allowed by the system such as retail sales and cashier or distributor and consultant.
- 10 7. The system of business referral as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, using a global communications network to connect a plurality of manufacturers at one end of the production, sales and marketing network to a region grouping of wholesalers and retailers, and to the sales personnel in the retailers, wherein some of the users (upstream) may be allowed by the system to bypass other users (downstream) to view data on retail sales and stocks.
- 15 8. A business referral network as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein sale of goods are controlled using QR codes and all users would be able to access QR code database and print QR Codes and control of flow of goods, assortment of goods, connection with CPA and anti fraud would be achieved.
- 20 9. A business referral network as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein users may track offers of promotional goods off line, offers of on-line learning, offers of special actions including display control, assortment control, polls of buyers and sellers and users may receive notification on new products, reference information on the new products and all goods available for sale, promotions from vendors and trade and business news for the industry and on vendors.
- 25 10. A business referral network as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein users may have access to educational videos, educational materials, tests, have payments made to them to top up their mobile phone account balances or to other payment systems
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such as payment cards or credit card or bank account and view statistics on ROI of offers, special actions, on line learning, application usage and special alerts and see ratings for sellers such as best sellers and rankings, in each region, and special remuneration from vendors, in order to further incentivize and motivate the users to excel in marketing and sales of goods from each manufacturer.

11. A business referral network as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, the business referral network linking the manufacturer at one end of the production, sales and marketing network and the sales personnel at the other end wherein. access to this network is through Personal Computers, Tablets, Laptops and Mobile Phones or other electronic computing devices.

12. A business referral network as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein access to the business referral network system is by an application ("App") installed in a personal computing device or a mobile phone, wherein the camera in the personal computing device or mobile phone is used to scan QR codes of goods to report sales of a product at a retail outlet by a sales personnel, generating sales reports into the system and points awarded to the sales personnel and in turn, points are awarded to the sales personnel which may be monetized, thereby linking the sales efforts of the sales personnel directly to the promotional and other sales and marketing efforts of the manufacturer, improving productivity and morale of sales personnel.

13. The application installed in a personal computing device or a mobile phone as claimed in Claim 12, wherein the App is used: -

- at the warehouse to control assortment of products;
- for layout control for display purposes at the retail outlet;
- for guidance of the retail staff when customers ask questions about a product;
- to learn new tasks through watching of training videos, reading of information on the product;
- to take a test on product knowledge;
- to read about new developments of the manufacturer;
- to view special offers and current tasks; and

to see the individual retail staff sales performance ratings vis-à-vis other retail staff in the same city or on a regional basis and even on a nation-wide basis.

14. The application installed in a personal computing device or a mobile phone as claimed in Claim 12, wherein a user must download the App from either Google Playstore™ or Apple Store™ or from the Internet.

15. The application installed in a personal computing device or a mobile phone as claimed in the preceding claims which after download, the user would have to register with the App provider, providing basic personal (or business information) and selecting one or more roles within the business referral network as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2.

16. The application installed in a personal computing device or a mobile phone as claimed in the preceding claims in which the camera in the personal computing device or mobile phone is used to scan QR codes of goods to report sales of a product at a retail outlet by a sales personnel, generating sales reports into the system and points awarded to the sales personnel and in turn, points are awarded to the sales personnel which may be monetized.

17. The application installed in a personal computing device or a mobile phone as claimed in the preceding claims, wherein users have access to educational videos, educational materials, tests, have payments made to them to top up their mobile phone account balances or to other payment systems such as payment cards or credit card or bank account and view statistics on ROI of offers, special actions, on line learning, application usage and special alerts and see ratings for sellers such as best sellers and rankings, in each region, and special remuneration from vendors.

18. The application installed in a personal computing device or a mobile phone as claimed in the preceding claims, wherein users may track offers of promotional goods off line, offers of on-line learning, offers of special actions including display control, assortment control, polls of buyers and sellers and users may receive notification on

new products, reference information on the new products and all goods available for sale, promotions from vendors and trade and business news for the industry and on vendors.