Incentive / Offer System

Within VS-TrEx 1.3.8 series of traffic exchange software

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General: We have put a system of incentives in place to allow you to give out credits to users if they click on a certain link. Once you have created these entries, they are self-managing. This document discusses how to set them up.

Types of Incentive Offers

- A 'Standard' or 'Normal Offer' gives a user credits when they click on a link. This offer only works for each user 1 time, unless you reset the offer. Standard offers are used for login text area, and for incentives in your weekly emails. Users can see a list of all un-clicked offers from their "Your Info" section.
- A 'Login Award' gives a user credits when they log in. This offer works for each user no more than one time per day. [The drawup2.php routine resets these variables once per day.]
- A 'Surf Prize Page' gives a user credits IF they click on the prize page link when seeing it during surfing. This incentive works for each user no more than one time per day. This is also the most complicated incentive to create. If you use these, you must create separate pages and offer entries for auto and manual surfing.
- As we move to 1.3.9, this area will also allow the assignment of cash offers… it will just be a few extra fields (we believe it will take 4) added to this table. The general process will be the same.

A word to the wise

This system is designed to get your members to do something: log in daily, click on advertisers' links, or pay attention while surfing.

Just because credits don't cost you, the webmaster, anything, does not mean you should give them out willy-nilly. Remember that credits you give out are credits members don't have to surf for, or don't need to purchase.

To keep the awards useful, you should keep the amounts relatively low, with an occasional 'big award'.

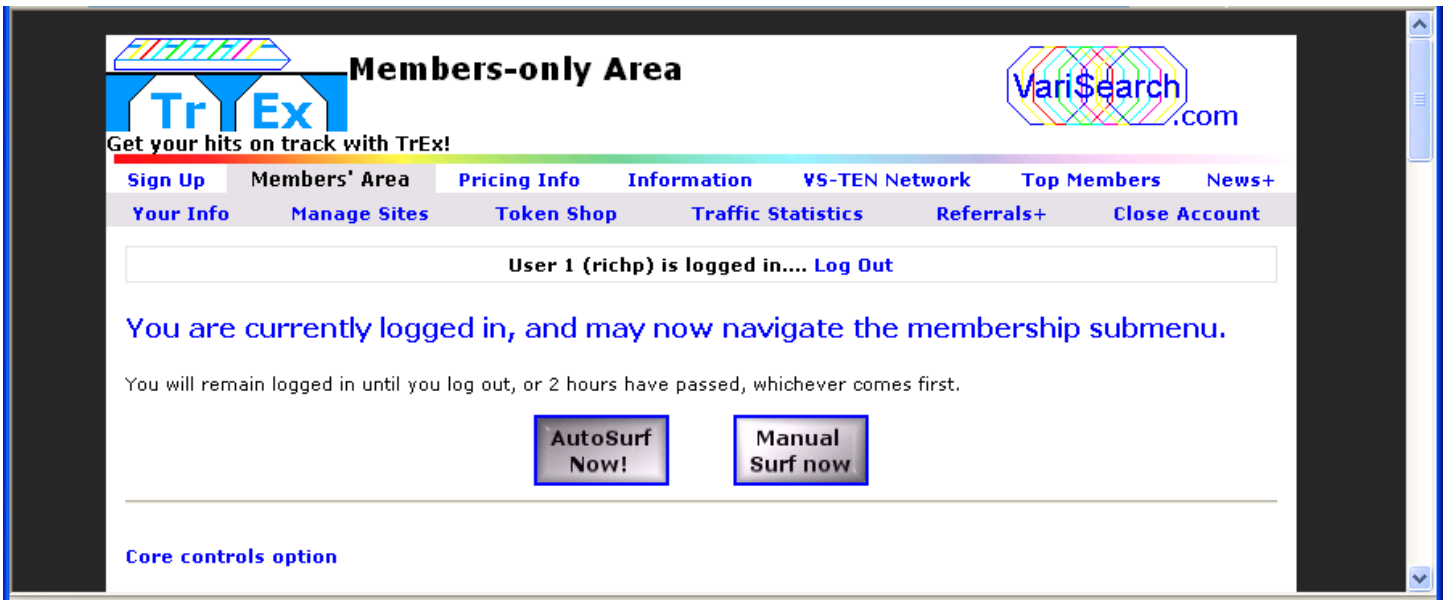
In general, most offers should be under 500 credits, even if they are one-time-ever offers. Save 500 and above for a major opportunity.

