

7 Ways to Create Promotional Items Your Customers Will Love

A good promotional product is hard to match when it comes to attracting new clients to your business and staking out a claim for quality and customer appreciation. It is a simple fact that few things are a better reminder of your brand, than an actual physical item, especially a useful one, such as an umbrella or a coffee cup.

Some businesses may balk at the idea of spending money to create something they will give away for free, but this is a short-sighted position that fails to see the excellent ROI such products have proven to bring. When done the right way, of course.

So how exactly do you achieve this? How do you make sure that the quality and the effect is worth the price? The following report will outline the 7 steps you must take to design, create and ultimately deliver high quality promotional items into the hands of delighted clients.

1) Understand Your Purpose

While it may be tempting to want to craft the ultimate must-have trinket, some unforgettable item that your clients will never leave the house with, this kind of thinking misses the point. You must look at your promotional item as the opening line of a conversation, something relatively simple yet memorable which will make your prospect think positively about your business and “break the ice” before your sales effort proper.

Keep in mind that there is a strong psychological component here, the so called “Law of Reciprocity” means that when given something for free, humans feel an instinctive desire to return the favor, hence making them more likely to become a customer. In fact, [research](#) has shown that as many as 52% of people given a promotional item ended up doing business with that company, and 100% has a more favorable opinion of the brand after. It is simply a part of human nature, and thus a powerful ally for your company.

2) Determine What the Item Should Be

You want your promotional item to have the right combination of utility and visibility. A simple pen or notepad is certainly very useful, but such branded items are a dime a dozen and more likely to be dumped in a non-descript pile on someone’s desk than to be showed off to friends and family. Something that is bold and highly visible, while still useful of course, is a much more effective proposition, and one that can turn any lead into a walking billboard for your brand. An item that can be seen from far away, such as something drawing attention all across a trade-show floor, is a bright beacon proclaiming “Free Stuff!” and drawing in curious people from every corner of the room. Talk about reach!

Promotional products are an amazing way to attract attention so focus on that before anything else when deciding what it will be. Items like branded bags or umbrellas, for example, have the

perfect combination of usability and visibility that would want to achieve. Lastly, a third consideration, durability, can ensure that your investment continues to deliver returns for years to come. While a TV commercial, or magazine ad may run for a few weeks, a good, well crafted promotional item will remain with you customers for as long as they find it useful, spreading around free branded impressions over and over and over. A study of business travelers determined that from the 71% who had received a promotional item in the last 12 months, a full third still actually had it in their possession at the time of the survey!

3) Choose Quality over Quantity - Always

A poorly made item that either feels cheap or worse, breaks easily in the hands of prospective clients, is a sure way to waste money on a PR disaster. The last thing you want people to associate with your brand is the frustration of dealing with a crappy product; one that will make the recipient wonder if this is the shoddy level of quality they can expect from all your work. Something too generic is not much better, as it denotes little effort on your behalf and drops the perceived value of your free item, which in turn weakens the reciprocity effect we discussed earlier.

On the flip-side, a durable item that is manufactured with care and performs as well, or better, than something your prospect would have paid for, is a sure way to tell them you care about what you create, that you know how to get a quality product made, and above all, that you care about THEM. Always strive to associate your brand with something unique and well made, if you focus on saving a few bucks on a cheap product instead, you are pouring money down the drain.

4) Find the Right Partner to Craft Your Item

So, you have decided on the what your promotional product will be and are set on creating a high quality item that your customers will use, enjoy and remember you for; now how to get it made?

The key here is finding a vendor with both the experience to ensure timely delivery, a portfolio of well-made, top quality items, and the capability to handle the project from soup to nuts. That last part is very important since, while it may be tempting to find the best deal on a design, and then hand it over to a different manufacturer, this can turn into a disaster full of delays and errors. The manufacturer may not fully understand your design, or be able to make any last minute changes. A cumbersome shipping process and an unclear timeline can leave you miss your key event, and leave you stuck with a box of promotional merchandise you can't give away. A production error with no accountability can sink the entire endeavor.

Do not let this happen to you! Select a company that takes care of the entire process and works with you on every step from design to delivery. Such a vendor can act as a true partner, helping you plan out your design better, smoothing out any discrepancies with the manufacturer, and

ensuring that shipping happens on time and you don't have to deal with any unpleasant surprises. They can even help you decide what to make for future projects or how to best get your item into as many hands as possible.

5) Develop the Look

This is where you have to work with your chosen vendor to get the right look for your product. Sometimes a simple logo on a quality item can be enough to achieve your objective, other times you may want to choose a bolder design to draw all eyeballs to your item. This will depend upon your target audience and on the campaign you have planned. A big sports event would benefit from striking visuals and all-over print, while a bank should choose to go with something more conservative such as a strategically placed logo. Once again, this is an area where having an experienced partner really pays off, as they can draw on their extensive knowledge help you design the perfect look to match your needs.

Always get a pre-production sample before manufacturing the entire set! There could be errors or misunderstandings even with the best of vendors, so this one way to make sure you are getting exactly what you want. Touch and feel your promotional item before giving the green light and you can easily save yourself a lot of anguish.

6) Get Your Stuff On Time

This may sound pretty simple, but it is essential that you plan way ahead when you will need your promotional items and then select a company that can deliver on your timeline. Do what you can to help the process move along faster. If you have a design team, get templates from your chosen company to help them out, and make sure you know the exact logo and colors you will want early on. Find out the estimated manufacture and delivery time and check in regularly to ensure things are on schedule.

Depending on your urgency, and the complexity of the promotional item, it is possible to have it done and delivered pretty fast, but don't risk compromising quality for a rush job. Some highly experienced companies, such as UmbrellasCustom.com however, do offer a high quality logo quick print service with a Ten-Day Turnaround, but such speed is rare in the industry.

7) Hand it Over to Delighted Customers

You now have your promotional items in hand, are happy with how they look and certain that any leads who receive them will love them and use them for (possibly) years to come. Now, what is the best way to pass them out? The particular method will likely vary highly depending on your product and your industry, but one of the most common methods are sending gift packages to your most prized customers. It is a great way to remind them of who you are and to associate the good mood created by a gift with your business. Schedule sending such gift to

coincide with the launch of new products or features, and throw in a promotion or discount as well to really push your targets into looking to do more business with you.

Another very common scenario is the trade show. This is why it is key to get your items on time, as many businesses will plan their promotional items specifically as a campaign for a high profile industry trade show. It is indeed the perfect scenario, a big floor full of people in your industry looking to learn more and possibly make purchase orders. This is also a perfect place to let your new company swag shine; you can reach people all across the trade show floor when they see someone walking around with your promotional item and ask them “where did you get that!?” In fact, a trade show survey showed that there was a whopping 176% increase in trade show traffic at booths that gave out promotional items! Be sure not to miss this opportunity, for more tips on trade show success, here is an excellent [Forbes article](#) to help you out.