

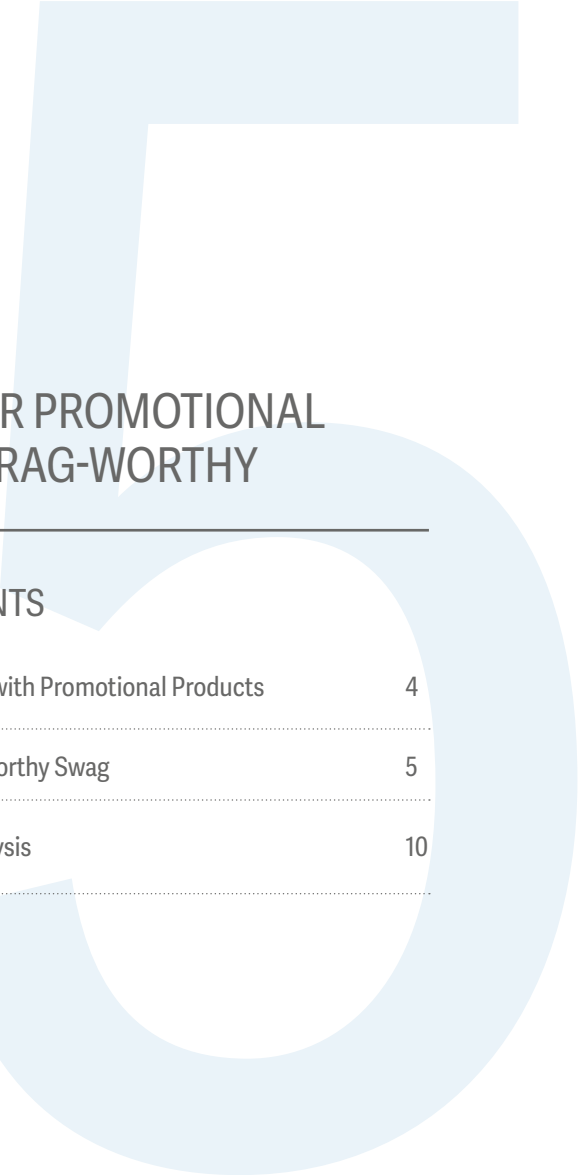


STRATEGIES
TO MAKE YOUR
BRANDED MERCHANDISE
BRAG WORTHY

 AliantBrands



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STRATEGIES TO MAKE YOUR PROMOTIONAL GIVEAWAYS BRAG-WORTHY

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In today's information-intensive world, it's hard for any business to attract potential customers. But promotional products offer a unique opportunity to get your company's name out to its target market — and keep it there.

The promotional items that you choose are limited only by your own creativity and imagination. They can range from market-proven goods — such as calendars, coffee mugs, and baseball caps — to innovative items like candy and nuts, stadium blankets, toy cars and trucks, and first aid kits.

Whatever items you pick, all should bear your logo and contact information.

No matter what route you take or which items you select, be sure you maximize your investment. Here are a few tips to make the most of this time-tested sales and marketing resource:

Set clear goals for your promotion.

Think about what you want these products to do for your business. Should they build awareness of your company? Boost sales? Provide a way to thank your customers? Have clear goals in mind from the start in order to purchase items that make sense for your business.

Set a budget and stick to it.

Putting your logo on a coffee mug or a mouse pad tells customers that you've arrived and you're in business for the long haul.

Avoid overspending:

Identify your costs up front, factor them into your overall marketing budget and pricing strategy, and keep careful track of all expenses — especially indirect costs like shipping and handling and storage.

Seek out partnership opportunities.

If you'd like to offer gifts at one of your events, ask one of your suppliers to share the cost. In exchange, recognize them by placing their logo on the gift. Joint promotional efforts strengthen relationships with suppliers and make a statement about your commitment.

Recognize the limited shelf life of most promotional products.

Don't buy more than you need. A lot of businesses have stockrooms full of outdated promotional items.

Promotional items can be a silent salesperson for your products or services. Keeping these tips in mind will help you to make the most of your promotional items' potential.

5 STRATEGIES TO MAKE YOUR PROMOTIONAL GIVEAWAYS BRAG-WORTHY

Pound for pound, impression for impression, giving away logoed products is the cheapest form of advertising, according to an Advertising Specialty Impressions study of over 100,000 consumers.

The study also found that people younger than 55 prefer branded merchandise over all other forms of advertising, and like internet and mobile ads the least.

So you should probably do a Google search for “company swag” and order a bunch of hats, T-shirts and calendars today, right? Not so fast!