If you have non-manual surfing (non-click or automatic surfing), your credits are generally worth less, because traffic flows so swiftly. A 100 credit award will be attractive, and 200-300 will be a bit on the high side.

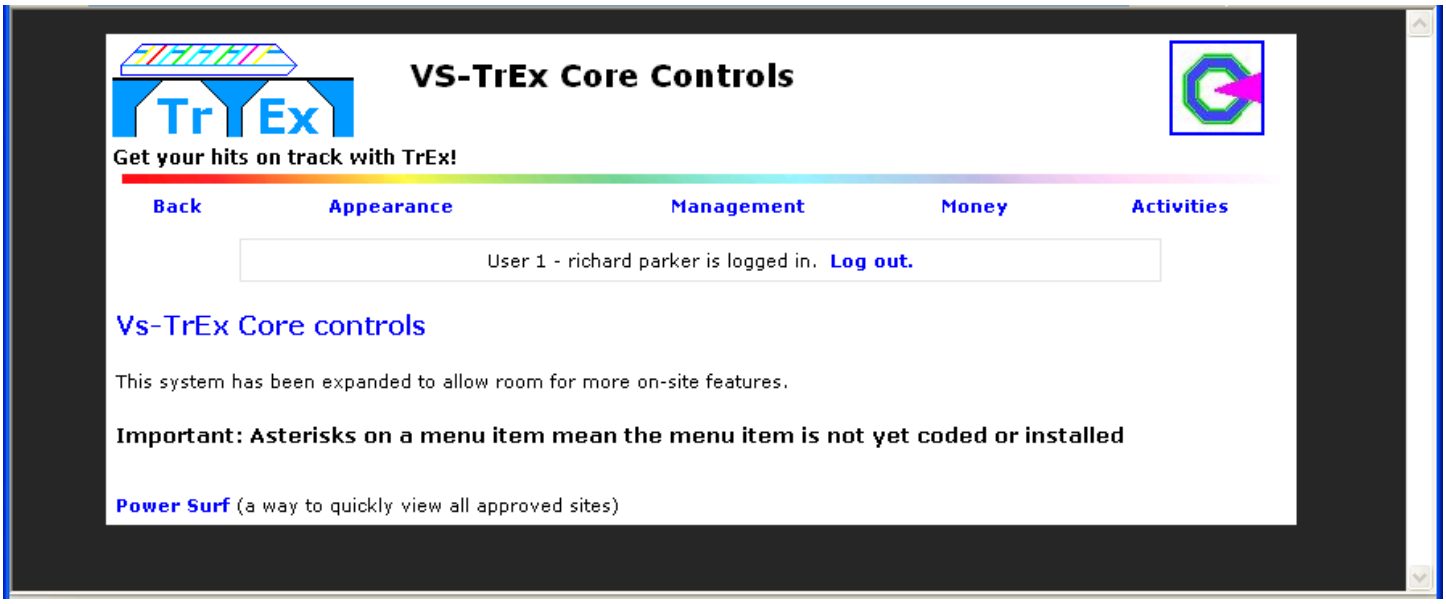
If you run a manual-only site, the credits are much more valuable, because they are harder to 'earn'. Generally, 10-50 credits are appreciated by manual surfers, while 100-200 would be a bit on the high side. [200 credits would take most members over an hour to surf up, which is why we recommend < 200 on manual-only sites.]

Getting into the Offers system

You must have an account with full access (this would be a 'yard controller' account, or whatever you have called the highest membership level (the one that can not be subscribed to). When you log in, an extra link will appear called "Core Controls Option", below the 'surf now' buttons, as shown below.



