

# DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



October 2017

## HOLIDAY HUNT: GREAT GIFTS THAT STAND OUT



We're in the thick of the fall season and you're probably seeing "fall specials" on everything from cars to clothing to candy, but you really should be thinking about winter holidays and buying presents.

From our unique perspective as a service provider to the promotional product and other industries, we have ideas that go beyond applying company logos to candy canes or gingerbread men.

Here are a few suggestions to help you and your small- and medium-sized business (SMB) customers with both gifts and branded giveaways their clients are sure to enjoy.

### Wrap Up the Gift Giving

First off, making your best customers feel special is important to retaining them for you. Real estate magazine *Inman* points out that, according to a survey of professionals, [these are the most popular types of gifts to give](#):

- 27.97 percent of respondents said they favor edible/drinkable items most.
- 26.57 percent prefer to give plants, calendars and other items that make the workspace cozier.

## 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.



- 20.28 percent prefer items customers can use in their homes or kitchens.
- 17.48 percent say that restaurant gift cards are their preferred presents for clients.

When planning for the holidays, remember that gifts are best when they actually look like gifts. Whether it's a batch of cookies from a food supplier, gift cards to restaurants or elegant pens, adding greeting cards plus wrapping paper and bows goes a long way.

Even if you're going with the gift card idea that about one sixth of professionals prefer, adding a little bit a flair with packaging makes the gesture seem more deliberate and genuine. Don't hesitate to feature your company colors and branding (and encourage your customers to do the same).

Ultimately, whatever you (or your customers decide to give, true expressions of gratitude and generosity will be remembered by your customers and clients long after the holiday season.

### Holiday Promotional Products

*Promo marketing Magazine* tackled the subject of **holiday promo product orders with the most critical advice being to plan ahead**. They stressed that professionals who serve SMBs should not wait until the end of the year. The advice makes sense, considering companies have many other things to do during the season, including winning more business, closing the books and even celebrating a little!

"The end of the year can be stressful, sure, but it can also be a big-time opportunity for promotional products professionals," *promo marketing* writes. Yet they also mention that "one of the biggest mistakes distributors seem to make is waiting too long for the holiday season and then missing the boat altogether."

As the timeframe is relatively short, *promo marketing* points out that distributors should be talking to their customers in September or October for holiday products.

There are many choices SMBs can make when they buy year-end gifts and promotional products. The Advertising Specialty Institute says items which combine the useful with the festive tend to be the most welcome by recipients and also to SMBs allocating their precious marketing dollars.

For example, **technology devices under \$500 are a hit as holiday presents**, reinforcing how most people already think that tech and holidays go together.

ASI also writes that technology in the promotional product industry "continues to grow year after year, thanks to constant advances and product enhancement" within the tech industry. As such, ASI notes tech is trending, stating accessories such as earbuds, wireless headphones, chargers and battery packs are an easy win for SMBs looking to choose branded giveaways their customers will really appreciate.

In addition, ASI illustrates that some non-tech products are still excellent for year-end. Items such as winter wearables — think hats, scarves and

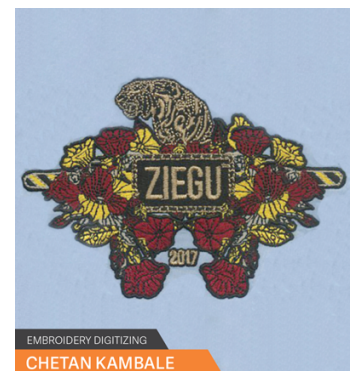


Under Insights, we also archive [past issues of this newsletter](#).

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, **Chetan Kambale** won for embroidery digitizing and **Saylee Ghadge** won for vector artwork. Keep up the great work, team!



### NOTABLE QUOTES

beanies — as well as health and wellness items. Another thought is reasonably priced **gadget gear that fall into the “holiday cheer” category** that work as traditional inter-office gifts and holiday stocking stuffers too.

We hope you'll follow the advice, get started with your holiday promotions now and explain the urgency for your customers. We are always ready to help you brand items with **high-quality, fast vector artwork and embroidery digitizing services**. We can assist with everything from promotional items to printed cards and gift wrap, while freeing you up to sell and support more customers!

