

# DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



August 2017

## IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO PLAN FOR FALL AND WINTER



One great way to tap into the enthusiasm for the upcoming fall and winter is to highlight football promotions. **Football is currently America's favorite sport** — both the professional and college varieties. The sport provides many opportunities for distributors of promotional products. Items such as **spirit wear, sport bottles**, and other related gear **help brands stand out with sporting events** and even small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) really connect with their audiences.

But fall opportunities aren't limited to football. There are plenty of ways to appeal to businesses that use promo products for branding. As strange as it sounds, this is one area in which the weather is considerably reliable.

### Hats on, People!

It's pretty certain that knit beanies, once just utilitarian hats designed to keep heads warm during winter months, are not just for hipsters, fashionistas, or teens to wear while skateboarding in July. **Beanies are now almost as important as t-shirts.**

Both in the U.S. and abroad, fundraising efforts like **"Beanies for brain cancer"** have **become a thing**, while knit hats in 2017 have also been used to highlight **women's rights, domestic violence awareness** and **support of science and environmental issues.**

That said businesses need not get political to leverage these promotions.

## QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY

Would you recommend this newsletter?

Nope ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 For sure

## INFOGRAPHICS THAT CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS



Every month, Idea Custom Solutions publishes original infographics that we design to inform and educate industry professionals. Here are a couple of our most popular. Be sure to check out the **Insights section of our website**, under Resources, for more of these tools.



Nor must they wait for cold weather. Just ask the San Francisco Giants, whose **warm season promos include knit hats**, among other baseball-branded favorites.

It's clear that the use and appeal of this once-generic item is broader and not limited to sports or politics. *Esquire* last December compiled a list of **15 kinds of cold-weather hats** that every winter wanderer should consider. Meanwhile their sartorial rivals over at GQ prescribed their own **"do's and don'ts" on how exactly to wear and accessorize winter hats**.

One other apparel news source called *DestinyMan.com* points out that **knit beanies come in different styles**, with varying looks appealing to a range of age groups. Among them are:

- **The cuffed beanie.** A traditional-looking style that comes with extra material folded over or knitted to the bottom.
- **The slouch beanie.** Longer and a favorite with younger (and perhaps hipper) crowds, called so because the top of the hat "slouches" of the back of the head.
- **The bobble.** Better known to some people as a pom-pom hat, which has a "ball" on top. This one can project a note of fun and works well with multiple colors.
- **The high-top beanie.** This has a little bit of formal flair, while being versatile for any look or age group.

In addition to the variety and relatively low price of this promo product, **knit hats look great embroidered with logos**. And if it is a priority for your customers, **several hats are made in the USA**.

## Bundle Up

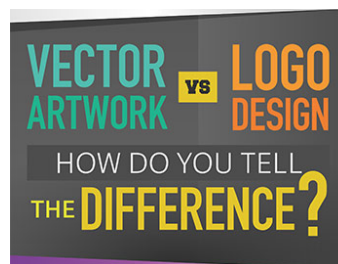
*Promo marketing* magazine last fall highlighted some other clothing accessories for fall and winter, including **everything from gloves and earmuffs to scarves and warm, cozy socks**. Like beanies and knit caps, these items can be embroidered with logos and come in many colors.

While keeping your ears and fingers warm is pretty important, in some parts of the country, layering up is important too. The Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) published an article on "super soft sweatshirts" with **examples of fleece tops, zip jackets and hoodies that keep people warm**, while doubling as a great way to make brands more visible.

Keeping with the theme of planning ahead and, in some cases, way ahead, *People Magazine* advised its millions of readers last March to **stock up on winter outerwear** as spring started to break. According to ASI, **outerwear remains a popular category**, especially in households with annual incomes above \$100,000. Take the **Silicon Valley favorite fleece vest** as one example.

When talking to your SMB customers about planning ahead for the next two seasons, make sure to demonstrate your expertise in promotional products. As your graphics partner, **Idea Custom Solutions** can provide **top-notch service in embroidery digitizing** for fall and winter products to ensure customer logos sew properly every time.

## KEEP YOUR LOGO LEGIT



Under Insights, we also archive **past issues of this newsletter**.

Feel free to contact us to request we cover any subjects that would help your business: [marketing@ideacustom.com](mailto:marketing@ideacustom.com).

