

DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



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“RUGGED” OUTDOOR PRODUCTS GREAT FOR FALL AND BEYOND



Idea Custom Solutions knows that wearable promotional products — the industry’s **best selling** category — need **not be tied to specific seasons**. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) tend to plan all year long. That means conversations about the right piece of logoed outerwear or t-shirt design are always timely.

Distributors of promotional products can and should talk to their SMB customers about spring and summer ideas a few months ahead of time. Meanwhile, they will appreciate you cluing them in now about what’s hot in winter wear, including ski caps and beanies.

That said, for some the change in seasons is something to get pumped about. Of course we’re thinking about active people, consumers and business owners who lean toward the rugged side of life.

Promo marketing magazine offered some “**Tips for Selling Rugged and Safety Apparel**” along with a few adventurous ideas. As you can imagine, rugged wearables are typically popular with entrepreneurs and SMBs in the road construction and building sectors, as well as others whose work is primarily outdoors such as landscapers, roofers, home improvement companies and remodelers.

While sharing sales tips, author Brendan Menapace talks about what makes rugged items good. Whether you recommend **outerwear like work jackets**, raincoats and parkas and **fleece tops**, or handy tools such as light-

QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY

Would you recommend this newsletter?

Nope ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☒ 5 For sure

INSTAGRAM WINNERS

Congratulations to the winners for September! Their designs got more engagement on Instagram than any others.

SUJAY MANE

Vector Artwork

SANTOSHKUMAR KADAM

Embroidery Digitizing

If you haven’t checked out **our account**, you can see two new beautiful designs per day.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ASI Show!

Orlando, FL

January 19-20

Exhibiting, Booth #1347

PPAI Expo

Las Vegas, NV

January 10-12

Attending

ISS

Long Beach, CA

January 20-22

Attending

ASI Show!

Dallas, TX

February 2-3

Exhibiting, Booth #1048

pens and carabiners, Menapace writes that it is important to pay attention to variables and special elements that appeal to those who work outdoors.

“Water-repellant finishes and durable construction”, as well as safety or visibility striping are great features. Meanwhile, he says to make sure to pay attention “to the usual warmth and comfort that workers want.”

Menapace also writes that there is a market among SMBs for American-made goods; specifically jackets by Carhartt and other outdoor brands known for their durable reputations.

One supplier remarked, “I think what has occurred is that people are finding that a lot of imported goods are not only cheap in price, but they are cheap in quality,” said Robert Klein, owner of Iowa-based Pella Products. “We’re finding a great deal of continuing desire on the part of the marketplace for made-in-USA goods.”

Also, outdoor appeal isn’t simply limited to trades or SMBs whose business focuses on repair or construction. There are also great markets for SMBs that play versus work outdoors.

Experts at the Advertising Specialty Institute have profiled outdoor promotional items and their increasing popularity. In addition to ponchos and outerwear, **ASI highlighted camping and other gear** this May. Items such as blankets, reusable food containers and **vintage coolers** are excellent selections for businesses that want to share their brands with adventurous consumers.

Along the same lines, **picnic promos work well for warmer months** when people spend time outside and also couple well with the ever-growing **grill and barbecue promotional products category**.

Lastly, don’t forget that promotional products with an outdoor focus are also amazing giveaways for SMBs’ trade show events. And regardless of the items you sell to them, you’ll be confident the decorating process goes smoothly when you tap Idea Custom Solutions for **vector artwork and embroidery digitizing support**. Get your orders back in 24 hour or faster with award-winning quality!

SELL TO TRADE SHOWS AND THEIR EXHIBITORS

At trade shows and conferences, most booths typically have some sort of promotional products emblazoned with exhibitors’ names and logos. You see everything from classics such as promotional drinkware and desk toys to the latest in **outerwear products**. There are useful items for the office, the **campground** and even **backyards**. Plus, as technology continues to innovate in every direction, we see giveaways from **earphones** and phone accessories to Fitbits and other **wearable tech**.

But who should you sell to? Traditionally distributors of promotional products, like most entrepreneurs, tend to start with local, expected markets including retailers, law firms and sales pros. In addition, targeting chambers of commerce and state trade organizations in your area can be a great way to get introduced to the venues businesses use for promotions. And sometimes getting solid leads is as easy as asking your

NOTABLE QUOTES



“Autumn is a second spring
when every leaf is a flower.”

— Albert Camus



“For me the challenge isn’t
to be different but **to be**
consistent.”

— Joan Jett



“Procrastination is the art of
keeping up with yesterday.”

— Don Marquis



“Sometimes life hits you in
the head with a brick.
Don’t lose faith.”

— Steve Jobs

existing customers, “What trade shows do you go to?”

Keep in mind that it is important to recognize that what constitutes “trade shows” and “exhibit events” has changed over the years. Thinking outside the box presents opportunity to reach different sectors.

