

April 2017

## GREAT LOGOS PROVIDE VALUE TO SMBs



It's probably true that **entrepreneurs think differently**, which is why they can invent things or discover new approaches. But how do they think?

"Ignore the noise", "listen to your crazy ideas", and "ask for more than what you think you are entitled to" are just a few nuggets of wisdom cited recently when *Business Insider* and *Chron* asked **young, successful entrepreneurs about their thinking**. But entrepreneurship doesn't begin and end with great ideas. Nor is personal inspiration all that makes businesses take off.

Most entrepreneurs typically do have money on their mind. Though it is not the only thing that drives small and medium-sized business (SMB) owners to get up every morning and put in long hours, most do think to some degree about what they get for each dollar. To ultimately be successful, it's critical for them to consider the money invested in their businesses, from inventory to marketing.

Along the same lines, when thinking about our marketing services — for suppliers to distributors and decorators, as well as for their end customers — we always have one question top-of-mind: "How do we provide the most value for their marketing dollars?"

### A Logo Saves the Day

Last month *promo marketing Magazine* highlighted one business that has used its logo to boost business and ultimately its revenues in a unique way. A hospitality sector technology firm called HotelTonight offers an app that lets travelers book short hotel stays at reasonable prices.

Initially, **HotelTonight's inking to actually put their logo to work** came from some snags customers were having. In particular, some users are accidentally booking stays unintentionally on their mobile devices.

## QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY

Would you recommend this newsletter?

Nope ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 For sure

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ASI Show!

Chicago, IL

July 12-13

Exhibiting: Booth #1137

### Embroidery Mart

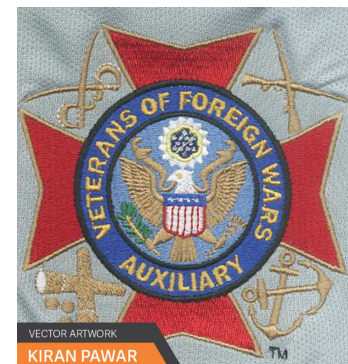
Nashville, TN

August 4-5

Attending

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR TEAM

Every month, we celebrate the designers whose work scores the highest impressions on Instagram. This time, **Kiran Pawar** won for embroidery digitizing and **Shivdatta Khandagale** won for vector artwork



“As people started calling [HotelTonight] complaining about accidental bookings,” *promo marketing* writes, “the company had to issue refunds, which, of course, hurt its bottom line.” To fix the problem, the small app provider decided to make its logo a defining part of its actual sales-confirmation process.

Coincidentally, the elongated lower-case h that was the firm’s logo also looked like a bed. It also looked like an element familiar on every iPhone and hundreds of other apps — the feature known as the slide bar.

To fix the problem, “HotelTonight engineer Ray Lillywhite came up with the solution to make the elongated “H” logo a slide bar that users have to trace their finger along to book a hotel.”

Certainly the act of transforming HotelTonight’s cool logo into a user-friendly solution to a technical problem might seem the like the domain of tech nerds. But it did demonstrate one example in which a logo can become synonymous with the company itself and what it offers clients.

Perhaps the moral of the story is that for smaller entrepreneurial businesses, a good logo is more than just something that goes on a business card. Whatever the type of business — high-tech or low-tech — **SMBs should invest in developing brands with good logos** and then use them consistently.

Likewise, one major difference between small companies that are “brands” and those that just have names on their websites is visibility. Spending some of their marketing bucks to **have expert partners design their logos** is a great start. But then what should they do with them?

### Great Logos Should Get Around

First off, there are plenty of classic means by which businesses get their names out and their logos recognized. Obvious places to put logos are on business cards and letterhead, as well as the signage on front doors and throughout places of business. It may sound “old hat”, but these are essential steps to developing brands. Of course, SMBs shouldn’t stop there.

Certainly, most don’t have the capital to run TV ads, purchase billboard space or run extensive print advertising campaigns. That’s okay, as many businesses don’t benefit from that type of promotion.

Social media is a powerful tool for SMBs. It’s not just for posting photos of friends and reading news. Rather, **businesses should be using their logos to help establish and maintain brand consistency**. Better yet, they can encourage their ideal customers to engage with them and their brand identities — logos and all — on a constant basis.

If your customers are new businesses that need logos or existing businesses that have outgrown their original logos, help them **get cost-effective, custom logos developed by a dedicated creative team**. Our Custom Creative services allow you to provide solutions, deliver value and earn healthy profits — all while delighting your customers.

