

DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



March 2018

MARCH MADNESS MAGIC AND MAYHEM

The Super Bowl, the Winter Olympics and now March Madness — the sports world has been in overdrive lately. Which can mean both good and bad things for the promotional products industry. As you gear up for the annual 64-team college basketball showdown, follow these tips to avoid the mayhem and bring on promo product magic.



Magic

Aside from all the obvious ways promotional products companies can use March Madness to their advantage (We see you: plush basketballs, logoed jerseys and tiny desktop basketball hoops!), there is opportunity simply in the idea behind the event: brackets. Yes, fans can determine the best college basketball team, but your customers also effectively keep people coming back to their businesses every week. **They can start product bracket tournaments** and have consumer weigh in on their best products each week, betting on which will take the top spots. The winners get free giveaways (of products you supply) and your customers will instantly have repeat buyers.

Your customers can also take advantage of March Madness time of year with **coupons or discount codes, similar to what eBay is doing**. Do they have new customers in March? Tell them to give 20 percent off when

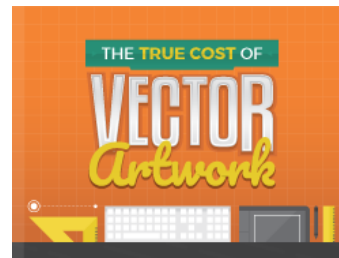
QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY



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.



Under Insights, we also archive

people use “basketball” as a coupon code while ordering. Everyone loves a sale!

The most obvious — and perhaps the most difficult — way to bring in more business during March Madness? Companies can get some of their products into athletes’ hands. Maybe that means sponsoring them or giving promotional gifts. **Today’s athletes are incredibly engaged on social media with their fans.** If they post photos on Instagram of themselves wearing shirts with your customers’ company logos (that they’ve purchased from you!), you can bet consumers will come in droves

Mayhem

Please, try not to infringe on the NCAA’s copyright while helping customers with their marketing plans this March! Multiple companies have lost trademark lawsuits already and you just don’t want to be among them.

One of those lawsuits started last year, when online sweepstakes and fantasy sports company Kizzang tried to register its new slogans: “April Madness” and “Final 3.” Oddly similar to March Madness and Final Four, no? Well, in typical aggressive NCAA fashion, the association took offense and filed against Kizzang. As of a judge’s ruling in January of this year, **Kizzang is not allowed to use any related slogans and has to recall anything that went out under those marketing promotions.** Plus, the company must wear a scarlet letter; part of the ruling was that Kizzang must admit to unfair competition practices and copyright infringement.

Also in January, the NCAA filed a complaint against **a car dealership that had been using “Markdown Madness”** as a marketing scheme to sell more cars, trying to riff on March Madness. The NCAA, perhaps logically, suggested that consumers will be confused and think that the association is trying to sell cars. In the dealership’s defense, though, “Markdown Madness” has been officially owned and federally registered for about three years. The NCAA attempted to settle with the company but eventually filed a lawsuit this year.

As you get warmed up for this year’s tournament, pass your vector artwork and embroidery digitizing requests to Idea Custom Solutions for the highest quality and standard 24-hour turn times. We can even help you get creative for customers with **Custom Creative services, including original designs for logos, t-shirt designs, posters and banners!**

MAKING TRADE SHOWS WORK FOR YOU

With **a full slate of industry trade shows** coming up over the next few months, it’s important to know that the time and investment you’re putting into events will be worth your while. So, sorry folks: that means late nights partying with industry friends and then sleeping on the showroom floor is probably not the best strategy.

Well, maybe you can have *a little* fun. After all, even showing up to the event in the first place is a good start for making trade shows work for you.

“Shows, especially for small business, are the best way to get products

past issues of this newsletter.

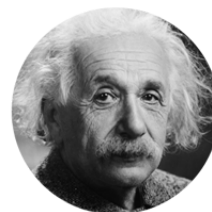
Feel free to contact us to request we cover any subjects that would help your business:
marketing@ideacustom.com.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR TEAM

Every month, we celebrate the designers whose work scores the highest impressions on Instagram. This time, **Suraj Dhamnikar** won for embroidery digitizing and **Nisha Awhad** won for vector artwork. Keep up the great work, team!



NOTABLE QUOTES



“Creativity is intelligence having fun.”