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR TEAM

Every month, we celebrate the designers whose work scores the highest impressions on Instagram. This time, **Manisha Gaikwad** won for embroidery digitizing and **Girish Kulkarni** won for vector artwork. Keep up the great work, team!



## NOTABLE QUOTES

It's been said that "imitation is the greatest form of flattery". That concept has inspired some of the best works in popular music, comedy and fine arts for ages. But when it comes to crafting corporate identities and brands, copying other designs is not a good idea. SMBs should always strive to be unique.

Logos and visual brands should be strong depictions of the businesses and what they do best. Remember that your brand or your customers' brands will be seen everywhere they are placed, from **signage** and business cards to marketing collateral (not to mention websites, social media and promotional products).

### Similar Isn't Smart Business

Take the case of the Wichita, Kansas small business called In-N-Out Cleaners, which is your typical neighborhood dry cleaner. The name "In-N-Out" sounds familiar and maybe even a little too familiar. The dry cleaner's lettered logo in a dominant red outlined with yellow came to the attention of In-N-Out Burger, **prompting a lawsuit from the national burger chain**.

The In-N-Out debacle isn't the only example in which SMBs have poached — intentionally or inadvertently — the logos and trademarked assets of bigger companies. You might not be surprised that entities such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a.k.a. **North Korea, let their space agency rip off NASA's logo** (which is oddly named "NADA", a four-letter word that means "nothing" in Spanish). But entrepreneurs and companies of all sizes in the USA need to be more careful.

Just this summer, the **New England Patriots' tight end superstar Rob Gronkowski got in a little trouble with Nike**. The football player, serial entrepreneur and frequent champion of charity fundraising launched a logo for his own "Gronk" brand, which was **deemed too close to the iconic "Jumpman" logo owned by Nike's Michael Jordan brand**.

Elsewhere in sports, spirits maker Jägermeister blocked a shot from the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks franchise. Jägermeister's legal complaint noted that the Bucks' rebrand featured a **deer-inspired logo too close to that of Jägermeister's trademark**, which was first introduced in 1935.

Meanwhile, a high school in Colorado called Old Thornton High School had to change its varsity sports emblem completely. Despite being crafted in shades of royal blue and white, Texas Tech University objected. Even though the occasional contender in the Big 12 Conference created a logo in very different colors (red and black), **Old Thornton's font and arrangement of the letters was deemed too similar to that of Texas Tech**.

Yet, despite all of the advice to play it safe out there, **promo marketing** pointed out this month another example in which **a college went "too similar", this time to the legendary three-stripe logo of athletic wear giant Adidas**.

But it's not only the sports industry that gets competitive about logos. Recently, internet titans have battled over corporate identities. PayPal accused music streaming service Pandora of trademark infringement simply because Pandora had paired down its logo into a simple, **single letter P in a shade of blue alleged to be too close to PayPal's logo**.



"You have to be willing to ask questions that almost **no one else would ask**."

— Samantha Bee



"**Tomorrow is no place** to place your better days."

— Dave Matthews



"**Be yourself**; everyone else is already taken."

— Oscar Wilde



"**Humility is no substitute** for a good personality."

— Fran Lebowitz



"I believe in **divine forces and energies**."

— Richard Pryor

## Keep it Original, Work with Experts

Even big corporations with well-known logos shake it up now and then. Perhaps "fresh and original" is just a good marketing strategy. A graphic article by [Storypick](#) demonstrates that it is as important for century-old companies such as Coca-Cola, Canon, Audi and Volkswagen [to transform their logos into something new and original](#) as it is for newer companies like Twitter, Uber and Amazon. Of course, sometimes for SMBs it is difficult to know where and how to start.

*HuffPost* recently published an article about ["How to Know When It's Time for a Logo Redesign"](#). Some of the drivers for rebrands are common sense, like having "dated" logos. But it is also important to refresh complex logos that were designs for more print- and television-oriented media of the past to compete today, when smaller screens such as mobile prevail.

Small businesses should shoot for originality and be willing to pay for it. The American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) advises that businesses, educational entities and non-profits [avoid the \\$5 logo pitch](#), since these internet services tend to result in higher-than-advertised costs, stolen work and stock art.

Think about colors, style, shapes and other elements that, in your mind, create strong brands and focus not just on trends but also the long-term. Establishing recognizable brands and logos is essential and they can always evolve as needed later.

Even more important is to [hire help or "go pro" for logo design](#). Working with a specialist in small business marketing and graphic design will ensure that you get [the best support, pricing and creativity for your brand](#) and for your SMB customers.