## “PLAY BALL” WITH BASEBALL FOR MARKETING

Spring weather is slowly arriving on the scene, with sunny, warmer days becoming more frequent and trees growing back their leaves. And we have to admit we’re not just excited about flowers blooming; we’re excited



VECTOR ARTWORK  
SHIVDATTA KHANDAGALE

Great job, team! Check out new designs every day on Instagram ([idea\\_custom](#))!

## NOTABLE QUOTES



“There’s **nothing better than working up** a good sweat.”

— Jennie Finch



“**Good seasons start with good beginnings.**”

— Sparky Anderson



“**We don’t stop going to school** when we graduate.”

— Carol Burnett

about baseball season.

Idea Custom Solutions is based just outside Chicago in Elgin, Illinois. So of course we're still beaming about one of our two hometown teams, the Chicago Cubs, winning it all in the 2016 World Series.

As we've mentioned before, sports promotions are big business and not just reserved for the diehards playing and watching sports. Most of our clients, who are suppliers, distributors and decorators of promotional products, get requests throughout the year from their small business customers for ideas on sports-related giveaways.

Various sports have been used to successfully appeal to a wide base of customers that buy virtually any type of product or service. For example, the Ford Motor Company used football last fall to plug their limited edition version of the Ford F-150, emblazoned with the Dallas Cowboys' logo and blue-gray color scheme for football nuts.

Leveraging basketball, a local Philadelphia bank tapped into last year's big win for the NCAA champion Villanova Wildcats by handing out celebratory pennants and badges, while national brand Dunkin' Donuts co-branded a Dunkin'/Villanova coffee gift card.

Back to baseball, it's not surprising that merchandise for the Chicago Cubs has sold five times more than that of other Major League Baseball franchises in the past year. Looking at a recent article and list of brands that have added baseball marketing efforts to their lineup, we see everything from home inspectors and furniture repair outfits, to cleaning services and pest control firms. So it is safe to say that sports helps make marketing work even better.

If you are wondering what exact promo products businesses should select, it's all a matter of preference. Promotional products distributors can point out that just about anything available today can be branded — not just with SMBs' logos, but also with themes.

As such, small businesses wanting to tap into baseball season don't necessarily need to give out to Major League-grade baseball bats with their logos (unless that's their thing!). Taking a spin though the latest on 2017 ball park promotions, as well as what's offered right now during Spring Training and in the minor league parks can inspire some ideas, even for quirky baseball promotional products.

Desk items like staplers, pens and baseball-style stress balls can conjure up thoughts of the national pastime, while giveaways including baseball-themed paper weights and letter openers can easily feature logos. Also, many outdoor products work by appealing to customers of your SMBs. Caps, windbreakers and beach towels are all items favored by consumers who use and keep them.

Also, don't forget that branded jerseys are a big hit, whether ordered to reward loyal and proud employees or as part of sponsoring local baseball leagues. Plus, durables items such as reusable water bottles appeal to just about everyone.

Idea Custom Solutions works with thousands of promotional product suppliers, distributors and decorators each year to enable them to support their customers as they try to boost brand awareness and win customers. We're here 24 hours a day to help you empower SMB customers to play ball!



"My expectations of other people, I double them on myself."

— James Brown



"Those who trust to chance must abide by the results of chance."

— Calvin Coolidge



"A sheltered life can be a daring life as well. For all serious daring starts from within."

— Eudora Welty



"There is no re-inventing the wheel."

— Sean Penn



# PLANNING FOR SUMMER IS A SMART STRATEGY

April showers bring May flowers, the old saying goes. And though constant sun and 90-degree days may seem as though they are still months away, it's never too early to plan for the next season — especially for summer, as many businesses are doing right about now.

## Summer Doesn't Just Mean Beach Balls

**Idea Custom Solutions** supports entrepreneurs who make it their business to help other companies to promote their offerings and put their marketing dollars to work. What these professionals know is that most firms, SMBs especially, don't just place orders with the arrival of each new season. Planning ahead is essential for them.

The best promotional products often tap into what is “going on” or trending, while also having a staying power that makes them useful all year long. Yet, if your first thought is “summer specials”, let's take a step back and look at the power promotional products have all year long.

Sage World recently posted [a helpful infographic to remind us of what makes promotional products work](#), and that they are much more universal than people outside the industry might think. Some stats highlighted by that infographic:

- 8 in 10 people have and use promotional products
- 91 percent have at least one promotional product in their kitchens
- 74 percent have at least one promotional product in their workspaces

It's encouraging to know that when consumers receive promotional products branded with businesses' logos and contact information, they are kept and used.

