

DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



November 2017

TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL: A PERFECT MARKETING COMBO



By this point in 2017, the use of social media is second nature to almost everyone. Posting on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and a slew of other media channels is as comfortable as sending emails. According to Statista, **81 percent of Americans have at least one social media profile**. While the Pew Center found in a 2016 study that **Facebook is by far the most popular and widely-used platform**, all command at least a quarter of the market share of adults who are online.

It is also much more common (and perhaps necessary) for businesses to be tuned into social media. Just two years ago, *Fortune* magazine declared it **utterly essential that businesses use social media if they plan to survive**.

"I'm sure that for many people this may be dead obvious and hardly worth pointing out. Of course, social media is here to stay," writes *Fortune* contributor Ryan Holmes. He points out that many people who are experts in their businesses, such as CEOs, senior executives and even successful

QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY

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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.



owners of small businesses, may not know what to do with social media other than set up an account or two. He also mentions that nine out of ten businesses use social media and that a 2012 McKinsey Global Institute Report concludes that **social technologies stand to unlock \$1.3 trillion in value**.

But if you're not a large corporation able to spend thousands or millions of dollars on social media campaigns, sometimes it might feel no more effective than traditional billboards or print ads in newspapers. However, social media platforms such as Facebook do come with monitoring tools to measure visibility and engagement.

Nevertheless, it can be difficult to build a following for smaller businesses. We've found a few ways to link traditional marketing with social media to increase their power and effectiveness to reach new customers. Here's some advice for your customers:

- **Promo products and social media.** Remember the old days when local banks, realtors or insurance agents gave out **free pens with their names**, office addresses and phone numbers on them? Well, they still do, but take a second look and you'll probably see Twitter handles or Facebook pages on them. No matter whether your customers are service-based businesses such as **travel agents**, law firms, retail shops or even manufacturers, it makes sense to let their current and future clients know about social media presences. Putting social media handles or links on promotional products is just as important as contact information. **Another way for businesses to alert customers to their social presences is to include "tech swag"** branded with their company names and logos. Phone and tablet chargers, USB drives and phone accessories are used by people every day and are a great tie-in with social media marketing.
- **Marketing collateral.** In the same way that pens didn't disappear during the digital age, **there is and will always be a place for marketing collateral**. Sure, some firms like car maker **Nissan** create **digital marketing for tablets**, but others like **Land Rover** consider it an important part of telling their stories. Athletic wear company **ASICS** does as well. While your customers use smart colors and graphics to grab the attention of their audiences, don't forget that integrating collateral with their social media strengthens both channels.
- **Wearables.** The fact that **the fleece vest has become the "new power tie"** among consultants, tech professionals and around Silicon Valley, goes to show the power of wearable marketing and how branding with smart giveaways can catch on like a fever. Companies including **Google**, **Salesforce** and many others have found that, not only are wearables and promotional products great giveaways, their customers consider them something special too.

Certainly, one of the best ways for your customers to start is to partner with an experienced expert that has helped numerous businesses large and small — you! Look to Idea Custom Solutions for the graphic design you need to make their brands shine, including **vector artwork embroidery digitizing, image editing, marketing materials, virtual samples** and more.

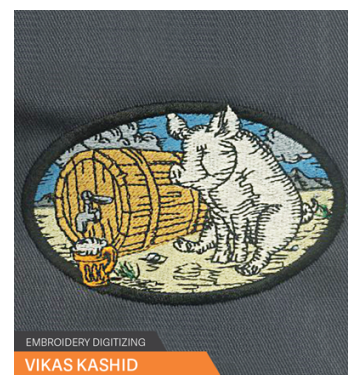


Under Insights, we also archive **past issues of this newsletter**.

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR TEAM

Every month, we celebrate the designers whose work scores the highest impressions on Instagram. This time, **Vikas Kashid** won for embroidery digitizing and **Manjiri Ratnaparkhi** won for vector artwork. Keep up the great work, team!



HOW IMPORTANT ARE FONTS IN LOGOS?

You may have asked this question when considering your own company's branding. Certainly, several major corporations have invested a great deal of time and energy in selecting typefaces.

One sector that particularly focused on unique graphics is footwear. Of course, the Nike swoosh or Adidas's iconic stripes may come to mind when footwear branding is mentioned. But according to industry magazine *Footwear News*, **fonts and the selection of certain attributes in fonts' sizes and geometries is more important than you may think.**

"The typeface that a brand uses to communicate via written language sets the stage for how that brand's message will be interpreted," says designer Lynne Yun. Certain typefaces that are plain may not scream with personality. But such simple fonts can evoke calm or reliability. Other fonts that are "chunky", "bouncy" or use more playful geometric forms can communicate fun and activeness for brands. That said, Yun also explains, "Most people do not consciously notice typefaces, but the subconscious impact that type has is profound and, in fact, measurable."