The good thing about putting your logo on giveaway items is that people remember your brand for months or years after receiving a promotional product from you. The bad thing? Your customers may remember you in ways you wished they'd forget.

So before you load up a shopping cart with \$4 hats or \$1 calendars, keep your brand and audience top of mind.

The worst swag is not necessarily the item itself but the disconnect that is created when it's not in keeping with your brand.

Avoid giving out bad swag by keeping the following expert advice in mind.

ITS ALL ABOUT PERCENTAGES!

- 1 58% of people in the US own promotional T-shirts
- 2 53% own promotional drinkware
- 3 50% own promotional bags, writing instruments, or outerwear
- 4 45% own promotional USB drives
- 5 41% own caps and headwear
- 6 41% own promotional desk supplies
- 7 29% own promotional calendars

1 HAVE A CLEAR OBJECTIVE IN MIND

Know what you want to accomplish before dipping into your marketing budget. Otherwise, you could end up wasting money on promotional items no one really wants.

What is your ideal outcome for a promotional campaign? Are you trying to increase brand recognition in your area or get people interested in a new business? Looking to acquire a few high-value customers within a specific timeframe?

Your goals should determine how much money and effort you devote to the project. Designing personalized promotional items is a smart way to target a niche market when you have high-end products or a highly refined audience.

On the other hand, simple, low-cost promotional items make sense for spreading brand awareness among a general audience. In the US alone, roughly 90% of people remember who gave them a promotional T-shirt. These products are attractive and visual, making them a great choice for reaching as many people as possible.

2 START WITH POPULAR PRODUCT CATEGORIES

In many ways, you have unlimited options for creating custom promotional products. The Coca-Cola Company once installed "happiness" vending machines around the world that gave out freebies, offered words of encouragement, and performed good deeds.

Obviously, a small business won't resort to such extremes, but it's possible to create branded versions of just about any item. However, it may involve a lot of trial and error to find an out-of-the-box promotional product that delivers the results you want.

In the meantime, get inspiration from popular products that have a high rate of success across diverse customer segments.

Choose a product that offers the most functional value to your customers. If your customers are mainly business professionals, they might find desk supplies and USB drives more useful than a shirt.

3 LEARN EVERYTHING YOU CAN ABOUT YOUR AUDIENCE

The more you understand about your customers, the easier it is to make a lasting impression that keeps your business top of mind. Factors such as age, gender, family status, and occupation play a big role in how customers view the value of promotional products.

Think about the type of people you're targeting and the lifestyles they lead. Consider these key findings from the Advertising Specialty Institute.

- Promotional pens offer the best balance of cost and marketing impressions
- Women between 18 and 24 are more likely to own bags with a logo
- Rural and older adults are more likely to own promotional calendars
- Younger adults between 18 and 34 own more promotional desk supplies
- Suburban and rural consumers are more likely to own logoed drinkware
- Men are more likely to own promotional USB drives and outerwear

4 MAKE LONGEVITY YOUR TOP PRIORITY

The biggest benefit of using promotional products is their ability to become a routine part of your customers' lives. When customers use your product several times a week, your branding lands in front of new people. Repeat contact helps to spark interest in people who aren't familiar with your business, encouraging them to seek you out when they have a relevant need.

In order to trigger this ongoing sales funnel, you have to create products with staying power. How do you do that?

- **Make It Wearable:** In general, wearables have the highest success rate because they display your branding in a bold, visual manner.
- **Match the Environment:** Environmental targeting is choosing a product designed to be used in your customer's home or work environment. For example, the average person keeps promotional desk supplies for 14 months and calendars for 12 months.
- **Solve a Problem:** Put utility first, and hand out products that solve a common problem for your customers.

5 MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS

The work you put into creating great promotional items is pointless if you aren't measuring your return on investment. To be fair, it isn't easy to know whether customers are using your product or follow up with everyone who comes in contact with your branded items.

However, you can use surveys and other forms of feedback to gather insight into your marketing efforts. Find out who referred new customers, and ask them if they have ever seen or received promotional products from you.

Go a step further, and thank existing customers who continually drive more business your way. Talk to loyal customers about their favorite types of promotional products. If you offer them freebies tailored to their interests, customers have even more incentive to say positive things about your business.



PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS FOR BRANDING

A lineup of promotional merchandise ranging from calendars to coffee mugs — can be a great way to spread the word about your company's name and products. Promotional items can:

- **Reward current customers.**
Perks are a perfect way to reward customer loyalty.
- **Build name recognition.**
Promotional products can subtly ingrain your firm's name into the minds of existing and potential consumers.
- **Supplement your media plan.**
Promotional giveaways make their way into customers' homes. Unlike a flyer or advertisement, a coffee mug might find a permanent home in your customer's work or home kitchen cabinet. People who would ignore a newspaper ad or a radio jingle might notice your logo on a golf ball that they use every weekend.