## 3 TRADE SHOW MUST-HAVES FOR 2017

Trade shows are an important cornerstone of both the American and the world economy. They're one place where B2B companies can establish relationships and sell to each other. For other firms that sell goods and services to consumers, trade shows foster an environment where they can build their brands and reputations.

Of course, a perk for guests and attendees at trade shows is the free stuff. Promotional products weren't necessarily invented with trade shows in mind, but certainly fit the environment perfectly.

Thinking about the fact that "trade show season" is really year-round, Idea Custom Solutions has three promotional product ideas that are musts, especially in the busy months of September through November.

### Fidget Spinners

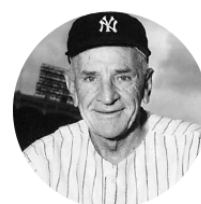
It seems as if they came out of nowhere. Whether you love or are sick of hearing about them already, [fidget spinners are a hot commodity](#) whose popularity keeps growing. They are also fairly durable as simple toys go and thus are here to stay.

As the Advertising Specialty Institute recently pointed out in the magazine *Counselor*, [18 of the top 20 best-selling toys and games on Amazon.com](#)



"As you think, [so shall you become.](#)"

— Bruce Lee



"[You gotta lose 'em some of the time.](#) When you do, lose 'em right."

— Casey Stengel



"The idea of capitalism is [not just success but also the failure](#) that allows success to happen."

— P. J. O'Rourke



"[Trust your hunches.](#) They're usually based on facts filed away just below the conscious level."

— Dr. Joyce Brothers

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



are currently fidget spinners.

“The fidget craze is happening everywhere — at every show I attended in Asia, every booth had endless versions of design, quality, pricing and functionality for this fidget frenzy,” said one sales exec to *Counselor*. “Although the original design has been around for years, these spinners are now flying off the shelves at 7-11s and will saturate the promotional market over the next six months.”

As you can probably guess, it's not just the big online retailers such as Amazon or the local convenience stores that are dialed into this trend. SMBs, major brands and even politicians want to put their logos and brand information on fidget spinners. Major League Baseball, the NFL and other professional sports teams have decided to get in the game too. The craze has been so big that MLB's first batch of fidget spinners reportedly sold out immediately.

As such, the promotional products industry is hustling to meet the demand. Small toys and easy-to-grab items have always been one sure way to keep trade show attendees coming to booths or exhibit tables.

If you help SMBs and other businesses market and brand with promotional products, take note that the fidget spinner will be a winner for your customers at their trade shows.

## Sunglasses

Symbolic of “cool”, sunglasses are one accessory no one can ever have too many of. As *Paste Magazine* points out in a recent story, shades, specs and sunglasses are also a must-have for tech-chic gear geeks and millennials who like to collect free swag.

According to ASI's *Advantages*, sunglasses are popular with SMBs, large companies and consumer brands such as Froot Loops. They are also a hit with educational institutions like universities, since sunglasses are part of the ideal new student welcome kits.

ASI also says that sunglasses are relatively inexpensive options for SMBs that come in a lot more varieties than you can imagine. A recent graphic post shows that shades and sun specs run the gamut from flashy to nerd chic, from classic and conservative to sporty. Custom colors appeal to SMBs that want to brand with their logos and make their corporate colors stand out.

Even better news is that sunglasses great for summer but are useful and worn by customers all year!

## Eco-Friendly Anything

Certainly one past criticism of promotional products is that — just as with many durable products made from plastics or synthetic materials — more can be done to make sure to consider the environment. As we mentioned recently, consumers and businesses of all kinds are choosing to incorporate sustainability and their own ethical values into every purchase decision. For SMBs, that includes their marketing dollars too.

Just as quickly and deeply as Major League Baseball got into the fidget



**Yogesh Vishwanath More**  
Unit Process Specialist, Digitizing

In his function as a unit process specialist for the Embroidery Digitizing Team, Yogesh's responsibilities are to check the quality of designs before they are delivered to clients, share feedback received with the team, improve overall quality and provide training.

During a typical work day, a lot of his time is dedicated to checking on new team members to assess their progress. He troubleshoots any issues and mentors trainees. “I would like to be known as a good mentor who can enhance the skills of team members.”

So far, Yogesh says his greatest professional accomplishment in the past nine years was when he was promoted to his current role. To anyone interested in working here he says, “Our company is great at graphic design and employees can build careers at Idea Custom Solutions.”

