

The **Do's** & **Don'ts** of using promotional products

Source: epromos.com

It's easy using promotional products. You pick out a few cool items, get them imprinted with your logo, and hand them out to your target audience. Bam – you're done.

Easy, right?

Well, there's a lot more to it than that.

Using promotional products is an investment. If you want your investment to pay off, there are some important things to keep in mind.

In this article, we'll explore some do's and don'ts of using items imprinted with your logo.

Let's start with the do's.

DO understand your audience.

Who's going to be on the receiving end of your promotional products? If you want your giveaways to be effective, you first have to know who will be receiving them.

Take a moment to revisit your customer profile. Looking at demographics, you should have insight such as customer age, gender, geographic location, income range, education, and more.

Digging a bit deeper into the psychographics, it's helpful to know lifestyle information such as hobbies, attitudes, behaviors, values, interests, and the like.

So, why does all this matter when it comes to promotional products?

This information helps you in two important

ways.

First, knowing these details about your target customer allows you to adjust your product or service to best accommodate what your customers need. And second, it clues you in to how to reach your customers with your marketing and promotional efforts.

If you know, for example, that your core audience is businessmen who golf and work in large metropolitan areas, it makes sense to give them golf-related items – maybe nice golf shirts they can wear on the course or at the office, or perhaps leather golf accessories.

If you're marketing to rural agriculture workers, golf probably isn't the best way to go. Instead, you'd want to look at items they could use in the field – perhaps a hardy pair of gloves or a custom work jacket.

When you take the time to get to know your target market, your brand appears smart and a whole lot more relevant to the people you want to reach.

DO learn from other businesses.

Take some time to study the promo items that other companies have used, and figure out why they selected those products. Are they directly related to the brand? Are they quirky and unique?

Have a read of one of our other 'Useful Stuff' articles that cover ['How to choose Promotional Products'](#).

It's especially helpful to pay attention to the businesses in your niche. Have you noticed that other pediatricians are handing out drawstring bags for kids? Or that all the gyms in your area are distributing sports bottles?

Don't run out and order bags or sports bottles. The idea here isn't to directly copy your competitors. If you do this, you're already one step behind.

Instead, take their strategy and make it better. Think about how you can improve on what they're doing. Every time you see someone using a promotional product from a competitor, you have great insight into what customers want.

Bring your observations to your Promotional Marketing partner - tell them what you've seen and challenge them to one-up your competition - at JPS we LOVE this kind of challenge!

Going back to our examples above, you could give out drawstring bags with built-in water bottle pockets or distribute sports bottles with attached carabiners. The trick is to find out what works and take it to the next level.

DO think of clever ways to grab attention.

When you use promotional products, you don't have to resort to the same old, same old. Let's say you always send out a mug filled with pens or hand out key chains to passersby at a tradeshow. It's what you've always done, and it's what you think works.

The thing is, though, you're missing out on an

opportunity for epic creativity.

Think about ways to really make an impression on your audience. It could be the products themselves, or it could be the way in which they're delivered.

Check out these two awesome examples of guerilla marketing that are next level creative!

- [DHL is Faster](#)
- [Coke Zero 007 Challenge](#)

We're not saying you have to try and one-up your competitors as DHL has done, or blow your entire marketing budget by emulating Coke Zero's 007 campaign. But the brand's stunts were anything but boring – and that's what your promotions should aim to be.

People are busy. They're bombarded. They don't have time for anything that's dull or mundane. It takes a clever approach to get noticed.

Some ways you can do this include:

Street teams or brand ambassadors.

Sending people out in branded apparel to hand out freebies allows you to get face-to-face with potential customers. Your promotional products aren't just background items – they're front and center. [Click here](#) for a great example that any company could easily pull off.

Interactive promotions.

Don't just hand out your promos and be done – make them fun and exciting. Send people on a scavenger hunt to find your giveaways. Give out one component of your giveaway, and have prospects come back the next day for the second piece. The idea is to engage with people – not just hand out free stuff. JPS Marketing came up with a really creative way for a client to engage customers at a tradeshow. Instead of a standard freebie pen or magnet, they handed out parking timers that were pre-programmed to 'go off' at a certain time, prompting the recipient to return to the stand to receive a gift.

Incentives.

Use promos as perks when you want your customers to do something. Are you seeking more reviews for your restaurant? Want to

generate more referrals for your new business?
Want more likes on your Facebook page?
Motivate people to take action by offering up promotional products.

AT JPS Marketing we 'promote' ourselves all the time. From giving away free custom catalogues to our clients, to short-duration campaigns where we give away targeted items to entice or inform our customers. One self-promotion we did to grow our Merchandise Management business earned us an Industry Award for Excellence!

