

shopkick: Where Award Opportunities Keep Appearing

shopkick is an app-based, coalition program with diverse opportunities for earning rewards. Some are advertised and some are unadvertised, appearing with continued participation. shopkick introduces us to a new approach for rewarding the right customer...

by Fiona Woolf (August 7, 2013)

shopkick's model is centered on encouraging consumers to visit partner retailers and interact with products, leading to increased visits and in-store purchases. Using their smartphone, consumers earn points called *kicks* that can later be redeemed for an array of rewards at shopkick's Rewards Mall, accessed in-app.

shopkick is representative of a new generation of loyalty programs embodying "gamification", the growing trend of incorporating game elements into a non-game context in order to engage consumers and reinforce participation.

Earning shopkick's reward currency simulates a game-like experience, and active participation and in-app exploration continuously unearths special benefits and multifarious opportunities to earn kicks. As members continue to participate (or "level up" as its known in shopkick's lingo), more partner retailer offers and award opportunities become available. This framework is designed to incentivize and reward the "right" customers (ie, frequent users), motivating further participation and in-app exploration.

Advertised Opportunities

Members earn kicks from partner merchants through three primary ways:

- Walk-ins (enter a designated partner merchant)
- Scans (scan a designated product's barcode using your smartphone)
- Buy & Collect (make purchases in-app or in-store at designated retailers)

To locate participating area merchants and their offers, open the app and tap "Find kicks nearby". Merchants are clustered into groups by proximity (eg, districts, shopping malls). Tap on a group to view its list of merchants; tap on a merchant to see if it currently offers kicks for a walk-in, scans or purchases.

Unadvertised Opportunities

Beyond these advertised opportunities for earning kicks, there are various “Bonuses” which are not initially noticeable or visible. Bonuses are offers to earn extra kicks and other awards. Bonuses can be:

- build-ups
- boosters
- bonus pieces

Members can hunt for Bonuses scattered throughout the app, and Bonuses are also awarded to members as they continue to “level up” (ie, actively participate). Making sense of Bonuses—the different types, where to look for them, and what to do with them—is not abundantly clear. Here are three of the most common Bonuses:

- **build-ups**

A build-up is extra kicks awarded for your next walk-in to a designated retailer.

You can hunt for build-ups on Lookbooks (digital catalogs showcasing products and trends at retail partners). Check the in-app list of retailers with Lookbooks and find retailers with an icon in the form of a lock next to their name. This signifies the retailer currently offers a build-up of “x” number of kicks. To get (or “unlock”) the build-up, tap on the retailer’s name and tap on any of its Lookbooks marked with a star. Flip through the entire Lookbook to unlock the build-up. Once the build-up is unlocked, a pop-up announces the number of days to complete the walk-in to earn kicks before the build-up expires.

For example, after flipping through Old Navy’s “Pretty in Plum” Lookbook marked with a star, this pop-up appeared: *You’ve unlocked 45 kicks. Get them when you walk into Old Navy. Offer expires in 21 days.*

- **boosters**

There are various types of boosters. Like build-ups, one type of booster is extra kicks awarded for your next walk-in to a designated retailer. The way in which you obtain boosters, however, is different from build-ups. Retailers offer boosters periodically.

Consider this recent example from Target. It offered a “100 kick booster” to members every time they redeemed their kicks for a Target gift card at shopkick’s Rewards Mall. Once you obtain the gift card, it advises the number of days to complete a walk-in at Target to earn 100 kicks before the booster expires.

- **bonus pieces and Bonus Sets**

A bonus piece is a product to be scanned at a designated retailer, used to complete a Bonus Set. Three (3) bonus pieces from a participating brand comprise a Bonus Set. After scanning the barcodes of all 3 designated bonus pieces, you will be awarded the Bonus, usually extra kicks added to your kick total.

As you “level up” with continued participation in shopkick, more and more bonus pieces appear. Available bonus pieces are found in-app under the “Bonus Board” heading on your user profile page.

Two examples of Bonus Sets:

3 bonus pieces to scan to complete the Set	bonus awarded
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Honey Maid graham [cracker] squares• Hershey's Milk chocolate 6-pack• Kraft Jet-puffed marshmallows	70 kicks
Planters Sustaining Energy Peanuts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Honey flavor• Apple Cinnamon flavor• Chocolate Nut flavor	5 kicks

In addition to Bonuses, shopkick also features “Instant Surprises”. These are complimentary kicks randomly awarded for in-app behaviors. Instant Surprises might be given after flipping through a Lookbook, or sometimes you receive an Instant Surprise (appropriately called a “Daily kick!”) just by opening the app.

Closing Thoughts

As we have discovered, shopkick has many game-like elements. Scans are basically retail scavenger hunts, with members searching for products in-store and scanning their barcodes for kicks. Earning shopkick Bonuses mirrors that of video games, wherein players complete a given level and are treated to a Bonus Round (to score more points and prizes). Likewise, as in video games, when members become familiar with how the “game” works, they learn and internalize where to look for the unannounced opportunities and prizes.

Aside from the employment of gamification, shopkick reinforces participation by giving short time frames to take advantage of retailer offers and Bonuses. On retailers’ in-app coupons, for example, tapping “Use this deal” activates the coupon, typically giving you 12 hours to use it in-store before it expires. Unless otherwise advised, “Bonuses” expire automatically in 30 days if not earned.

Most importantly, in contrast to the traditional “points for purchases” loyalty model, shopkick rewards members for both spending and non-spending behaviors. It features advertised (walk-ins, scans, purchases) and unadvertised (Bonuses, Instant Surprises) opportunities to earn kicks and other awards. shopkick adds a new dimension to the traditional loyalty program concept by making it an engaging, interactive experience that effectively maintains member interest.

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About the author...

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