

Marketing Link

A publication of Bells International, Inc. Vol. 2 No. 1

Marketing Link is your link to news, information and advice on issues of interest to businesses, organizations and marketing professionals. The newsletter emphasizes topics related to marketing, advertising, promotions, communications and corporate culture.

Find all issues of Marketing Link online at
www.bellsintl.com/m-link

Promotional Products: Does Your Business Have the Right Stuff?

People like stuff. That fact sparks commerce, builds relationships and spurs human ambition. It also drives a form of advertising that holds a unique place in the marketing industry—and in the psyche of consumers.

A promotional product is advertising you can touch. Unlike other ad media, it has ownership value. It is a cornucopia of "stuff" incorporating virtually everything your customers wear, use, consume or display. The list includes wearables, sports and leisure products, office tools, food products, writing instruments and thousands of

other items. Interestingly, promotional products convey your message in a way that is perceived not only as a method of marketing—but as a gift. In fact, they are the only form of advertising that instills gratification with each presentation.

In this edition of Marketing Link, you'll be introduced to the wide variety of promotional products available for marketing your business or message and learn strategies for using this powerful marketing tool.

See **The Right Stuff**, Pg. 2



PLUS

Top 10 and Timelines	2
Distributors, Suppliers and You	3
Giveaways and the Art of Trade Show & Tell	3
Imprinting Techniques	4
Inc. Blotter	4

The Right Stuff

Continued from Pg. 2

How to Use Promotional Products

Not only do people like stuff—they need stuff. Promotional products run the gamut from novel executive toys to essential job equipment. In today's promotional industry, virtually everything is available in an imprinted form. That's a lot of stuff. In fact, businesses and organizations spent \$17,311,730,376 in 2004 on imprinted merchandise to carry their promotional messages.

Buying a promotional product is one thing, using it is another. There is an art to getting the most from your messaging. By utilizing proper strategies, you'll increase the effectiveness of your campaign and create greater opportunities for achieving your marketing goals.

As with any advertising medium, you'll need to ask yourself a series of questions to help in identifying your target, defining your objectives and setting a budget.

1. Who are you trying to reach?
2. Is it a single, defined prospect or are you casting a net on a wider group of clients?
3. Is the target an existing client or is this their first encounter with your company?
4. Is the relationship friendly or more businesslike?
5. How important are they to your business?
6. What marketing materials are your competitors using?
7. Is this a one-time message or part of a larger, continuing campaign?
8. Are you looking to close the deal or just arrange a meeting?

Once you've answered these questions, you'll have a better understanding of the type of products needed to achieve your objectives. For example, if you've identified a single prospect that brings great value to your business, you might reach out with a high-end gift item like a golf club or an embroidered jacket. But if you're reaching out to a large number of prospects, high-end products can be a significant drain on your budget. Fortunately, there are a number of items (everything from magnets to portfolios to electronic calculators) that have a higher

perceived value but can be purchased in larger quantities at a modest cost.

Choosing the Right Product

Promotional products can be highly targeted for a specific prospect or group, but it's important to make selections that are appropriate for the recipient. An imprinted potholder might open doors with a local restaurant, but it's less likely to make an impression at a trucking company. Similarly, a T-shirt that wins friends at a radio station could go unnoticed by the CEO of a Fortune 500 company.

Choosing the right product for the right customer can yield benefits for your business. Consider the type of industry you're targeting. Is there a product that serves a job-related purpose? For example,

a prescription pad displaying your company logo might be an item a doctor would use on a daily basis. The effect can be equally powerful in items with a personal use—think of a lunch cooler, keyholder or flashlight. These products have a broad appeal and high-use factor without being limited to a particular group or profession.

Just as an item can reflect the needs of a particular recipient, you can select products that reflect your own business. A car dealership, for instance, might choose a roadside emergency kit, and a computer store could distribute imprinted mousepads. This technique makes a memorable connection between your product or service and the item given to a recipient. The same effect can be achieved by using custom-shaped magnets, notepads or keyholders that remind users of your business category.



THE TOP 10

A 2003 study by Louisiana State University lists the following groups as the nation's Top Ten Promotional Products Users by sales volume.

1. Educational Entities
2. Financial Businesses
3. Health Care Services and Organizations
4. Not-For-Profit Organizations
5. Construction Firms and Suppliers
6. Government
7. Trade and Professional Associations
8. Real Estate Industry
9. Automotive Firms
10. Professional Services

Popular Uses for Promotional Products

1. Business gifts
2. Trade show giveaways
3. Company stores
4. Fundraising
5. Corporate communications
6. Employee incentives
7. Recruitment tools
8. Awards
9. Reminder advertising
10. Brand awareness

Find more information about this newsletter, view previous issues, or sign up a friend to receive Marketing Link by going to:

www.bellsintl.com/m-link

Promotional Products Timeline

1888

Two Iowa newspaper publishers place a watercolor painting of the county courthouse on a piece of cardboard, add a calendar pad and sell advertising space around it. They print the item and sell it to the public.

1889

The Mendelson Opera Company advertises on matchbooks.



1892

Trading cards and promotional buttons debut.



1930

Charles Ward advertises his consulting company on the back of playing cards.

Distributors, Suppliers and You



The promotional products industry is divided into specialized categories—suppliers and distributors. There are approximately 20,000 distributors in the United States representing more than 3,500 suppliers. It is an interdependent relationship that requires companies to work together to put the completed product in the hands of a buyer.