People love free stuff, and they're more willing to do what you're asking if they have the chance to get it. Just make sure the giveaway is universally appealing, or something that you know your audience will appreciate. Stay abreast of 'what's hot' right now - JPS Marketing has had success promoting itself using travel coffee mugs, drink bottles, headphones, powerbanks and, of course, lollies!

The key lesson here is: Be creative. Out with the boring and in with the bold when it comes to using promotional products.

Now that you've learned some do's when it comes to promotional products, let's examine some of the don'ts.

Don't be cheap.

Remember what we mentioned at the beginning of this article? Promotional products are an investment. Don't sacrifice quality to save a few bucks. Your brand image is on the line. If you go for the cheapest products you can find, people will correlate those giveaways with your brand.

That's not to say you need to shell out big bucks for your promotional items to be effective. You can create a stellar promotion and still keep well within your allotted budget – just don't make price your only consideration.

Do your research. Think about what you want your promo items to accomplish, and what your target audience would actually want to receive.

You'll be better off using promotional products (even if there are fewer of them) that are interesting and appealing to recipients than

getting a truckload of the cheapest items around.

You know the adage: You get what you pay for. It's true with promotional items, as well. Give your customers and prospects a cheaply made giveaway that breaks or falls apart, and you have a oneway ticket to the trash can. So much for that brand exposure you were hoping for.

Don't cheap out. You'll invest more money up front, but in the long run, it pays off for your brand and how it's perceived.

Don't weird people out.

There are some promotional products – think hygiene products or political products, for example – that make sense only for certain companies and campaigns.

If you give people something that makes them feel a little off, do you think they'll have positive feelings about your brand? No way.

Creativity is good, but don't cross the line and make people feel weird or uncomfortable with your giveaways. The last thing you want to do is upset your customers or turn them away from your brand.

A promotional toothbrush is a great giveaway if you're a dentist. If you're an accountant, well, not so much. Not only is the promo strangely out of place, but it could send the vibe that your clients have bad breath. They'd be weirded out that they just got a toothbrush from their Accountant, and they'd think about it every time they interact with you.

The same thing is true with political products. Unless you're running for office or you're a campaign manager, it's best to steer clear of any promo that might tip people off to your political leanings.

People are passionate about politics. If they can see that your views don't line up with theirs, you can kiss that brand loyalty goodbye. If you're not directly in the political arena or striving to make a political push, it's best to give it a wide berth. Go patriotic instead with country mascots (Kiwis or Korus for NZ, Wallabies or Koalas for AUS).

And when it comes to hygiene products, by all

means, leave the toothbrushes for the dentists. Otherwise, it's just too weird if it has nothing to do with your brand or promotion.

Don't hand out promos without a strategy.

Do you have a game plan for your promotional products? If you're not sure why you're giving them out, then don't do it. Take some time to figure out what you want to accomplish.

You should never invest in promos without knowing why you're making the investment. You'll simply be flinging freebies at people with no solid goal in mind.

Here are some things to consider. Will the promotional items be used for:

Brand awareness – Do you simply want to spread the word about your business?

Customer loyalty – Will the products be given out to reward and retain current customers?

New business – Do you hope to win new customers with your giveaways?

Employee recruitment – Is the purpose of the promos to attract new talent to your business?

Incentives – Are you hoping to use the items to motivate your audience to do something?

Thank-you gifts – Will the promotional products be used as tokens of gratitude?

Gift-with-purchase – Will the promos be given as freebies when customers buy something?

This is just a sampling of some of the reasons to give promo items. But it's a good place to start if you're unsure why you need to be using promotional products.

It's also smart to think about what's on the horizon for your business. You may uncover some hidden gems when it comes to distributing custom logo merchandise.

Do you have any upcoming:

- Conferences or tradeshow?

- Open houses?
- Fundraising events?
- Golf tournaments?
- Contests?
- Customer appreciation events?
- Awards ceremonies?

These are all prime opportunities to get your promo items into the hands of your customers and prospects.

Does it take time to develop a strategy for your promotional products? Yes. But it's so worth it.

You'll have a clear vision of what you want to achieve, and you'll have some actionable ideas on how to make it happen.

There's more to promotional marketing than you think

If, a few minutes ago, you thought using promotional products was as simple as putting your logo on something and handing it out, we hope we've cleared up that little misconception.

Promotional products are powerful, but you have to know how to use them. Take the time to know who you're marketing to. Pay attention to what other businesses are doing. And be creative. Promotional items shouldn't put people to sleep – they should catapult your brand to a whole new level.

Feel like being inspired? We have some great stuff on our [Pinterest](#) page showing products and promotions we thought were really cool. Or you can do a bit of window shopping on our [promotional products website](#).

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