But in terms of going beyond brand recognition to generating revenue, are they effective? Responses indicate that they are:

- 85 percent of people say they do business with companies after receiving their promotional products
- 55 percent of people say they have more favorable opinions after receiving promotional products

With that in mind, it's understandable why so many of the distributors that Idea Customs Solutions supports continue to market promotional products as solutions.

## Summer is for Planning Too

For many businesses, warm weather is when they hit their peak season. **Some sectors hire new employees in summer**, indicating better cash flows. Likewise **many companies will develop fall marketing plans** and refine marketing materials. The best way to increase sales is to be part of those plans and updates.

**Another infographic ASI published** says that 20 percent of businesses order their promotional items at least three months ahead, while 22 percent do four or more months in advance. Another 44 percent say they purchase one or two months ahead of time. The message: when it comes to reaching customers, few businesses consider their branded promotional



**“Follow your instincts.**  
That's where true wisdom manifests itself.”

— Oprah Winfrey



**“I'm trying to grow. I don't want to stay on the same page.”**

— Flavor Flav

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



### Nikhil Shevkar

Unit Production Specialist, Order Entry

Back in 2012, Nikhil joined Idea Custom Solutions as a junior production associate. Today, in his role as unit process specialist, he supports his team by resolving questions. He also shares best practices and software tricks with them. To other employees, he advises: “Love your work and you will learn so much from it. You will achieve success too.”

About the company, he thinks people should know, “Idea Custom Solutions is a very good platform, where we learn to develop careers

products as afterthoughts or impulse buys.

## Drinking up Summer

For those businesses that really want to tap into summer's fun there are a number of product options. According to research firm AYTM, **summer is the most popular season for beer enthusiasts**. This could be driven by the fact that summer festivals are common from coast to coast, providing more chances to enjoy beer outdoors, while also tasting new products promoted by **America's more than 5000 breweries**. Another interesting fact, according to a graph brewed up by BevSpot, **people tend to trade in their wine for beer during the summer months**.

Many of our promotional product **distributors market items like cups and drinkware** not just to beverage companies or bars and restaurants, but also to chambers of commerce, cities and towns that hold **outdoor summer fests and for live events**.

As we have reported previously, outdoor events including summer food celebrations — local versions of the Taste of Chicago and Oktoberfest — as well as 5K races or music fests, provide ample opportunities and reasons for businesses to stock up on branded promotions. **Promotional products for the outdoors** are one option, but really anything can work well when placed properly.

In addition to the festive, outdoor, or beverage-related items, wearables are effective. T-shirts, caps, jackets and more comprise the most popular category of promotional items. As many as **12 percent of all businesses use t-shirts as a part of their marketing** and brand building strategy.

Don't forget that a variety of different **businesses come alive in late spring and summer**. Enterprises such as home builders, renovators and caterers exist simply because of the change in weather, or others like travel and tourism-related firms fill a need that pops up one season a year.

Whatever the weather, Idea Custom Solutions can help you **transform business logos into production-ready designs** for whatever products you recommend to customers. With our vector artwork and embroidery digitizing services, we help you and their brands shine!

## CLIENTS ARE RAVING

"The revision dated 3/15 is beautiful! The client and I both love it. You guys did an outstanding job."

**Idea Custom Solutions client**

"Thank you so much. I appreciate it. Looks great to us."

**Account coordinator for Idea Custom Solutions supplier client**

"As always, you all provide great service. This looks great!"

**Senior business development specialist for Idea Custom Solutions supplier client**



## DESIGN SHOWCASE

and improve our day-to-day lives."

In his time with the Idea Custom Solutions, Nikhil is most proud of his promotion, as well as how he improved his design and communication skills. He says, "I am sure I will grow further with the support of my superiors."

Nikhil recently got married. On weekends, sometimes he travels with his family to nearby places and tries different types of food. He frequently sees his brother, sisters, cousin and friends. "We all have a blast when we get together!"

Otherwise, during his free time, Nikhil likes to read stories and inspirational books. He enjoys playing video games and solving puzzles.

Someday, Nikhil hopes to work on social causes and helping others. He has been volunteering for the past five years with the foundation, "Art of Living". In the meantime, he is focused on completing his graduate degree and improving his English speaking ability.