— Albert Einstein

in front of multiple buyers and have a captive audience, at least for a few minutes,” Andy Yochum, owner of Boardwalk Food Co., told Florida’s *Business Observer*.

But you want to do better than just showing up, right? You want a trade show to generate new business and make you money. A captive audience is great, but if you really want to maximize your time at an event, follow these tips.

1. **Know Your Goal.** This will take some advance preparation. You must know why you’re going to the shows to start. Is your goal to make new connections? Find new products? Drum up some new business? Once you decide on what you want to accomplish, research who’s going to the events and plan your route through the showrooms. Set appointments and, if you can’t do that, come prepared with a list of the people you want to meet and the reasons you want to meet them.

“At the first few trade shows I networked, I made the mistake of not setting specific goals for each meeting and often found myself waffling when I was concluding the meeting,” Jeff Kear, owner of Planning Pod, told ASI.

Don’t make the same mistake. Be prepared. And it doesn’t hurt to spy a bit on the attendees before hitting the exhibit floors. If you browse their social media, you’ll be much more informed about who they are and what makes them tick — and that much closer to making a business deal.

2. **Network Your Heart Out.** Don’t get caught up in just visiting exhibits or hanging out with your industry pals. Use trade shows as an opportunity to network. The chances are there: social events, keynotes, planned parties and workshops. All you need to do is step up your networking game. Boca Terry, an A-rated SAGE distributor, suggests attending the smartest events for your business. Meaning, the events where the networking potential has the highest power. And please, *bring plenty of business cards*. You don’t want to be the one left writing your phone number and website on cocktail napkins because you were less prepared than your competition.

3. **Have a Dazzling Display.** If you’re exhibiting instead of shopping, you’ll want to have a display that draws everybody’s eyes. No more tables with random branded products strewn across them to show the breadth of your business. Get creative. How about a competition for buyers where the leaderboard is displayed, or a special feature just for your booth that people want, such as having a caricature artist or even a fortuneteller who focuses on business futures? The goal is to get people there and get them to stay and interact with your products. If you do this right, before they know it, they’ve had entire conversations about your offerings.

4. **Don’t Drop the Ball.** According to *Entrepreneur*, you’ll want to make a checklist (mental or written both work) to follow when contacting people after you get home from the show. Don’t just email everyone whose business card you brought home to say it was nice to meet them. Instead, include something relevant to the business, be it more information or answers to questions about product you discussed, or even just some interesting industry news.



“The best marketing doesn’t feel like marketing.”

— Tom Fishburne



“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

— Peter Drucker



“A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor.”

— Franklin D. Roosevelt



“Sales are contingent upon the attitude of the salesman — not the attitude of the prospect.”

— W. Clement Stone



“You will get all you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want.”

— Zig Ziglar

“With trade shows, you can see, ‘How many leads have I gotten? How many customers have I closed from those leads?’” Asif Khan, CEO of Caremerge told *Entrepreneur*. “This is pure, back-of-the-envelope ROI that you can track.”

And don’t forget promotional product giveaways. It’s our business, right? Let Idea Custom Solutions help prepare for the show with **custom designed business cards, marketing materials and logo design perfection.**

TRY A BIT OF SUBTLETY IN YOUR BRANDING

Lynne Lambert, owner of Mapt Gear, has a revolutionary idea that may upend the promotional products industry. It’s kind of like anti-branding. Her company sells totes, messenger bags and padfolios waiting for logos. However, the logos themselves are sometimes never seen on the products. Instead, **she prints maps with pin illustrations to show the exact locations of companies’ headquarters** (or specific locations or even event spots). The products are designed to arouse curiosity — promoting word-of-mouth marketing by leaning on the idea that others will ask about the bags or padfolios. Even better, they alleviate the hesitation consumers have about walking around with huge logos splashed across their belongings.

“Many of us are not comfortable being a free walking advertisement for a company,” Lambert told *Adweek*, “and many companies aren’t doing anything more than putting logos in big text across the products. So, I think **there’s room for a very tasteful product to come in.**”

PPAI noted in 2015 that company branded swag is a \$20.81 billion industry and, with 9,000 trade shows in the U.S. alone each year, that’s a lot of heavily-branded material that could potentially end up in the trash. Lambert’s products do have spaces for smaller, subtle logos — and maybe that’s a tactic the industry should be taking up to ensure that promotional products are both kept and used.