## SOME CLASSICS NEVER GO AWAY

For years people have talked about the sweeping changes of the digital age. Information technology is seen as a force that would transform everything . . . and it has! Thanks to advances in software, the microchip, social media and cloud technology, we can be “plugged in” and communicate with anyone, anywhere in the world within seconds.

But in many ways, life in the digital world is the same. We still drive our Fords, Jeeps and Hondas, **despite all the talk of self-driving cars**. Smartphones may have altered the way we organize and record data, but **humans still use pens and pencils**. Occasionally, we even ask another person instead of our phone for directions. Moreover, print as a form of communication is not dead, no matter who claims **the sky is falling for newspapers**.

In the realm of small businesses, much of what they rely on to promote brands remains the same — with improvements. This is part of the reason that many SMBs continue to use promotional products as a cost-effective element of their advertising, trade show marketing and general relationship-building efforts with new and existing customers.

It's also not surprising that the promotional products business has a few classics that have stood the test of time. SMBs still consider these staples essential to their branding and name recognition efforts.

### Pens and Writing Instruments

Just like newspapers and landline phones, pens and pencils are still here in 2017 and widely used. According to data released last year, **sales of pens and other writing tools are actually growing**. Market research firm Technavio says that the industry generated revenues of \$16.2 billion worldwide in 2014 and its collective revenue is projected to reach over \$20 billion by 2019.

The Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) says that **one in every two Americans owns at least one logoed or branded pen**, marker, pencil, highlighter or other writing instrument. The secret of the pen's success and continued use as a promotional product is its simplicity as well as its low cost. ASI also says, in their infographic on the category, that writing utensils have the lowest cost per impression of any promo product.

But keeping that in mind, it is important to highlight that pens and writing utensils are not just cheap giveaways. In 2017, the variety that promotional products distributors can offer is far greater. **Style is an important**



**“The answers you get from literature depend on the questions you pose.”**

— Margaret Atwood



**“Success is a science; if you have the conditions, you get the result.”**

— Oscar Wilde



**“I do fantasize about having my own shop one day.”**

— Ellen DeGeneres



**“I succeeded by saying what everyone else is thinking.”**

— Joan Rivers



consideration, with suppliers offering a greater number of colors and features. Meanwhile, class is in. For example, formal-looking quality metal pens are in high demand.

That said pens and writing tools are no longer just a go-to for insurance agents, realtors and title companies. And businesses don't need to be law firms or investment banks to offer their next customers something special. Just ask car dealers.

Last year, BMW — the self-proclaimed maker of “The Ultimate Driving Machine” — used pens as a sales tactic. Car lovers in the market for new luxury BMW 7 Series models were enticed by the addition of special “100-year edition” blue lapis and metal BMW Mont Blanc pens designed to match the colors and design of BMW’s iconic logo.

## Printed Marketing

As we’ve hinted already, print is another subcategory of marketing that is not going away. Recently, *Marketing Profs* shared some important data about print marketing. Based on some findings from Vistaprint, the marketing intelligence website said that 92 percent of 18- to 23-year-olds surveyed reported that they find printed marketing materials, such as posters, billboards, brochures and printed ads, easier to read than digital content.

When it comes to response-based marketing, data shows that direct mail marketing garners a 37% higher response rate than emails do. Despite the widespread expansion of ecommerce and online retail, their report also said that “consumers trust print ads 34 percent more than search engine ads for making purchasing decisions”. According to Vistaprint’s infographic, physical print ads are just “easier for brains to process than digital”.

This may be in part because it is easy today to make print-based marketing as visually appealing anything digital. Some small business customers and their designers have embraced the sleek and cost-effective trend of one-color print marketing, while tourism and real estate firms continue to rely on high-resolution photographic collateral to convey visuals of mountains, beaches and other breathtaking views that sell their offerings to vacationers and adventure seekers.

When serving SMBs customers, don’t forget that it helps to have a partner who knows the territory. Idea Custom Solutions can make your job easier and more profitable. Whether you need graphic design for print materials or vector artwork for writing instruments, we help you deliver quality for your SMB customers’ marketing campaigns.