Simple yet Smart

Social Media Today published **a helpful infographic for any company considering a new logo or even a rebrand.** While it does cover the topic of fonts, the infographic lays out several traits companies should aspire to "Be".

The recommendations are to: Be enticing. Be unique. Be timeless. Be new. **Be simple.** And be consistent in the design and messaging.

The author also advises using some common sense on font selection. For example, avoid trendy fonts such as 3D designs or the paint-splash script look reminiscent of 1980s shows like "Miami Vice". Businesses should choose fonts that convey the right emotions and are not trendy or flashy.

Demonstrating with examples, the article points out that Disney uses script in its brand mark adapted from the handwriting of its founder Walt Disney. The reason for this is more than tradition and nostalgia *Social Media Today* shares an example of what Disney's logo would look like with a formal all-caps serif font.

Similarly, *Rolling Stone*, popular music's flagship magazine, developed its own font — which also served as its magazine's masthead as well as its official logo. Restaurant and resort chain Hard Rock Cafe did the same thing, as did **the Broadway hit musical "Hamilton"**.

Another featured example is Red Bull. The caffeinated beverage brand also promotes motorsports and skydiving events. That's why the company made sure to select the right look for its logo. As the *Social Media Today* infographic points out, Red Bull's brand mark would look pretty silly with Comic Sans as its font choice.

Lastly, it may help to consider what not to do as a measure for success. A social media resource and blog called *Rocks Digital* highlighted in an



VECTOR ARTWORK
MANJIRI RATNAPARKHI

NOTABLE QUOTES



"Only I can change my life.
No one can do it for me."

— Carol Burnett



"Success isn't about the end result, it's about what you **learn along the way.**"

— Vera Wang



"As any small business owner knows, **starting a business is not glamorous work.**"

— Senator Kevin McCarthy

article what to avoid doing and “5 common mistakes”.

Rocks Digital writes that **small businesses (and designers too) can go wrong by trying to “borrow inspiration” from other brands**. Specifically, they should steer clear of “only what is current (in) design, with no regard to whether it actually fits”, as well as taking care not to latch onto “internet buzzes” over a certain ‘flavor of the month’ look or feel.

This may sound easy for those who consider themselves to have good taste. But often by trying to keep costs low, SMBs end up overcomplicating the logo design process, or even settling for designs that don’t work well for their businesses. Instead, SMBs can get the best results (and most satisfaction) by partnering with professionals that specialize in branding.

If your company needs a new look or an update, or your customers’ brands need some TLC, Idea Custom Solutions provides **custom logo design that is fast and reasonably priced**. Put our expertise to work for you and your customers.

PROMO PRODUCTS TO BUNDLE UP IN

Putting a brand or logo to work not only helps a company to look good; it also keeps its name ever-present in the minds of customers. Certainly wearables — including hats, outerwear and jackets — are a huge part of the promotional products landscape. But there are always new items coming to market and ideas that distributors can present to their customers to make them stand out.

Cooler temperatures are here in most parts of the country. For some people that means skiing, holiday festivities or just throwing snowballs in the yard. For others winter involves bundling up and trying to survive the weather. The good news is that there is something all businesses can offer to warm up relationships and build brand affinity with their audiences.

To provide some assistance to you, during our latest scan of available products, we found a few items that are perfect for the next few months.

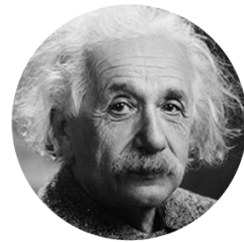
Socks

“When you’re discussing logoed apparel with clients, don’t forget their feet,” the Advertising Specialty Institute wrote on their website this month.

ASI pointed out that custom socks with fun graphics or bold designs could be the perfect way to make lasting impressions, especially with younger crowds. For example, socks with colorful logos are ideal for local schools and sports teams, non-profits that raise money through events like 5K runs or even quirky local craft breweries. **Even fast food giant Taco Bell is kicking it with promotional socks**.

More importantly ASI says not to worry about logos or messages getting lost under pant legs. “These days, the youth market like to wear shorts with higher socks,” one industry stalwart says. “When the sock has a funny logo or team that they love to support, the wearer loves to show them off.”

As ASI’s article hints, athletic socks are a big hit. Other ideas that work



“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

— Albert Einstein



“Anything worth doing good takes a little chaos.”

— Michael “Flea” Balzary



“It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do **not care who gets the credit.”**

— Harry S. Truman

well for winter include wool and thick cotton socks, as well as slipper socks, which are ideal for cozying up at home in front of warm fires.

Winter Hats

Back when it was a bit warmer in July, our blog posted a run-down on some of the different types of winter hats. Every year starting in the late summer (as some SMBs plan for fall) we see lots of promo products distributors tap this classic and inexpensive wearable as an idea for their customers.

Looking at styles, *Esquire* compiled a list of 15 kinds of cold-weather hats, while *The Trend Setter* offers advice on “how to wear” them. Another source called *The Idle Man* details a few popular styles of knit beanies, we think make for an easier pitch.