A company desiring promotional products works directly with a distributor. The distributor is a sales and consulting specialist that can help you develop ideas for using a promotional product, then direct you to items that meet your specific needs and budget. In addition, the distributor can recommend imprinting and packaging options to enhance the effectiveness of your message.

The advantage to you as a client is that the distributor has access to many suppliers and can provide you with the greatest range of options in price, materials, colors and other considerations. Also, the distributor acts as your liaison with the supplier to ensure that logos and artwork meet necessary imprinting requirements and that the products are delivered by a specified date.

The supplier is a company that manufactures, imports or converts a particular product for its end-use. Suppliers depend on distributors to be the sales force for their particular product line.

When working with a distributor, keep in mind that they can turn to different suppliers to try to get a better price, a wider range of colors or a higher quality material. Don't be afraid to ask your representative to search for similar items that better suit your budget or individual needs. In addition, the per-item cost of most products decreases as the quantity increases. Ask your representative about quantity price-breaks (if it's an item you'll be using again, stocking up could be cost-effective). If your needs are smaller, have your sales representative look for a manufacturer who accepts lower quantity orders.

By being specific about your goals and desires when talking with your distributor, you greatly increase the chance they'll be able to find the item you need at the price you want.

Giveaways and the Art of Trade Show & Tell

Like fine wine and cheese, few things are as perfectly paired as promotional products and trade shows. Promotional products are the lifeblood of these industry spectacles, drawing roaming prospects to your booth with the promise of a particular gift or giveaway item.

Choosing the right trade show promotion is an art form that can mean the difference between a successful event and failure. Talk to your promotional products representative about your unique needs before selecting your booth materials.

Here are some guidelines to consider when preparing for your trade show:

Know Your Target

Not everyone who comes to your booth is a bona fide lead. Consider having a lower priced giveaway item for chance encounters and a more prized item (like a portfolio or a paperweight) for promising prospects. A higher value item helps ensure that your logo remains with your prospect for a longer period of time.

Be Unique

The key to success at a trade show is the ability to stand apart from the crowd. Try to find unique giveaway items that are less likely to appear at other booths.

TIP: tote bags are always good giveaways because they provide booth-goers with the means to carry the loot they pick up throughout the show—and your prospects keep them longer than plastic bags.

Prizes

Rather than have a low-priced giveaway item that everyone takes home, consider offering one higher priced promotional product that will be given away in a drawing. It's a great way to collect information about attendees.

Send a Pre-Show Gift

Try sending a promotional product to a list of likely attendees before they leave for the show. Studies indicate pre-show giveaways can improve your booth traffic by 300 percent—and you can hand-pick the prospects you want to meet.

Imprint Your Information

A business card can be lost or tossed. Try imprinting your phone number on your promotional giveaway (use common sense—it's great on a refrigerator magnet but probably not on a golf shirt) to ensure your contact information stays handy.



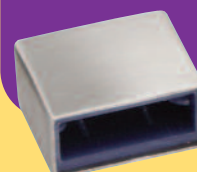
1970s

Watches, calculators, and other technology items emerge as low-cost promotional items.



1990s

The rise in personal computer use results in promotional opportunities on mousepads, screensavers, disk cases and other accessories.



2000s

Portable technology breakthroughs lead to promotional innovations on cell phone covers, iPods and transportable data storage devices.



1945

Ballpoint pen surges in popularity, supplanting the fountain pen.



1949

T-shirt debuts as a promotional vehicle. The medium becomes a fashion statement in the 1960s and its popularity continues to grow today.

Common Imprinting Techniques

What's in a name? Clearly, Shakespeare never worked in the promotional products industry. Your name is the calling card for your business. The method used to imprint your logo can convey distinction, competence, price-awareness, quality and more.

Many products offer a choice of imprinting methods, which can significantly affect the cost of the item. Ask your representative about available imprinting options before making your final selection.



Screen Printing



Embroidery



Debossing



Branding



Laser Engraving



Deep Etching



Giving is its own reward -- at least when it comes to promotional products. One study showed that recipients of a promotional product have a more favorable view of the firm doing the giving than clients who do not receive one. They're also up to 24 percent more likely to refer that company to another individual.

Bigger isn't always better. Surveys show that for certain high-end items—plaques, awards, briefcases, watches, fine writing instruments and the like—a subtle imprint made the best impression with recipients.

It's nice to be remembered. A study by Schreiber & Associates said that 39 percent of people who receive promotional products remember the name of the advertiser up to six months later.

Marketing Link

Marketing Link is a publication of Bells International, Inc., an Austin-based corporation offering advertising, promotional products, new media, event fulfillment, online store development and marketing services for clients across the U.S.

Contact Us

Please send news, comments and Letters to the Editor to your contact at Bells or to:

Marketing Advertising Creative Services

Diana Hyland
dhyland@bellsintl.com
512.454.9663ex228
888.440.4649ex228
Fax 512.380.7974

Promotional Products

Terry Wilt
terry@bells.com
512.454.9663ex201
800.822.0114ex201
Fax 512.451.7653

Online Stores

Shawna Plumb
shawna@imprintmall.com
512.454.9663ex215
888.440.4649ex215
Fax 512.451.7657

© 2006 Bells International, Inc.

www.bellsintl.com

Find more information about this newsletter, view previous issues, or sign up a friend to receive Marketing Link by going to:

www.bellsintl.com/m-link