

Promotional Contests Are Mostly For Losers

By: Michael Merrick Crooks

"We're Sorry. You Are Not A Winner."

That makes me a loser. I don't like being a loser. And I don't like companies who make me feel like a loser.

Granted, I have free will and I can choose to feel like a loser or not. But there's something to be said for the fact that I did everything your company asked me to do. I spent my money at your stupid store or bought your crummy product. I read the dumb contest hype. I wasted my time logging on to your website. I played your retarded game. Just to read,

"We're Sorry. You Are Not A Winner."

The whole thing is anti-climactic and leaves me feeling a bit empty. If not less, I certainly do not have MORE love for your company.

"Not A Winner" is just another way to say, "Loser!"

Everyday, around the world, companies waste big dollars handing out free promotional items to every Sam, Sally and Sue that walks past their trade show booth. They are handing the stuff out without regard to whether the person they're handing the stuff to has any intention of ever buying anything from them. They measure the success of the trade show by the number of items they "got rid of."

On the other end of the spectrum, thousands of people who have spent money with a company, jump through a bunch of hoops to play the company's promotional game ... are told they are a loser.

Does that make any sense to you? It doesn't to me. Yet it's the status quo of promotional contests.

When considering a promotional contest, serious thought should be given to making everyone a winner on some level. It doesn't have to be much. It could be as simple as a coupon that I print off. When I collect x number of dollars worth of receipts from the store, I can send them in with my rebate coupon and get a couple of bucks back. It could be a coupon redeemable for that pen you're handing out for free at the trade show. It could be a button, a pin, a pencil, a coupon, a two for one, a Buy one Get One — ANYTHING that says, "You did everything we asked you to do. We appreciate your effort. While the main prize(s) is still up for grabs, you win "X".

"You're A Winner!"

Key Point: Hand me your pen at a trade show and I'm unlikely to "spread the word". Make me a loser in your stupid promotion and no way will I "spread the word." BUT! Let me win that same pen and I'm gonna tell someone! In fact, I'll gladly print off my coupon that says I'm a winner. I'll get in my car and I'll drive to your retail location and I'll walk in holding my winner coupon and say to the clerk, "I'm a winner." And the clerk, if properly trained, will say, "Yes, you are," and hand me the pen I'm going to show to the next five people I see as I say, "Dude, I just won this pen."

What will work for your company and your customers and prospects depends on a lot of things. The point is, doing it right requires some thought. And the more thought you give to making your clients, customers and prospects feel like winners, the more winners there will be — "spreading the word" and giving thought to spending their money with you. 



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