Simple yet good-looking styles that people wear today include:

- **Cuffed beanies:** A basic, traditional-looking, common style that comes with extra material folded over or knitted to the bottom.
- **Slouch beanies:** Longer and a favorite with younger crowds, called so because the top of the hat “slouches” downward at the back of the head.
- **Pom-pom hats:** A playful classic with a ball or “pom” on top, it is versatile with multiple colors and great for sports fans.

Although warmth in wintertime is a no-brainer and perhaps an easy sell, conveying to customers the product variety available is essential. Another point is that the beanie is one of the best items for high quality embroidered logos. They’re a great idea for businesses that want to see their brand worn all winter long.

Scarves

Another wearable that can show off logos well is the scarf. Available in every fabric from cotton to fleece to silk, ASI points out that this popular winter accessory is often underutilized by businesses. There are also sets of hats and scarves that come in a variety of colors and finishes, which are ideal for winter sports lovers as well as families with kids who play out in the snow.

Remember, you can never have too many extra accessories when winter hits and that’s true for your customers and their target clients. Whether they want to dress up employees, trade show booth visitors or even their best customers, winter wearables are one great way to keep their brands in motion during the chilliest months.

MARKETING ISN'T JUST FOR CONSUMER GOODS

Often when we think about “marketing”, we tend to think about reaching consumers. Sometimes the narrative is focused on getting through to American families, affluent professionals or even millennial consumers. But marketing isn’t just for targeting consumers.



“Use your voice on the local level where it has the potential to be more widely heard.”

— Senator Kirsten Gillibrand



“You can’t wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.”

— Jack London



“I allow myself to fail. I allow myself to break. I’m not afraid of my flaws.”

— Lady Gaga



“Once I dive in, I dive in all the way.”

— Carly Fiorina

In many industries, from heavy machinery and trucking to engineering and technology, business is built on name recognition, reputation and relationships.

Why Marketing for Manufacturers?

Manufacturing Global covered the subject this spring in an article titled “Why have marketing in manufacturing?”

First, author Andrea Olson highlights conditions that apply to business-to-business (B2B) industries as much to the business-to-consumer arena.

Among the high-level reasons firms in heavy industry need marketing are:

- Massive increases in competition due to the increased number global suppliers
- Requirement among customers to save money
- Need to expand sustainably through efficiencies
- Economic swings, price fluctuations and **variable material costs**
- Imperative to differentiate from the nearest competitors

Another magazine and website called *Industrial Distribution* studied the **subject of marketing in industry** from a different angle.

The periodical asked, “Does your company ‘speak’ to the market in a clear, consistent manner?”

Moreover, *Industrial Distribution* stated that all strong brands, no matter whether they manufacture products or sell services, “take a well-defined position; one cemented in a foundation of consistency, sincerity, and defensibility.”

It’s from this position of strength that “market alliances are formed, customer relationships are fortified, and market share is defended or expanded”. With this assertion, the magazine makes it clear that B2B customers are no different than consumers from the perspective of marketing and that what marketing seeks to accomplish is also the same.

Building Relationships, Name Recognition

Some manufacturers and B2B services firms **rely on active salesforces to initiate and nurture relationships**. Others gain visibility by participating in trade shows in their sectors. But in the end, B2B firms build name recognition the same way as other businesses.

For this reason, many of the promotional products distributors and printers that Idea Customs Solutions serve spend at least a portion of their efforts targeting manufacturers, heavy industry and B2B services firms. Though the end users of their products and services may be foremen, engineers, systems architects or operations managers, promotional products and marketing collateral both play a role in establishing name recognition and maintaining it.

We’ve talked about how some promotional products like **tool sets and**

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Sunita Kate

Senior Administrator, Digitizing

One of our more tenured employees, Sunita has been with Idea Custom Solutions for 21 years. In her current role, she is responsible for handling customer emails, order entry and reporting for the Production Team.

Sunita is proud that she has had such a long career with us and received service recognition awards.

About Idea Custom Solutions, Sunita thinks other people should know “Ours is the number one company in embroidery digitizing and graphic design. You can make a career here!”

Outside the office, she enjoys cooking for her family, which includes her husband and two daughters. She also likes to read the news and listen to old music.

Overall, what Sunita would most like to be known for is working sincerely and helping others in their tasks. “I’d like to be seen as a good and positive person who is ready to help.”

TWEET THAT!

Rideshare firm [@Uber](#)



safety kits are becoming popular, especially with businesses in the manufacturing sector. Likewise, specialty tools and other useful items can be branded as giveaways for specific markets. Moreover, tech promos such as phone chargers and other electronics accessories are used by everyone at work, at home and on the road too.

Anyone in the business of selling marketing services should target the diverse B2B sector. They remain a profitable and underserved market. When you do, partner with Idea Custom Solutions for the best vector artwork, embroidery digitizing, image editing and other graphic design services.



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Embroidery Digitizing



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