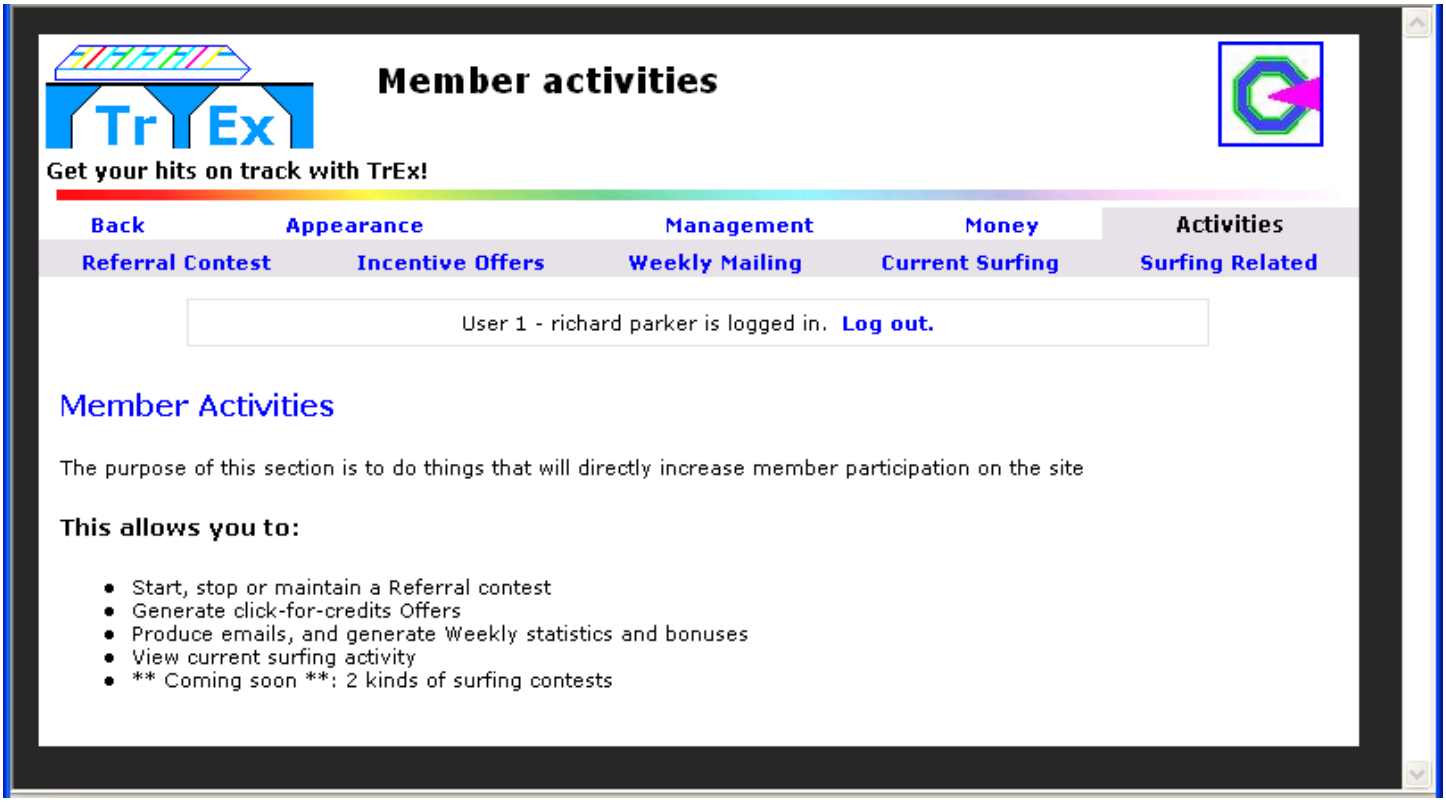
Click on the "Core controls option" link, and the top-level menu will change:



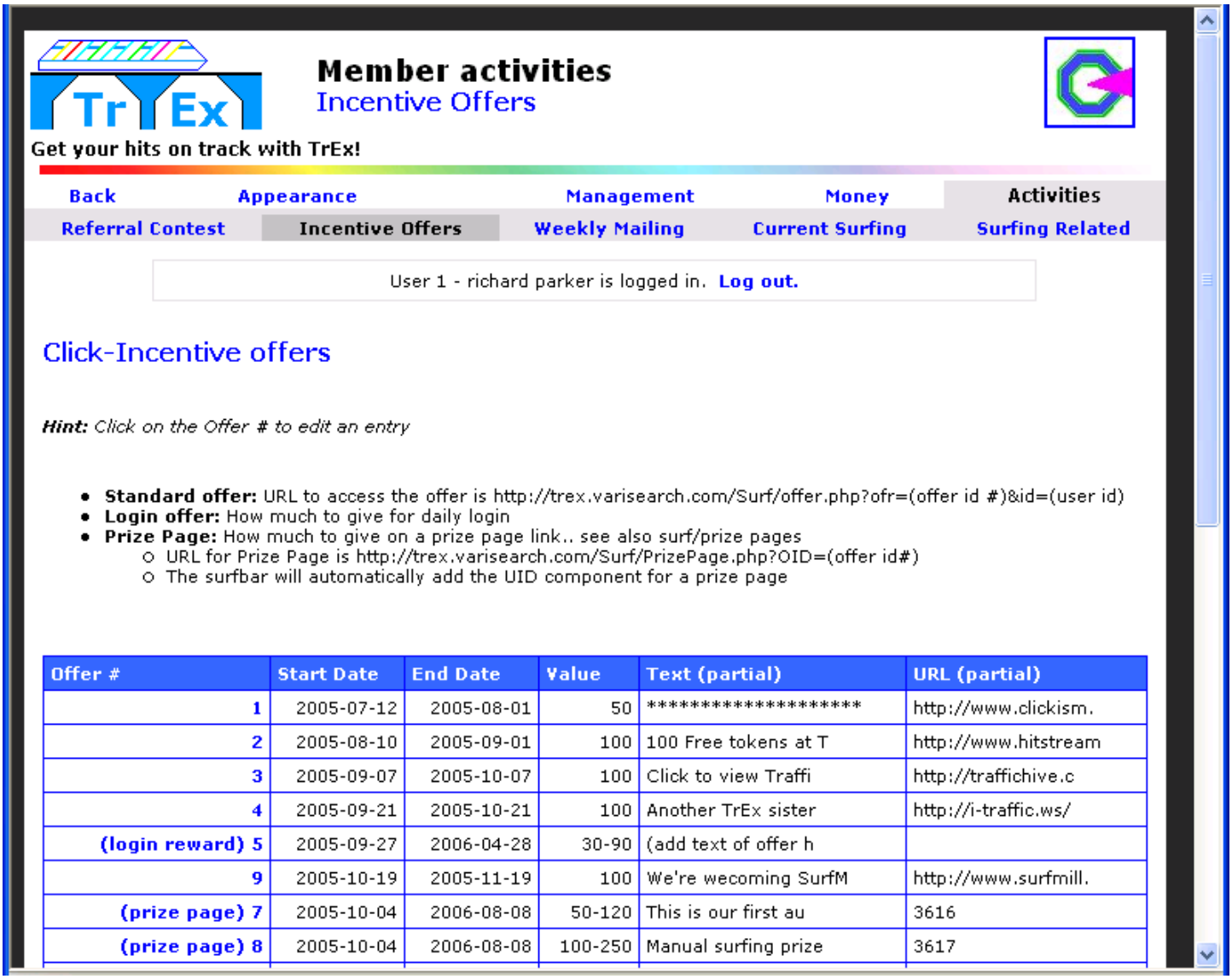
Briefly:

- **Back** – return to the members' area login screen
- **Appearance** – change things related to site appearance
- **Management** – most day-to-day work is done here
- **Money** – work with payment processors and payouts (if enabled)
- **Activities** – Things related to getting members to take actions… click-for-credit offers, weekly mailouts, statistics and competitions are done here.
- **Power surf** – This allows you to roll through approved sites quickly, checking for violators.

To work on Incentive Offers, Pick **Activities**



Pick **Incentive Offers** on the second-level menu line.