Choosing the right items to give away is important. You'll want to come up with something that isn't too expensive but will make an impact. The best choices are items that people really use. Start with these ideas:

- **Calendars.** Print your logo, address, and phone number at the bottom of every page. Consider highlighting important dates for your business (sales, etc.) on the calendar itself. Need help coming up with an effective company logo? Read *Logo Design* for some good ideas on how to start the process.
- **Desk accessories.** Emblazoning pens, pencils, and stationery with a company's name is one of the oldest tricks in the book. It works.
- **Golf balls.** Link your company's name to your customers' favorite pastime. Possible drawback: Your logo won't do much good buried in the woods or at the bottom of a pond.

- **Hats, shirts, jackets.** These get the word out to your customers, and anyone who sees them wearing your logo. In effect, you can turn your customers into walking billboards for your firm.

- **Refrigerator magnets.** Magnets are an extremely cheap way to get your firm's name posted in thousands of locations. Domino's Pizza gives out a magnet with every delivery that includes their logo and the phone number of the local branch.
- **Key chains.** A cheap way to attach your company's name to something people carry around with them every day.
- **Watches.** What time is it? Time to buy something from you.



PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY STATISTICS, TRENDS & ANALYSIS

The promotional products industry is unique because it doesn't manufacture the items that it sells. Active firms will purchase magnets, calendars, mugs, T-shirts, and a wide range of other products which are then customized to meet the needs of a client's advertising or marketing effort.

It is like having a business card that promotes a company, but it offers the message on a usable product instead.

Because of the promotional products industry, the advertising and marketing messages created by brands can continue to live on after the initial exposure.

- 88% of people can remember the advertiser specifically after viewing an item on an industry product.
- 47% of those who receive one of these items say that they have kept them for at least 12 months.

Brands purchase items from this industry to give to their future customers. It may be the only set of products where the advertising you offer to people is something for which they will thank you.

Wool Selection



Soft knitted beanies,
ideal from autumn to spring.



IMPORTANT PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY STATISTICS

The promotional products industry has a current value of \$23.3 billion. This amount set a record for the industry in total sales volume, top in the previous record in 2016 by over \$2 billion.

- Wearables are the most popular product category for the promotional products industry today. 35.8% of all sales involved in this category, with 28% involving apparel.
- Drinkware comes in second with 8.4% of product sales.
- Writing items follow at 6.6%, then it is travel (6.3%), technology (5.6%), and automotive products (3.5%).

Sources: ASI, Sage World Promo Marketing Magazine, Microsoft, Promotional Products Association International

PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY STATISTICS BY OVERALL MARKET SIZE

Business services are the top buyers of promotional products each year. The primary use for industry products is to promote brand recognition, product awareness, and to establish a corporate identity.

- 70% of brands say that they consider promotional products to “always” or “mostly” be effective when attempting to achieve marketing goals as an organization.
- 89% of consumers say that they have received a promotional product in the last six months. That caused 79% of them to research the brand after receiving an item, while 83% report that the contacts made it more likely that they would do business with the brand that was offering items from this industry.

- 90% of the people who receive a promotional product say that they can remember the branding when encountering it again.
- 80% of people who received promotional products in the past six months said that they recalled the messaging offered by the brand, while another 70% said that they could remember the call to action that was given. Generation Xers recalled the directional call to action or statements with definitive instruction.
- 80% of people own up to 10 promotional products at any given time. 53% said that they use their promotional product at least once per week.
- 60% of consumers who received promotional products say that they keep them for up to 24 months.



PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY STATISTICS ON T-SHIRTS, DRINKWARE AND BAGS

- Only 20% of people will take a promotional product that they don't want and put it into the trash immediately. Even when the item is unwanted, the average lifespan of an item from this industry is 6.6 months.
- 91% of consumer say that they have at least one promotional product in their kitchen at any given moment. Another 74% say that there is at least one promotional item in their workspace.
- Two-thirds of consumers who receive promotional product industry items say that they pass along the items to someone else when they don't want to keep them.
- 41% of consumers who receive promotional items from a brand with whom they are interested in working will keep them for up to 5 years. 18% of consumers that they keep promotional products for over 11 years.

