

A generous baker's dozen tips for small businesses buying promotional advertising products.



- 1. Work with a trusted distributor partner...** one who has experience navigating the hundreds of thousands of promotional products and knowing which of those will be of value to your prospects or customers. An experienced partner will also be able to help with branding ideas you might have never considered.
- 2. Determine your budget and your purpose for buying a promotional product.** Though you may have stated your budget, a consultative representative can show you **good, better and best** items that allow you determine the difference a price differential might make. What do you wish to achieve with promotion product giveaways or campaigns? You don't want to negatively affect your brand and reputation with low-quality products introducing your company. On the other side, you don't want to spend excessively on products that will not be used or have very limited longevity **unless they are part of a short-term directed campaign.**
- 3. Always consider your target demographic when choosing promotional giveaways.** A baby boomer may prefer a calendar before Holidays, while a millennial would appreciate a tech accessory. If you are working with a varied demographic, a microfiber cleaning cloth could be a product you consider as many people wear glasses and people of most ages have electronic devices and monitors.
- 4. Don't wait until just before an event to order your products.** You often may receive better pricing and a wider choice of products if you have your preparation concluded well before your event. Make sure your distributor partner has determined inventory is available for the product, color, imprint type, and size (if applicable). In some cases there may be a run on inventory the day before you make your purchase. Most items are imprinted or embroidered, not made to order at factories. Avoid rush charges.
- 5. Allow sufficient transit time for cost savings.** Your distributor's product proposal should include **production time AND shipping time.** An item ordered from the West Coast can often take 4 days after shipping to arrive on the East Coast, but almost all products will be arriving from a shipping point, not at your locale.
- 6. When possible, work with a distributor partner who has in-house graphic design.** An in-house graphic designer

can be invaluable in turning around ideas and proofs and expediting your order process to the manufacturers who are processing your job.

- 7. Consider co-op advertising and sponsorship at events.** Many suppliers may have co-op programs and will share costs and a small amount of the spotlight with you when you include their logos imprinted on mugs, shirts, caps, totes, calendars, leather goods, and other products.
- 8. Combine several products for your desired purpose.** Combining packaging, promotional products and print into a useful and valued product will allow you to get your message to the recipient.
- 9. Surprise customers with unexpected promotional gifts at unusual times of the year** (Christmas in July) for example. Everyone who visits your establishment could get a logoed ice-cream scooper or sand pail.
- 10. Initiate a customer loyalty program** and reward customers with promo products in various price ranges, depending on number of visits or other established metrics.
- 11. Even if you're not a pet-related business, consider adding pet products to your promotional efforts.** People love their pets and will love you for thinking of them too. Automobile, technology, insurance and car rental clients are among those non-pet industries that are requesting pet products.
- 12. Consider experiential marketing for your business,** where you would provide your customers an experience that includes promotional items.

Consider your ad specialty rep a marketing partner. Call him or her in for regular planning meetings on promotions coming down the pike. Experienced partners will have firsthand knowledge of what other businesses like yours are doing to promote themselves and will counsel you accordingly on how you can stand out. **And finally, a bonus tip:** Have fun with your promotions. You will be working with a very creative 22 billion dollar industry whose cost per impression is more cost effective than television (1.8¢), magazine (1.8¢), and newspaper (.7¢). The cost per impression for promotional products and apparel is (.6¢) per impression... and it lasts and lasts.



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