## KITS AND PACKAGED PROMOS FOR EVERY AUDIENCE



“Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens.”

— Jimi Hendrix



“Do not look for approval except for the consciousness of doing your best.”

— Andrew Carnegie



“We tap into something when we’re honest about what’s going on in our lives.”

— Sheryl Sandberg



“Create your own visual style . . . let it be unique for yourself and yet identifiable for others.”

— Orson Welles



Recently we've noticed that a terrific way to market using promotional products is with packaged sets of useful things. Here are two ideas that are gaining attention right now with both SMBs and major companies.

### Tool Sets and Safety Kits

You don't have to be handyman or repair expert to know that sometimes having the right tool nearby can be a lifesaver.

Some years ago, smart specialty retailers like Sharper Image, Victorinox and even "rugged retailers" such as North Face and Patagonia got into the market of selling classy looking tools such as pocket wrenches and branded Swiss Army knives. There are travel kits and carabiner clips for the adventurous weekenders, the gear geeks and even urban professionals who like outdoor style. Some of these gadgets come in "high tech" versions, which are favorites as corporate gifts and trade show promos.

Yet, SMBs don't need to look specifically to luxury retailers to find great giveaways for customers. The Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) published an article recently about the various new options available for companies that want to give their customers and prospects extremely useful items with their brand names featured.

ASI highlights a variety of new promo product kits including:

- Road safety kits: a smart tagalong for anyone with a car
- Cross country kits: ideal for the intrepid travelers or weekend adventurers
- Multi-tools and home fix kits: ideal for minor repairs and quick fixes

### Personal Care and Cosmetic Sets

The swag bag is a concept similar to the party favor bags we got as children when attending birthday parties. But the idea behind transitioning those beloved goodie bags from personal celebrations to business or industry events is a brilliant one. The reason is that, whether it's a work or



"Risk isn't a word in my vocabulary. It's my very existence."

— Slash



"Ninety-nine percent of the failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses."

— George Washington Carver

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



### Abhijeet Hande

Manager of Finance, Global Revenue Team

One of our more tenured employees, Abhijeet has been with Idea Custom Solutions for almost 15 years. As the manager of finance, his responsibility is to process billing, handle manual invoicing, manage team members and ensure accurate invoices are sent to clients on time.

Looking back over his career with the company, Abhijeet feels his

social event, people love free stuff.

There's also been as swell in the gift bag craze because of its inclusion at highly-publicized events such as The Academy Awards and [The Grammys](#). But tech and social media companies like TIBCO, Uber and Cloudwords have also begun to market with [branded items in personal care packs](#) more suited to professionals on business trips.

One major trend within the evolution of the swag bag is branded personal care items used as promotional products. Everything from [lip balms](#) to sample sized skin lotions and sunscreens couple very well with other must-haves like reusable sports water bottles and pens. Some of the more popular choices among companies and event planners include [reusable items like hot/cold packs and massaging wraps](#).

Moreover, with the emergence of consumers' interest in sustainability and products made though environmentally responsible means, some personal care packs feature or are made up entirely of [organic skincare and personal items](#). Often branded promotional packs are most impressive and most cost-effective when filled with [sample sizes of popular premium products](#).

### Good for Any (and Every) Customer

The best thing about promotional products kits is that they are versatile and can suit almost any consumers or customers. Certainly construction, real estate and architecture firms can connect with their audiences using tool kits. Meanwhile tech firms may gain more traction with professionals using branded travel or personal care kits.

No matter what audiences your customers target, [Idea Custom Solutions will help you convert or recreate their logos in vector artwork format for the decoration process](#). Don't forget, we also provide award-winning embroidery digitizing, image editing, graphic design for marketing materials and more — 24 hours a day.



### Embroidery Digitizing

greatest accomplishment was the transition of the global billing system from Manila to Pune within 24 hours, while maintaining maximum accuracy for the weekly and monthly bill runs. Another high point was automating the billing for about 36 clients.

A native of Pune, India, Abhijeet is married and lives with his wife, their two children and his parents. With his relatives, he often travels to places around India.

