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Make an
impact with
promotional
products

Make an Impact with Promotional Products

There's an old adage that everyone loves free stuff.

If that's the approach you've been taking when you select your promotional products, you're missing some big opportunities to make big impressions. Promotional products—those clever little marketing tools that bear a company's name and logo—can be powerful branding tools. When chosen correctly and used creatively, they can create a positive, lasting brand impression.

How do we know? Take a moment and look around your desk. Do you have a pen bearing a vendor's name? A coffee mug containing your company's logo? A mouse pad imprinted with your tech support team's phone and Web site?

If you have one or more promotional products within easy reach, you're not alone.

Promotional products are designed to cleverly cut through the clutter by doing double duty—they're merchandise that is useful to the end user and holds a company's name, logo or message for marketing and communication purposes. They go beyond merchandise samples, making their mark as your favorite pen, your desk's coffee cup coaster or your gym bag. In reality, promotional products can come in any form, from gadgets and gizmos to garments, housewares and food—to name a few. Anything that is specifically chosen to represent your company can be given away to your customers and potential customers, promoting who you are and making a positive lasting impression.

And, that's exactly what they do.

Survey says...success!

The Promotional Products Association International (PPAI) conducted the survey Promotional Products Build Positive Image With Customers at Georgia Southern University to test the effectiveness of promotional products.

In the study, one group of students received promotional products with a local restaurant's identity, while the other group did not. One month later,



testing revealed that those who had received promotional products had a better perception of the restaurant, thought its image to be overall positive, and were more likely to both patronize and recommend the restaurant.¹

This study clearly demonstrates the power of promotional products in affecting both awareness and perception among prospective customers.

Those findings jive with another survey, *The Effectiveness of Promotional Products in Trade-Show Settings—Recipient Perceptions of Recall Usefulness and Company Image*, conducted in 2003. Researchers in the latter study did pre-tests and post-tests with 326 trade show attendees. At the show, attendees were asked the name of the company that gave them the promotional product. More than 70% could do so. Thirty (30) days after the show, 56% could still do so.²

We know that promotional products make an impression. But, if you want to make the best impression possible, you'll want to choose the right promotional products.

Where do you start?

That's the big question: You have literally thousands of options—from pens and magnets to putters and fleece jackets. Picking the "right" promotional products is a strategic decision.

Thinking about who your target market is and what they do is essential. Do they golf? Drink coffee by the gallon? Spend a lot of time at the computer? Make so many sales presentations that they live in their cars? That's just part of the equation.

As you look at your promotional products options, ask yourself these key questions:

1. Who is the customer?
2. What are they interested in?
3. What product will give us the best chance to make a lasting impression?
4. Which product best reflects our company's culture?

Answer these questions and you'll be well on your way to selecting a promotional product that delivers results.

¹*www.ppa.org. News Release: Customers Remember and Recommend Companies Who Use Promotional Products, According to New, Published May 11, 2005. Cited October 2006.*

² *www.ppa.org. Building Brand Equity by Kathleen H. Gruben, Ph.D. Issue 2004JUL. Cited October 2006.*

“Choose, but choose wisely.”

You might be tempted to start your search based on budget. If you look for the first item that pops up at 37 cents/each, you’re likely to miss something that could be high impact for your business.

Cost will always be an essential ingredient in your decision-making, but try to think about how you can package the promotional product to give you the most bang for your buck. Here are a couple of ideas:

Theme

Find products that tie into your current promotions. For example:

- If you’re a realtor who sells a lot of vacation getaways, offer people who tour a property an outdoor-themed promotional product, such as a camp chair or a hiker’s tool kit.



- If your travel agency wants to promote Caribbean cruises, beach balls or flip flops would be excellent tie-ins to your already-planned advertising.

- You can quickly liven up a trade show exhibit with golf-themed games and giveaways. Even if it’s the middle of winter, your business is in cold-weather country and unrelated to golf, by using promotional products to create an interactive experience built around a theme, you can attract attention, draw in potential buyers and make sure people take home a clever marketing tool carrying your name.



Useful

Think about what your target audience uses on a daily basis, and cater to their needs. Think through when you’d most like a prospect to see your name. Is it when they are at their desk? (That’s perfect for an office supply company or a restaurant specializing in take-out/delivery.) In the car? (Say yes if you’re a gas station or car wash.) For example:

- If your best prospects work in an office, imprinted Post-It® Notes give you multiple exposures. They’re useful and welcomed.
- If you own a building supply company, give out yard sticks.
- If you sell to traveling salespeople, offer travel alarm clocks.