## TWEET THAT!

At 2017's Cubs Convention & baseball shows [\*\*#wearables\*\*](#), food, lip balm [\*\*#PromoProducts\*\*](#) for guests. <https://goo.gl/oWKgC8>

**Tweet That!**

Incentives help businesses motivate, reward employees. An opportunity to sell [\*\*#PromoProducts\*\*](#). <https://goo.gl/f8rFSq>

**Tweet That!**

Rain or shine, [\*\*#PromoProduct\*\*](#) umbrellas are one great way to [\*\*#market\*\*](#) to older adults. <https://goo.gl/JfosZr>

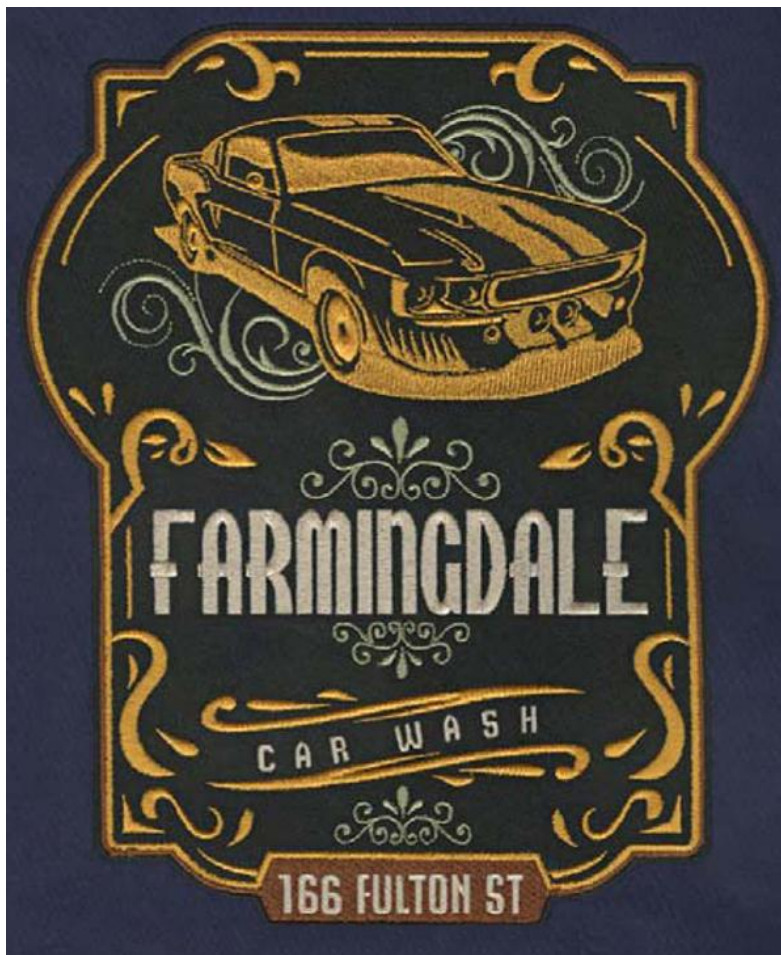
**Tweet That!**

Tributes to Arnold Palmer with [\*\*#PromoProducts\*\*](#): umbrellas & [\*\*#wearables\*\*](#) for the [\*\*#golf\*\*](#) crowd. <https://goo.gl/fs7ZNa>

**Tweet That!**

SmallBiz Trends: "11 Unusual Elements" of job offers: company

**Tweet That!**



Vector Artwork



#PromoProducts a plus!  
<https://goo.gl/5YIZcJ>

Hoodies, bomber jackets are big fashion for men, says @GQ. Embroidered #designs part of the mix.  
<https://goo.gl/gaw1MM>

Tweet  
That!

#Rebrands aren't just for big businesses. Midwestern library launched new #logo, new look.  
<https://goo.gl/bP3x9C>

Tweet  
That!

In soccer, India has an ambitious national team that deserves a world-class #logo.  
<https://goo.gl/J7F1Qq>

Tweet  
That!

For businesses, visitors bureaus: branding matters. Columbia SC revamps #logo, modern design.  
<https://goo.gl/azHqP1>

Tweet  
That!

Miller Lite's new tagline: simple text, classic #logo, strong colors. Tells faithful "hold true".  
<https://goo.gl/qs0uGj>

Tweet  
That!

@Forbes talks "The Art of #Rebranding" #SMBs can be smart, strategic. #TeachMeTuesdays  
<https://goo.gl/kVK2DU>

Tweet  
That!

Look out kids, Nickelodeon is #rebranding! New #logo and fun new graphics for the TV network.  
<https://goo.gl/cHNvxb>

Tweet  
That!

Environmental #branding — print collateral and signage — takes center stage for #SMBs too.  
<https://goo.gl/3ioP2B>

Tweet  
That!

Easy ways to turn #TradeShow contacts into new customers, according to Trade Show News Network.  
<https://goo.gl/YOWKGq>

Tweet  
That!

If you have any designs created by our team that you would like to share in this newsletter, send them to us at [marketing@ideacustom.com](mailto:marketing@ideacustom.com)

