

CALL ME WHEN YOUR DOG GETS TOO TALL

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CHEAP GIVEAWAY & AN EFFECTIVE PROMOTION

BY: MICHAEL MERRICK CROOKS

MY FRIEND KEN, the toy poodle breeder, called the other day asking about imprinted pens to give away at dog shows to promote his kennel. From previous conversations I remembered something about height restrictions.

"Ken, isn't there a rule that when a toy poodle gets to a certain height, you can't show it any more?" I asked.

"Sure," he replied. "Ten inches. Then the owner needs to get another poodle."

"So give your prospects a ruler imprinted with your kennel name, 'Breeder of Champion Poodles', phone number and a line that says, 'Call Me When Your Dog Gets Too Tall.'"

"Now that's a great idea," he exclaimed.

Developing great promotional ideas that are relevant to your audience isn't that hard. It simply takes a subtle shift in mindset and an understanding of what you really want to accomplish. The shift in mindset comes when you understand the difference between a giveaway and a promotion.

All too often, business owners give away some cheap doo-dad thinking it will create goodwill and effectively promote their business. They are mindless of the fact that the item is irrelevant

to their business or the prospect's need — such as a breeder giving away an imprinted pen. The recipient takes the item home and:

- 1) puts it in a drawer,
- 2) gives it to the kids,
- 3) throws it away,
- 4) perhaps uses the item with no real intention of doing business with the advertiser.

A giveaway is a one-way street. You cannot measure your return on investment. You gain practically nothing meaningful ... certainly nothing you can actively follow up on. And, as far as building business...few will say, "Wow! They gave me a cheap piece of junk with their name on it! I've really got to do business with them."

A promotion is a two-way street. You determine what you want your target to do, then you figure out a way to get them to do it. Trade shows are a good example.

As I said, most companies give away something cheap to everyone who stops or walks by. But as a business owner/marketer, you don't care about everyone — at least you shouldn't. You should care only about those who are interested in your product or service and can afford to pay for it. Being a smart promotional marketer, you should offer something of value to those who first fill out a short need-assessment or ques-

tionnaire providing you with their name, contact information and an idea of their interest level or purchasing time frame. This is how you qualify your prospects and obtain meaningful, actionable data. And because you're not giving something to everybody, you can afford to offer promotional product that costs a bit more and will give you prospect a reason to remember you.

For instance, a Financial Planner that's giving pens to everyone would do better to offer an imprinted booklet about Managing Your Finances ONLY to those who fill out the short questionnaire. Sure, the booklet costs more than the pens. But, the Financial Planner obtains information on which he/she can effectively follow up. The added

bonus is the fact that the return on investment is measurable, and, the prospect has a meaningful item that is relevant to their interest.

Cheap giveaways have their place when donating to goody bags or as prizes for contests or token thank-you gifts. However, when your goal is to promote your business, secure qualified leads or increase traffic — an effective promotion beats a cheap giveaway. •

Michael Merrick Crooks is a veteran advertising copywriter, creative problem-solver and promotional marketer in the US. Learn more and sign up for his CrooksView Creative Digest newsletter at www.CrooksAdvertising.com.