Follow these hints to try this idea yourself and make sure your client’s customers are holding on to and enjoying all the swag they get.

Put Logos in Unexpected Places

FlipSidez manufactures custom flip-flops, but in a unique way. They put logos on the bottoms of the sandals in cutouts so that, when someone wears them, an imprint shows in their footprints in the sand (or snow, or dirt or anywhere else soft enough to pick up impressions).

Go for the Cute Factor

It’s just undeniable: **putting anything on a critter with a furry face instantly makes that thing a thousand times cuter.** Maybe skip human-based promo products altogether and instead opt for products for people’s furry friends, like bandanas or jackets for dogs, or decoratively logoed kitty collars.

Chop it Up

We know your customers worked very hard on their logos. And they are beautiful, really! But when it comes to shirts, everyone is kind of bored with the typical left chest placement. Mix it up some and it’ll increase the



“Know thyself. Know the customer. **Innovate.**”

— Beth Comstock



“If your dreams don’t scare you, they’re not big enough.”

— Ellen Johnson Sirleaf



“Good marketing makes the company look smart. **Great marketing makes the customer feel smart.**”

— Joe Chernov



“Find your spirit, and **no challenge will keep you from achieving your goals.**”

— Christopher Penn

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

visual interest of the shirts themselves. Try moving the logo placements down to the hems or putting them on sleeves or collars. Shrink them and create new patterns. It may be even more appealing to consumers to chop logos up — [go down to the bottom of the shirts like Calvin Klein did](#) and only print parts of the logos.

Go for the Tag, Not the Whole Bag

Research from 2016 showed that [handbags with logos emblazoned all over them are falling out of favor](#). Consumers are becoming more and more focused on individuality and showing their own personalities, not those of the companies they know. Try skipping visible logos entirely and put them on tag or small keychains inside bags or hanging off the straps.

Where- and however you choose to display your customers logos in promotional products, Idea Custom Solutions has you covered on [the vector artwork and embroidery digitizing you need](#) for production.

COLD CALLS MAKE YOU SHIVER? THESE TIPS TAKE AWAY THE CHILL

"Hi! Um, my name is Sam and I'm just calling to see if you're interested in [click]" Ugh! Cold calling is the worst, right? It's an unfortunate part of business, though, one that everyone must do at some point in their careers — especially if they are trying to sell promotional products to new customers. How else do you reach people beyond the ones you already know?

["Cold calling is frustrating, but it's a necessity](#), and salespeople have to learn that skillset if they plan to be successful in real sales — not in account management, but in sales for new business," Stephan Schiffman, author of *Cold Calling Techniques That Really Work*, told ASI back in 2015.

He's still right three years later, but thankfully cold calling doesn't have to be such a gut-wrenching experience anymore. With the right method and some smart strategies, the calls can be more productive than you think. They may even become (gasp!) something enjoyable to do during the workday.

Do Some Slight Stalking

The traditional tactic of targeting your calls holds true today, but with all the powers of the internet we have even more ability to tailor cold calls to specific people. Once you find out whom you need to speak to, inform yourself. Check out their social media, see if they have a personal website and browse their LinkedIn profile. Maybe you went to the same school. You could start off by referencing that and mentioning you saw it on their LinkedIn profile. Or if you have mutual contacts, start the calls referencing those people. [It's particularly helpful if you can get your contacts on LinkedIn to put you in touch with their contacts](#). Amanda Johns Vaden told ASI it could sound something like this: "I know my name doesn't ring a bell but how do you know Jimmy Choo?"

Stop Selling and Start Socializing

It's simple: talk shop. But not your shop. Rather, discuss your potential customers' shops. Don't start off discussing how you want to help their



Anushka Daware

Senior Production Associate,
Digitizing

Anushka has been with Idea Custom Solutions for 12 years and is a member of the embroidery digitizing team. On a typical day, she starts by assessing the workload and focusing on the various jobs that have been assigned using a range of different software.

She is proud of the complements she has received from my superiors for her work. "I would like to known as one of the best and most creative artists."

To others at the company, she offers this advice: "Value you position in the organization and strive to work here for a long time, as Idea Custom Solutions is a leading service provider in advertising and design."

To advance their careers, Anushka thinks it is important for employees to go beyond talking about work with colleagues and interact with people other than members of one's own team.

Anushka is married and has two children. She says, "My favorite activity is to spend spare time with family, especially going on weekend outings."