Outside the office, Yogesh likes to watch cricket. He also plays cricket every Sunday with friends, as well as rides his bike and explores places around Pune. For entertainment, he enjoys watching movies. His favorites are the “Fast and Furious” series.

Yogesh's philosophy is: “I try to do smart work and look for opportunities to enhance my skills. I am always open to suggestions to improve.”

spinner game, their Retail Summit held in May in Chicago showcased a variety of wearables and other **high-quality licensed promotions made of recycled materials**. Additionally, **wearables made with organic fibers and color dyes are gaining steam**, while other products made from recycled plastics or biodegradable corn and soy plastic are good options too.

Other fairly obvious **choices in the eco-friendly department are stainless steel and glass water bottles**, which allow professionals and travelers to stay hydrated without constantly disposing of single-use bottles. Available in 2017 are other interesting items including compostable pens, which are useful in the office and for business travelers.

Plus, the increase in popularity of personal care products in swag bags has led to a boon of companies with **great eco-friendly promotional product items**.

The important thing for promotional products distributors to communicate to SMBs customers and prospects is that businesses have the option to go green. Even better, they can use their concern for sustainability and the environment as platforms to connect with their eco-conscious customers.

After making the perfect recommendations to your customers for promotional products this summer, ensure their logos and branding shine with Idea Custom Solutions' **expert vector artwork and embroidery digitizing**. It's fast, high-quality and cost-effective!



## DESIGN SHOWCASE

### Embroidery Digitizing



### TWEET THAT!

[@priceline](#)'s travel metasearch engine Kayak gives five-letter block [#logo](#) more legroom  
<https://goo.gl/ztESxr>

Tweet  
That!

Pizza chain Sbarro baked up a slice-shaped [#logo](#) 2 years ago, now on signage everywhere.  
[#TBT](#)  
<https://goo.gl/MGH9US>

Tweet  
That!

Some marketing minds see [@Converse](#) reaching back in time with recent [#rebrand](#) efforts. [#TBT](#)  
<https://goo.gl/BSWm7y>

Tweet  
That!

The [#logos](#) for the [@WalkingDead](#) AMC are alive with clues about Season 8, says [@HeavySan](#).  
<https://goo.gl/VQCbDn>

Tweet  
That!

Coca-Cola axes Coke Zero. No-sugar, low-cal drink now part of [@CocaCola](#) w/ red + white [#logo](#).  
<https://goo.gl/pXMpqv>

Tweet  
That!

Grillin' and chillin' with tailgate  
[#PromoProducts](#). See [@ASlcentral](#)'s summer and fall ideas.  
<https://goo.gl/69KrNf>

Tweet  
That!

Beer bottle openers make the perfect [#PromoProducts](#), writes [@Minyanville](#)  
<https://goo.gl/ResA7Q>

Tweet  
That!

[@ColdStone](#) dove into Shark Week by baiting ice cream lovers with [#swag](#) and [#PromoProducts](#).  
<https://goo.gl/FdrLKe>

Tweet  
That!

An African-American owned credit union uses [#PromoProduct](#) incentives to pledge + sign accounts.  
<https://goo.gl/4NzRin>

Tweet  
That!

Colors make statements for [#brands](#). They can also highlight product varieties and flavors.  
<https://goo.gl/q32j3y>

Tweet  
That!

## Vector Artwork



[@Forbes](#) says print [#MarketingCollateral](#) will always have a place in [#Marketing](#).  
<https://goo.gl/5dqcz8>

[Tweet That!](#)

Shoe maker ASICS ([@ASICSamerica](#)) makes print + digital [#MarketingCollateral](#) part of ad portfolio.  
<https://goo.gl/YexBx6>

[Tweet That!](#)

## CLIENTS ARE RAVING

“ At the ASI Show in January, you and my wife were sure that working with Idea Custom Solutions was much better than learning how to do it myself. With this quick turn around and excellent results you have been proved right. Again, thank you! ”

**Vector artwork customer of  
Idea Custom Solutions**

“ Reliability and accuracy! ”

**Idea Custom Solutions  
distributor customer**

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)



© 2017 AffinityX All Rights Reserved. The mark Affinity Express is a registered trademark of Affinity Express, Inc. in the U.S. and other countries, and Idea Custom Solutions is the sole property of Affinity Express.