

## THE EFFECTIVE USE OF PROMOTIONAL ITEMS AT TRADESHOWS

When you exhibit at tradeshow do you give out promotional items to visitors?

...Why?

Like every other aspect of marketing, you need to develop a detailed plan for the use of promotional items. If you don't have a strategy for distribution or an expectation for awareness and return on investment, you might just as well hand out dollar bills.

Far too often, staff are sent to a show with a display and a box of promotional items but have no idea how or when to use them. Some staff even try to give the items away as fast as possible so they don't have to carry them home when the show ends!

The three types of promotional items most companies require for the average tradeshow are detailed here:

- 1.** The **first** type of promotional item should be very inexpensive like candy or pen. They can be given out to every visitor. The best use for this type of item is to disengage from a conversation with a visitor that might not require your product or service. This is done by handing the client the item and saying "Thanks for stopping by our booth, please accept this pen. It has our web site and phone number on it should you require more information". Of course, the reason you need to disengage from a non-productive conversation is that it takes time away from your opportunity to speak with people who are walking by your display and may really require your services.
- 2.** The **second** type of promotional items you should have are "reward" level gifts. This type of item is given as a reward for information provided by the potential customer. To "earn" this incentive, a customer is asked to answer a questionnaire or fill out a lead form before receiving it.
- 3.** The **third**, and possibly the most important, type of promotional item you want to have at the trade show is a quality gift to give to your existing clients. This should be the top item that you distribute and should be used to recognize a client's effort in visiting your display and taking the time to see your latest products. A premium incentive of this type can also be used in pre-show marketing by sending out a card to existing as well as prospective customers telling them to bring the card to your display for a free gift. This is a great way to further deepen your relationship with existing clients and entice new customers to visit you.

Promotional items, when properly used, can greatly impact your success at trade shows. You can use them to your advantage and have every visitor leave your booth with a smile on their face.

### About the Author

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