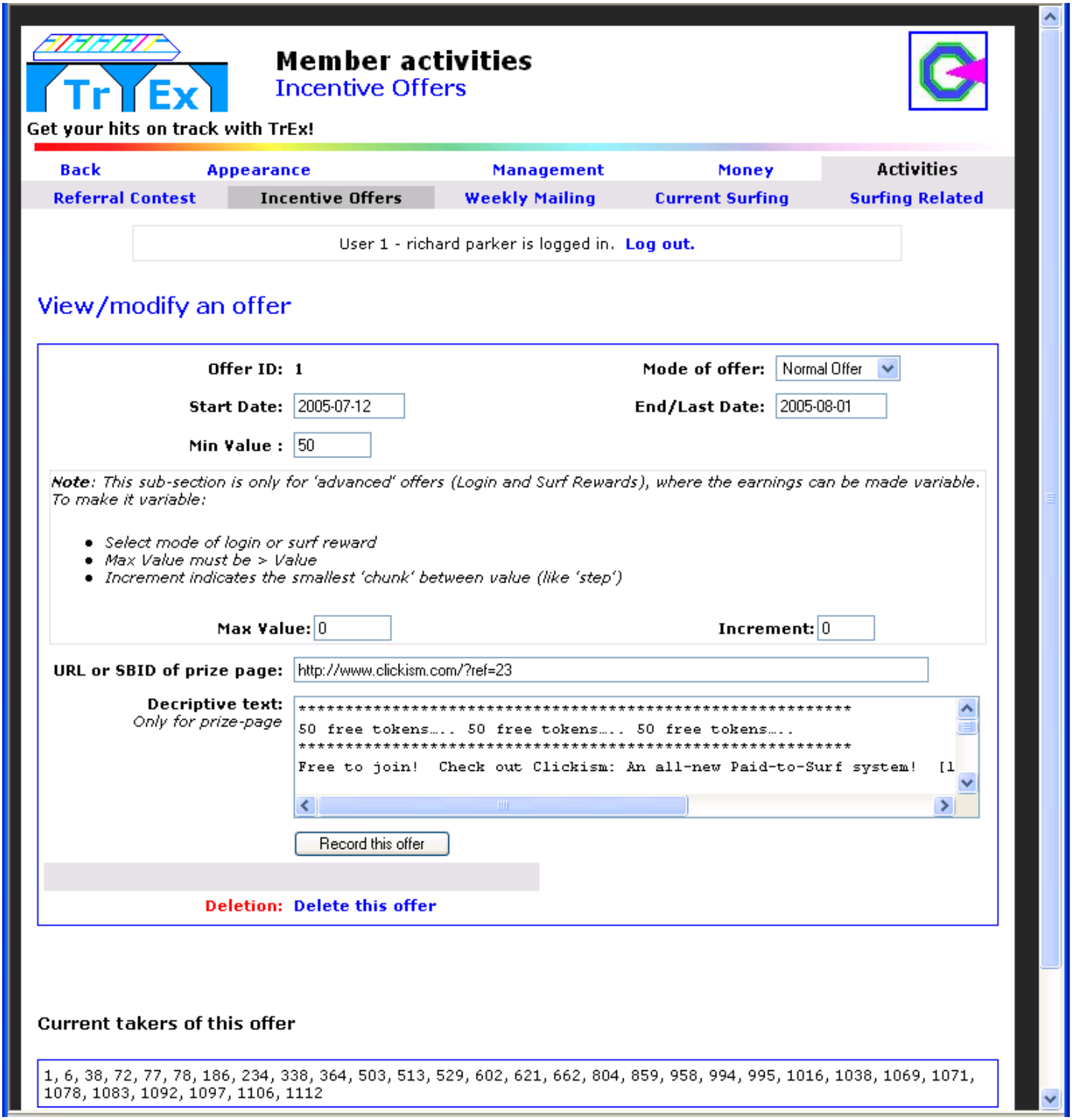


Some common things you can see about each offer shown here:

- Every offer has a start and end date. It will only provide credits during that date range on the server's clock.
- Every offer has a value, which is how many credits/tokens/whatever are given if the user performs this action. As you can see, there are both fixed and variable-values allowed.
- Every offer should have a little bit of text describing the offer. This is most important for standard offers, which are shown to a user in their "Your Info" area.

To modify an offer, click on the Offer # in the left column. The screen will be the same as if you add a new offer. Below, I will show offers #1, 5, and 7 from the list above.

Normal / Standard Offer



A normal offer means the user will click on the offer link, and will have a new window come up, showing the target URL (usually some advertiser).

This is also an example of a 'fixed amount' offer. The "Min Value" field, when used alone, is the exact amount of credits given to the user, if they click on the link..

At the bottom of this screen is a list of all the users that have taken this offer. That can be used to find the "sweet spot" for your surfers: This is how you find out ow many credits it takes to get them to click on a link.

Calling a standard/normal offer:

The link for this offer is http://yoursite.com/Surf/offer.php?ofr=1&id=
Followed by the appropriate user ID.

