

# Promotional Products Work!

By Blair Entenmann, President, MarketingHelp!

Promotional products have historically been the black sheep of promotion strategies. They've been called "toys for the boys", "trinkets & trash", and "junk". But properly planned and executed, promotional products are a valuable marketing tool. They are great as reminder advertising to reinforce your name or message.

## Uses of Advertising Specialty Products.

A recent survey by the Specialty Advertising Association of the Upper Midwest showed that the top eight uses of specialty advertising were:

- 1) Promote goodwill/image,
- 2) Reinforce marketing of existing products and services,
- 3) Recognize employee performance,
- 4) Generate sales leads,
- 5) Promote trade show traffic,
- 6) Introduce new products and services,
- 7) Stimulate employee sales performance,
- 8) Stimulate employee productivity.

## Selecting Promotional Products.

A good promotional product for your business has the following attributes. First and most important is the usefulness to the target audience. If it's useful, it will be kept. If it's not, it will be thrown away. Second, it needs to fit the image of your product or service -- on quality, aesthetics and uniqueness. The quality and appearance of the promotional product implies that your product or service has similar characteristics. Third, it needs to fit your budget. Generally you are better off buying less of something and being more selective in who receives it than buying a large quantity of "cheap stuff" to give to everybody. And finally, it has to be capable of being delivered in an effective way. It depends on your promotional objectives and strategy.

**Delivering Promotional Products.** Some products are very conducive to mail delivery, while others are better for hand delivery to a customer or prospect. Although most promotional products are delivered through the mail (41%), delivery in person at a trade show (16%) or during a sales call (13%) can be more effective. Through the mail is very good for prospect generation and customer acquisition programs. For sales conversion and customer retention programs, in-person delivery is probably better.

**Selecting a Vendor.** Promotional product resellers are a dime a dozen. Great ones are hard to find. With today's technology, they all have about 350,000 different industry products to choose from and everyone pays the same price. The difference in vendors is in the creativity they demonstrate in helping you select the right product for your need, and the customer service you receive after the "sale". The perfect promotional product for your business is available, if you have the right resource helping you find it.

As you are developing your next marketing plan or program, consider whether a promotional product deserves to be one of the marketing tools that you employ. Properly used, they can help you profitably grow your business.

Blair Entenmann is President of *MarketingHelp!*, a Grand Rapids based marketing firm specializing in helping clients catch and keep customers with better marketing strategies, programs and implementation. For more information, visit [www.mktghelp.com](http://www.mktghelp.com) or call 616-866-1198.