In her free time, Anushka also enjoys reading books, especially literature and science fiction.

Someday, she would like to visit all the historical monuments in India.

TWEET THAT!

Could [#bobblehead](#) tax

businesses grow with your company's promotional products. First, make sure they can see that you understand their businesses. Brandon Gracey, VP of Sales at Handshake Corp., [told *promo marketing* magazine](#) that the best cold call he'd ever seen was when a sales rep started out chatting with an optical industry player about the "consolidation and vertical integration" of the potential client's industry. The sales rep barely knew anything about the actual business, but that call ended up with a meeting and a deal. So, don't make it your first point to hawk your wares. Instead, start by engaging buyers with conversations of personal interest to them.

Hang Up the Phone

It's a Millennial world, and you must be a Millennial girl. Er, person. Well, *salesperson*. Studies have shown that [60 percent of Millennials prefer to be contacted through email](#), even eclipsing text messaging and social media, which both ranked at 13 percent. But to do it right, you must do it their way. This means making a personal connection. If you and your Millennial targets have mutual connections, note that upfront, possibly even in the subject lines. Don't pitch too hard and don't send form newsletters as initial contacts. Above all, offer deal or discounts for when they decide to work with you. Another 60 percent say they're most likely to interact with someone emailing them with notifications sales.

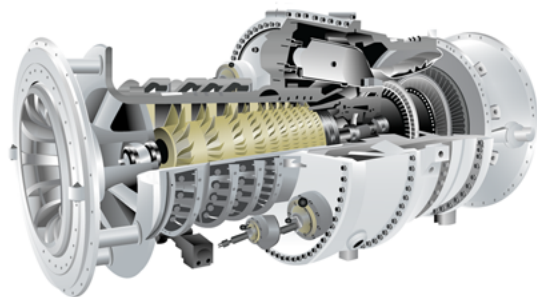
Once you do close those deals, [Idea Custom Solutions can help with everything else](#) — from business card and marketing material designs to virtual samples and vector artwork for fulfilling product orders.



DESIGN SHOWCASE

Embroidery Digitizing

MILEPOST POWER



Vector Artwork

debacle with [#Cincy @Reds](#) lead to big changes in [#PromoProducts](#) industry? <https://goo.gl/PNmDcV>

[Tweet That!](#)

The UK knows: [#CorporateGifts](#) and [#PromoProducts](#) are effective modern [#marketing](#) tactics. <https://goo.gl/84vcPu>

[Tweet That!](#)

Your customers can be on cutting edge of [#branding](#) by sponsoring live events with [#PromoProducts](#). <https://goo.gl/amf7Cs>

[Tweet That!](#)

Another day, another [#bobblehead](#)—but [@SanJoseSharks](#) showcase [#AR](#) capabilities with a [#logo](#). <https://goo.gl/tKq5UM>

[Tweet That!](#)

How has the role of the [#logo](#) has changed through the years? Experts weigh in. [#branding](#) <https://goo.gl/KK11r6>

[Tweet That!](#)

Make sure you don't stereotype in [#branding](#), like [@JohnnieWalkerUS](#) accidentally did with women. <https://goo.gl/o9Qwix>

[Tweet That!](#)

Check out how [@CBS](#) changed its [#logo](#) and [#branding](#) for the new [#CBSHQ](#) [#sports](#) streaming service. <https://goo.gl/jnyAi7>

[Tweet That!](#)

[. @Lufthansa](#) made waves in the marketing world with lackluster new [#branding](#)—all due to [#color](#). <https://goo.gl/yfhnRQ>

[Tweet That!](#)

Thanks, [@LACOSTE](#), for bringing attention to [#EndangeredSpecies](#) in your [#SaveOurSpecies](#) [#logos](#)! <https://goo.gl/oQhBgJ>

[Tweet That!](#)

Wonder why [@CocaCola](#)'s [#logo](#) is that iconic shade of red? Hint: it's got a lot to do with booze. <https://goo.gl/JbTasM>

[Tweet That!](#)

[. @MissionAvocados](#): ugly



avocados are actually
[#DiamondsInTheRough](#)—
new packaging.
[#branding](#)
<https://goo.gl/Eu7WDi>

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That!](#)

Have a meeting with
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CLIENTS ARE RAVING

“Excellent service and great
work!”

Distributor Client
February 2018

If you have any designs created by our team that you would like
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