For example, long ago live music events — think Live Aid, WOMAD and even Woodstock — were just large concerts that served up music to attendees. What was for sale then was mostly concessions and concert t-shirts. But times have changed. So have the people who attend and their interests.

Today, music seems more business-oriented. It attracts not just fans but also the brands that want to reach them. As such, music and culture fests like South By Southwest (SXSW) **showcase technology and new design** to people of all ages, causing SXSW over the years to accommodate curious attendees by adding exhibit spaces hosting SMBs along with bigger companies in **fields such as consumer goods, healthcare, education and technology**.

These events, according to the business press, are rife with promotional products, from kitschy, pop-culture items to **eco-friendly everyday items**. Live events, as the Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) categorizes them, offer businesses the ability to put a logo on everything from **cups and coasters to the plastic wristbands** used to admit ticket holders.

Equally as big are **Comic Cons, book expos** and others that draw thousands of visitors in three-day stints. These gatherings are stocked with exhibitors that hand out **promotional products both mundane and quirky**. Oh, and don’t forget about **another huge industry: wedding expos**.

Keep in mind that, whether it’s an industrial lubricants show or the next Star Trek convention, exhibitors need to do quite a bit to prepare and set up shop at these events. They will need assistance with stocking items to promote their companies.

Promo marketing magazine suggests that one great tactic is to **be a resource to trade show organizers themselves**. “Promotional products are used by trade show organizers to keep the market top-of-mind for buyers as they make their attendance decisions and by exhibitors to make their products stand out among the thousands of lines showcased at one buying opportunity.”

The Better Business Bureau recommended using themes in a recent post, stating that attempting to **craft promotional product offerings specifically with the interests of trade show attendees** is a good practice. The advice to SMBs is: “If you’re attending a convention with a specific theme — pet owners, for example — consider bringing leashes or pet bowls branded with your company name. If it’s an education fair, bring notebooks, backpacks, pencils and erasers emblazoned with your company logo.”

Such an approach provides a lot of opportunity but also decisions that SMBs have to make — ones for which you as a distributor of promotional products can be a great resource. Be sure to keep Idea Custom Solutions in mind for **vector artwork and embroidery digitizing services** as you sell to trade show organizers and their exhibitors!



“You’ll never find a **better sparring partner than adversity**.”

— Golda Meir



“I’ve always **dreamed of growing up** to be Amy Poehler.”

— Amy Poehler



“Since **everything is in our heads**, we had better not lose them.”

— Coco Chanel



“**Anything worth doing is worth overdoing**.”

— Mick Jagger

BROCHURES ADD BALANCE TO SMB MARKETING

In 2016, SMBs and the customers that they serve tend to connect digitally. For example, social media is used by SMBs as an essential means to keep in touch and promote interaction (as well as sales transactions).

But the rise of social media, e-commerce websites and digital advertising doesn't negate the need for quality marketing materials. Those posts on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest or Instagram are certainly valuable and extend the brand messaging of companies. But social posts eventually fade like news headlines and are not something customers can put in their briefcases and backpacks to take home and refer to later.

Only printed materials such as brochures, sales sheets and other marketing collateral can provide in-depth reading for customers, while feeding the senses that they will eventually use to make purchasing decisions.

Visuals Add Verve

It's no secret that great brochures and printed marketing collateral have looks that grab people. This is why industries which sell products and services because of visual experiences, such as **hotels**, **tourism** and **automobiles**, rely on attractive printed pieces.

The New York Times pointed out recently that, for luxury properties in New York City and beyond, **brochures can set one property apart from all others**. As such, real estate firms know that marketing collateral, when done right, stirs up interest and activates buyers. **Beautiful brochures and their visuals show off properties' stunning views** or details of their cozy feel. They can even close deals if they convey details like the warmth of fireplaces and other assets that make houses for sale feel like homes.

Collateral Carries the Brands

Another convincing argument in favor of printed marketing collateral came from author Gal Borenstein, in his article "**8 Reasons Why Marketing Collateral Still Matters**". Borenstein, who authored the book *Activate! Power Up Your Brand to Win in the Digital Age* highlighted a few important things.

"For companies of nearly all sizes, marketing materials — even print materials — are a must-have," Borenstein said, also pointing out that printed marketing collateral not only serve as sales tools, but brochures and printed leave-behinds "carry the brands". Collateral, he also wrote, can best tell your companies' stories with compelling designs, written words and graphics in way that other marketing tools like tweets and Facebook posts often cannot.

But it's also true that in today's market flexibility is important. **With the help of the right partner**, you can develop brochures and collateral for your company or for your clients that **shine both in print and on smartphones or tablets**.

Looks are One Thing



"If you want to gather honey, **don't kick over the beehive.**"

— Dale Carnegie

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Kamil Shaikh

Unit Process Specialist, Digitizing Team

Kamil joined Idea Custom Solutions in April of 2005. Today, he is a unit process specialist for digitizing quality. In this role, he checks the orders of new team members, rectifies minor mistakes and coaches to improve results. He also works to motivate employees to improve their performance and guide them.