In Newsletters

When sending out a newsletter at VariSearch, I would include:
http://trex.varisearch.com/Surf/offer.php?ofr=1&id=[%I

The email system knows to replace [%I with the member id number of the user being sent to.

On login page

To show this same offer on the login page, I would add:

http://trex.varisearch.com/Surf/offer.php?ofr=1&id=[%U

This was an unfortunately confusing turn of events: Newsletters already used [%U for the user information block, so we had to use [%I there. This was forgotten about when coding the login page interpreter, which was done first.

In the next example, you will see both the login function, and the variable-award option being used.

Login Award (and variable rate)

The key difference here is the ‘mode of offer’ has been changed to a ‘Login Reward’.

Since this doesn’t redirect the user, no URL is needed, and no descriptive text is needed.

We’ll discuss how variable rates are used on the next page.

In a fixed-rate offer, you fill in only the “Min Value” field, and leave “Max Value” and “Increment” blank, or as zero.

To make a variable rate, use all three fields. The amount of credits given becomes random, and is calculated like this:

Minimum Value + (Something between 0 and Max Value which is divisible by Increment).+ Increment

So, the login award above is some value between 40 and 130 credits

40 = Min Value (30) + 0 + Increment (10)
130 = Min Value (30) + Max Value (90) + Increment (10)

The reason for the increment is to control the randomness. If you give an award of 100-200 credits, 107 seems a bit, um, "cheesy". If you make increments of 10 or 20, then your bonuses are much more 'round'.

Calling a login award:

These need no further coding to run… once saved, they take effect immediately. Login rewards reset their 'current takers' list each night, so a user can earn this exactly 1 time per day.

The surf prize page

This is the most complex form of offer page, because we wanted to make sure the system could not be cheated.

To create a prize page award, you will need to create or use an internal user (one that never runs out of credits). That user should be opted-out of VS-TEN (since non-members couldn't win anything), and should promote the following URL:

http://yoursite.com/Surf/PrizePage.php?OID=
Followed by the offer number (we'll get that in a minute)

Punctuation is CRITICAL: OID must be all caps. This link tells the browser system that this is a PrizePage offer, so that it can add the User's ID number to the prize page call.

When you have created this site, you will need to write down the SBID, or Site ID number for this record, as you will need it to create the offer record.

When we created our prize page record, it turned out to be SBID #3616.

Here is a filled-out prize page offer:

Like any other offer, this has a range of working dates, and a min, max and increment.

The difference is in the URL: We put the site ID of the page showing this offer here… 3616 in this case.

After saving the record, we see that this is Offer ID #7. We have to go back to the site record and add the 7 to the end of the target URL. So, the site page looks like this:

How this works:

When surfing, the PrizePage.php?OID=7 tells VS-TrEx to add the User ID number to the URL before calling it.
PrizePage.php checks the offer to make sure it's valid
If the offer is valid, it checks the SBID in the offer against the users last-page-viewed (in the visits table)
If the SBID matches the user's visit table, then the offer is allowed, and the link to collect the offer show.
IF the user clicks on the link on the PrizePage, they receive the award.

Reviewing the steps for a Prize Page offer:

With 1 exception, no VS-TrEx webmaster has gotten the prize page working the first time, so we'll go through the steps again.

1. Create or select an internal user specifically for the prize page
    a. The user should be opted-out of VS-TEN
    b. The user should be 'internal', so it won't run out of credits
2. Create a page entry, within this user, for the prize page
    a. The URL should start off as http://yoursite.com/Surf/PrizePage.php?OID=
    b. Note (write down) the SBID number of this record after saving it
3. Create the incentive offer
    a. Mark it as a prize page
    b. Put the SBID NUMBER (2.b) in the URL field for this offer
    c. Note (write down) the Offer ID number of this record after saving it
4. Edit the page entry, and add the Offer ID number at the end of the URL
5. Approve the URL
6. Update the user flags

Then, you're in business.

Of course, you could put the offer info in first, then do the site record, then edit the offer with the SBID. That's completely up to you.

As long as:

- The Page contains OID=offernumber
- The offer contains the SBID of the Page
- The Page is approved
- The Page owner is active (and "Surfed Enough"), and has credits (or is Internal)

The system will work automatically in the date range you select.

Sorry for the complexity on this one, but this prevents users from cheating the system.

End of Incentive System documentation.