- Bags are one of the most popular item distributed from the promotional products industry because they offer roughly 6000 impressions every time a recipient uses it. 31% of consumers in the United States own at least one promotional bag.
- Writing instruments and bags are the cheapest items to produce in the promotional products industry at the cost of just 1/10th of a cent per item.
- Mugs with a logo on them are more effective for advertising and marketing purposes than television or radio spots. 57% of consumers say that they can recall the messages offered on the promotional product compared to the 32% who say that they remember what they say in the media.
- 15% of people in the Midwest own at least one item of outerwear from the promotional products industry, which is the highest percentage of any region in the United States for this option.
- When asked why they keep promotional products, the top three answers given were that the products were fun, functional, and trendy.

- 82% of people say that their impression of a brand becomes more favorable when they receive a promotional product as an advertising effort. That's why this form of marketing is often rated as being the most effective way to prompt action across all generations and devices.

Branded apparel and warables is the most popular item distributed in the United Kingdom because they offer over 5000 impressions every time a receiptent uses it.



Sources: ASI; Sage World; Promo Marketing Magazine; Microsoft; Promotional Products Association International



GLOBAL PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY STATISTICS

- 77% of consumers say that the primary reason why they keep a promotional product, even if they don't support the brand that gave it to them, is because the item proved itself to be useful in some way.
- 59% of employees who receive promotional products that reflect the branding and messages of their employer have a more favorable impression of their workplace when they are given an item.
- 85% of promotional product recipients will eventually do business with the advertiser, which means 17 out of 20 people will become a customer at some point because of the efforts made to distribute industry items.
- Adding promotional products to the mix of media advertising makes the effectiveness of each campaign up to 44% better because of the change in attitude that a consumer experiences when they receive an item they can use.
- Promotional products offered by brands working with this industry can draw up to 500% more referrals from satisfied customers compared to an appeal letter being sent out by the organization alone.
- Up to 15% of adults under the age of 35 say that they go out of their way to avoid traditional advertising services.
- Over 61% of the calendars that people use at home, along with 76% of the same item at a business, come from the promotional products industry.
- Although 77% of Americans say that they own a smartphone, 50% of them have never used the calendar function on their mobile device. These consumers will still use the calendar that they have on their desk or wall to organize their space.
- The top 50 promotional products distributors generated over \$5 billion in revenues in 2017, a figure that was up over \$500 million from the year before.
- There are 22 states and one Canadian province that has at least one of the top 50 promotional product distributors. Ohio has the most, with six firms appearing on the 2017 list.
- The U.S. Midwest accounts for the most firms in the top 50 of the industry, with 42% of active companies making the list. In comparison, only three states in the West have one distributor as a top earner for the industry.
- The top 50 distributors of promotional products in North America employ more than 15,000 people, with Taylor Communications responsible for 1/3 of that amount. 32 firms that appear in this list employed at least 100 people in 2017.
- 48% of consumers say that they would like to receive promotional products from brands more often.
- 69% of consumers say that they would pick up a promotional item on their own without prompting if they felt like the item would be useful to them in some way.

Sources: ASI; Sage World Promo Marketing Magazine; Microsoft Promotional Products Association International

Drinkware Is Everywhere!

Workday or weekend adventures, everyone's got that one go-to drinkware piece.



The promotional products industry is also shifting toward social media by creating specific hashtag marketing opportunities with their items to expand consumer reach. Over 43 million posts on Instagram use the #Adidas search, while #Nike has 69 million posts. Almost every item features apparel from the brand in the image.

The global promotional products industry currently has over 40,000 distributors and 7,150 suppliers offering products and services. The United States holds the greatest share of this industry with roughly 25,000 active firms, followed by Europe with about 12,000. Canada comes in third with 7,200.

PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

There is no doubt about it: the world is becoming a much smaller place. It is easier than ever before for a business to find customers internationally.

That means the average consumer receives more brand of messages every day in 2019 than arguably at any other time in history. Over 2,000 different messages are absorbed by potential customers. If you want to make an impact on someone, then you need to make your brand message rise above all of the white noise that people hear each day. You must become interesting as a brand and business right now to be relevant.

That is why the promotional products industry continues to grow at a steady pace in the United States and around the world. It is one of the easiest and most affordable ways for organizations to connect with potential customers. When they offer

something that is useful without charge, then there is an excellent chance that the person will one day become a customer.

The future of company swag will continue to evolve as technologies keep developing. A preference for wearables will transition into smart tech that could help to monitor a person's vital signs. More items will try to connect with consumers who are using their mobile devices to interact and shop online. Virtual reality and augmented reality are untapped resources where early adopters could create a lasting impression on consumers.

Over the next 5 year period through 2024, the upward trend for this segment should continue. Although it isn't a recession-proof sector, a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3% is a reasonable performance expectation of the promotional products industry.

Sources: ASI; Sage World; Promo Marketing Magazine; Microsoft; Promotional Products Association International



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