One of his favorite things about the company is the teamwork of colleagues, who are always supportive to him. Kamil believes his supervisors' suggestions enabled him to improve his skills and accept new challenges. He tells us, "I have seen many good people in the world but have never seen so many good people under one roof".

In terms of accomplishments, Kamil was awarded best performer of the month several

There are other objectives that good marketing collateral can accomplish for businesses besides highlighting brands and logos. As *Tech Times* wrote recently, Sony has put together a downloadable brochure for fans anticipating their next game console, the PlayStation VR. **Promoting its new capacity for virtual reality gaming**, Sony's brochure not only aims to quench gamers' thirst for the next release, but also provides information on specs and the PlayStation experience. By issuing this well-crafted piece of marketing collateral and tutorial, the game maker primes its customers to buy and play.

Another great task for your marketing collateral is to break through to untapped markets. But we're not talking about just scooping up new customers, but rather new populations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanic Americans accounted for over half of recent U.S. population growth from 2000 to 2010, constituting a large new segment of American consumers. To stay competitive, large and small firms in sectors including healthcare and food service have begun to **develop marketing collateral in Spanish** and other languages, vastly broadening their marketing reach.

Whether the marketing collateral for your company or your clients aims to wow potential customers or inform them, working closely with a partner to **get the best quality design** will help brands achieve more for their investments.

CLIENTS ARE RAVING

"We appreciate the excellent quality and service which we receive from your team."

Production coordinator from national supplier of custom printed stationery

"Guys, I was in a rush earlier and didn't take the time to comment but wanted to tell you, y'all have done a great job this week on a few rush jobs I had. Thanks!"

Client contact for national promotional products distributor network



Embroidery Digitizing

times and, last year, was promoted to his current position.

Today, Kamil lives in Kondhwa, Pune. He started his career at Idea Custom Solutions, about which he says, "It is the wind under my wings. It developed my vision and enhances my positive thinking!"

To Kamil, his family is the entire world. "I prefer to spend quality time with my beloved wife Uzma and my son Zorain. I love them passionately and their company is a real paradise for me."

When away from the office, Kamil likes to surf the internet. He also enjoys driving. When it comes to sports, he plays cricket as a batsman. His favorite movie is "3 Idiots" because its message is that everyone should be allowed work according to his interests.

Kamil turns to his father for inspiration. He is a professor at a senior college and a role model. Kamil enjoys talking, laugh and listening to him. Someday, he hopes that there will be an end to terrorism and world peace.

TWEET THAT!

Need a classy [#PromoProduct](https://goo.gl/SfmcuJ) for your SMBs? The fountain pen makes a huge comeback <https://goo.gl/SfmcuJ>

[Tweet That!](#)

Don't let your swag be a drag. [#PromoProducts](https://goo.gl/BOzcNZ) ideas to recharge your SMBs' marketing. <https://goo.gl/BOzcNZ>

[Tweet That!](#)

Restaurant matches make great [#PromoProducts](https://goo.gl/Sx5iY9). Check out NYC's "20 best". <https://goo.gl/Sx5iY9>

[Tweet That!](#)

Swag in the bag: pens, robes, and poolside [#PromoProducts](#) part of the [#Emmy](#) Award

[Tweet That!](#)



Vector Artwork



gift bags

<https://goo.gl/kGV8xF>

Tech [#PromoProducts](#) are popular with [#TradeShow](#), music fest goers. Here's one new favorite

<https://goo.gl/5DG6An>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

Direct interaction with desired customers = [#TradeShow](#) success. Some expo tips:

<https://goo.gl/EA9YKk>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

Automakers put customers in the driver's seat, as [#brochures](#) rev up sales.

<https://goo.gl/em0qHi>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

Healthcare:

[#MarketingCollateral](#) is essential to informing, interacting with patients.

<https://goo.gl/xwsO9c>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

Dude, you're getting a new [#logo](#)! PC maker Dell Computer opts for sleeker [#brand](#) mark.

<https://goo.gl/bsXaxx>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

Ford celebrates football with a limited edition F-150 bearing Dallas Cowboys' [#logo](#).

<https://goo.gl/gu5WYI>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

U.K. food delivery Just Eat shows smart placement of [#logos](#) = a great [#branding](#).

<https://goo.gl/XqG5Wa>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

Retailer Target has had a much longer history than you may think, with its prominent red bullseye [#logo](#) dating back to the 1960s.

<https://goo.gl/lzmBcb>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

Never stale: New [#logos](#), 8 other tips to keep your small biz [#brand](#) fresh.

<https://goo.gl/l0uyxM>

[Tweet](#)
[That!](#)

Cash crop: California Avocado Commission rolls out fresh

[#branding](#) and [#logos](#). <https://goo.gl/eSSMwx>

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