If you choose promotional products that are useful, people will keep them

– and every time they use your promotional product, they'll be reminded of your business. Being in the right place at the right time makes your company a no-brainer for their buying decision.

Take home (for loved one)

For businesspeople spending a great deal of time at trade shows, promotional products become incredibly common. If that's your typical audience, consider a thoughtful differentiator—something meant to be passed along to a loved one at home.

- If the average person who stops by your exhibit is a 35-year-old man, why not wow him by wowing his children? Offer fun items for kids, like Nutty Putty, a ball and glove set, or rubber ducks. Or, help him surprise his wife or significant other with a wine gift set, a chocolate-dipped spoon, or lotion.
- For animal lovers, offer a pet dish, pet first aid kit, or retractable dog leash.



Your goal is to make people stop! By tugging on their heartstrings or touching them emotionally, your promotional product is able to reach out to them, pulling them in to your company. Your promotional product is giving them a purpose to stop and talk with you—on a whole different level.

Fun

“Fun” promotional products draw attention. They arouse interest! Give your prospects, clients or customers a break from ‘real life’ with something that reminds them of childhood, like a Rubik’s Cube® or yo-yo. Countless fun products can be imprinted with your name—and these are the kinds of products that people will keep at their desk, so it’ll pleasantly remind them of your organization! Your name attached to a great memory secures the target audience’s attention. (You just know they will be playing with that Pac Man® keychain again and again!)

Product/service tie-in

For a clear way to reinforce your company’s product or service offering, choose related promotional products. It’ll reinforce what you do!

For example:

- If you work at a credit union, offer piggy banks.
- If you manage the organic foods department at a grocery store, give away a useful and environmentally-friendly cotton tote bag.
- For an electronics store, a tripod case would be a hot item.

Linking a useful, functional, handy or amusing promotional product to your company generates a lasting image. This lasting image ties into brand recognition, which flows into knowing your company name at the right time and the right place when a purchasing decision is being made.

Get out there.

When most people think of promotional products, their mind goes directly to trade shows. They're just one opportunity. We've said it before—but we'll say it again—promotional products are clever little marketing tools. They can be used as incentives, business gifts, recognition and award items, commemorative gifts, or advertising pieces.

These clever little marketing tools can be given out to your prospects, customers and clients in numerous ways. Think about all the ways you need to communicate with clients. Could a promotional product help that communication stick? Whether you need to thank your 'best of the best' customers or cut through the clutter to reach your best prospects, promotional products can play a role.

- **Referrals.** If you're a dentist, offer something like a stadium blanket with your logo on so patients can stay warm and cozy during their visit and take home a useful product. If you're a contractor who specializes in decks and other expensive remodels, perhaps you can offer a premium item like a Columbia fleece or parka. Word of mouth is the most important marketing tool for any service provider. Encourage it by rewarding your loyal customers with thoughtfully selected promotional products.
- **Incentives.** When you launch an advertising campaign or send direct mail, offer an incentive for people who check out your business. You could offer a branded pint glass to anyone who buys a microbrew at your pub. Or, offer a pack of golf balls for anyone who tours your country club. This type of strategy can reach an unlimited number of people—it really gets your name out there.
- **Appreciation.** Customer retention is a key strategy for many businesses. When you say 'thank you,' make your message stand out by including a useful product that carries your company's name.



The Moo Heard 'Round the World

River City Rubber Works is a Wichita-based rubber stamp manufacturer. The owners—two sisters and their best friend—are a fun, laid-back group with a terrific sense of humor. Their promotional product of choice? A stout spotted cow that sits in the palm of your hand and moos. Why a cow? Their business is located in a beautiful, red, renovated barn.



They've given these cows to existing wholesale clients, mailed them to key media contacts and even sold them in their retail store. Much like the Travelocity™ gnome, the cow has taken on a life of its own. Their rubber-stamping faithful are now taking their River City Rubber Works bovine on vacation and sending the accompanying photos and stories back to Wichita headquarters. The wit that infuses River City Rubber Works' brand carries through to this promotional product, helping both prospects and customers connect with the company and make an emotional investment in its culture.

In your face—in a good way!

With promotional products, you can put your company's image right into your customers' hands and in front of their faces—exactly where you want them!

Cutting through the marketing clutter is increasingly a challenge. Clever little promotional products can help you do just that, building your organization's brand awareness and strengthening perceptions among potential clients.

Before making a buying decision, prospects will consider who you are, what you stand for and what you do. Keep your message fresh in their minds by choosing your promotional products wisely and then using them creatively and regularly. Do that and they won't be able to miss your message!