

# best practices whitepaper: 5 ways to boost your business with branded merchandise



As a marketer, how can you cut through the noise of the marketplace and hoist your brand above it? It takes all the marketing power and creativity you have, and promotional items, when used effectively, have been among the strongest performers in marketers' tool kits.

Promotional marketing works so well because people like giveaways. Most people who received promotional items recently (85 percent) remembered the advertisers, 50 percent had a more favorable impression of them, and 37 percent said they were more likely to do business with them, according to a 2014 report from the Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI).<sup>1</sup>

Maybe that's why last year, marketers spent 7.2 percent more on promotional items as the U.S. industry grew to \$19.8 billion in 2013.<sup>2</sup>

Despite almost limitless choice, you can start to select promotional products by defining your marketing goal. You can begin by knowing your marketing objective, understanding your audience, setting a budget, and establishing your go-to-market strategy. Here are 5 ways you can use promotional items to support your business goals.

1

**BUILD BRAND AWARENESS**

Elevate your brand by using promotional products as part of your social media strategy to engage customers through reward-based programs. Offer discounts to consumers who “like” your brand’s Facebook page. If you’re looking to connect with audiences offline, consider direct mail. Consumers are four times more likely to respond to direct mail than email, according to the Direct Marketing Association. Focus on ways in which your promotional products and communication channels – social media or direct mail – can complement each other.

2

**ACQUIRE CUSTOMERS**

Make your promotional items memorable. Put your marketing collateral on a branded thumb drive. Host contests with top-of-the-line products or services as the grand prize along with promotional items, printed with coupon or codes, as consolation prizes.

3

**KEEP CUSTOMERS**

It costs far more to acquire a new customer than it does to sell to an existing one. Express gratitude to your loyal customers by sending a promotional gift on their birthdays or for a holiday. You can also retain customers through customer loyalty programs and distributor preference programs that include premiums gifts.

4

**DRIVE ENGAGEMENT AT EVENTS**

Trade shows are ideal places to use promotional products to stand out from the crowd. Make sure the gifts are relevant and/or useful.

5

**MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES**

Happy employees lead to happy customers. Maintain employee morale by hosting internal contests or giving awards. You can encourage employees to achieve specific goals by offering products tied to those goals.

**Sources:**

1. <http://asicentral.com/asp/open/research/impressionsstudy/impressions-study-2014.pdf>
2. <http://www.ppai.org/inside-ppai/research/Documents/2013%20SalesVolume%20Sheet.pdf>

## elevate your branded merchandise

Traditional branded merchandise – pens, apparel, bags – are popular. But fresh, smart ideas draw attention and can invigorate your brand. You could, for example, commission an artist to create a piece with an unconventional take on your brand. You could then apply that image on your promotional products. A creative strategy, rooted in common sense, will resonate with your audience.

### about innerworkings, inc.

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