He also spends free time playing badminton with his former school team, as well as with his son. Rappelling is an activity he enjoys with his friends.

Abhijeet even finds time to read. His favorite books are *Too Many Bosses*, *Too Few Leaders* by Rajeev Peshawaria, *Everyone Has A Story* by Savi Sharma and *Vinod Gatha* by P.K. Atre. A favorite TV show is DNA (Zee News).

When it comes to inspiration, his family always inspires Abhijeet. They keep him motivated to face challenges and achieve success.

### TWEET THAT!

Winter [#holidays](#): cool [#PromoProducts](#) that stand out. Tech, wellness and [#wearables](#).  
<https://goo.gl/35eds3>

[Tweet That!](#)

[#Rock](#) band [#foofighters](#) turned a London pub into its own [#PromoProduct](#) merch store.  
<https://goo.gl/1ShTxi>

[Tweet That!](#)

[#Logo](#) Power! Can you recognize these famous fashion [#brands](#) without words? Take the quiz:  
<https://goo.gl/Eqp4sQ>

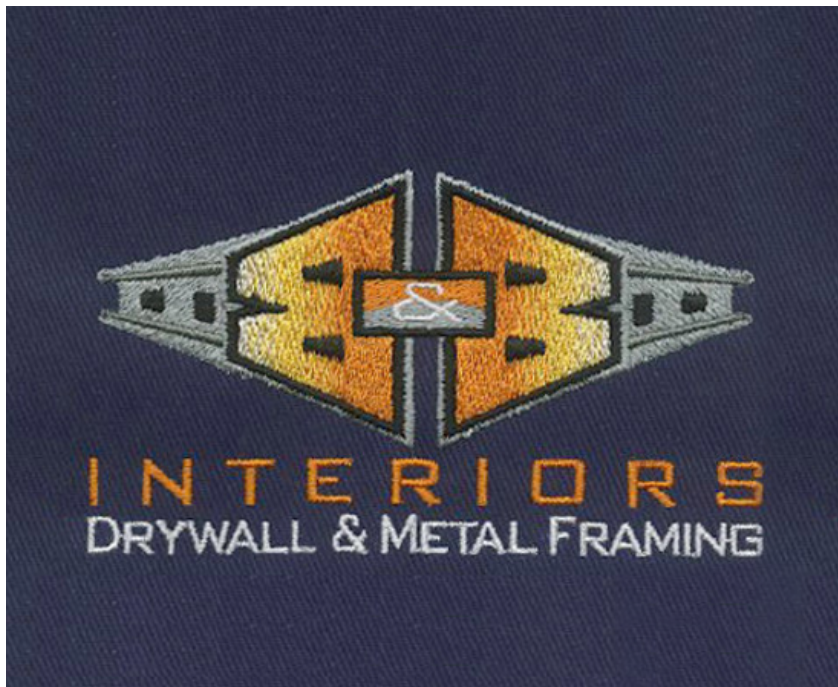
[Tweet That!](#)

What do consumers remember about [@adidas](#), [@BurgerKing](#) and [@Apple](#) [#logos](#)? Results are surprising.  
<https://goo.gl/tbJoQc>

[Tweet That!](#)

Some of the most iconic

[Tweet That!](#)



Vector Artwork

# R&R RESTORATION LLC

*"Building Your Dream Car"*



#logos ever come from #rock. Here are biggest, best via [@uDiscoverMusic](https://goo.gl/mtyxw4). <https://goo.gl/mtyxw4>

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

Broadway's [@HamiltonMusical](https://goo.gl/sDdSUG)'s #logo graces posters, #wearables. See #designs that didn't work. <https://goo.gl/sDdSUG>

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

Iconic Air Jordans and [@jumpman23](https://goo.gl/11v54W) nailed #marketing: 13 takes with different #logos, colors. <https://goo.gl/11v54W>

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

A great place for an iconic #logo? Ask the [@RollingStones](https://goo.gl/VEehXw) and they'll say on an airplane! <https://goo.gl/VEehXw>

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

A great #logo is a start but this #tech firm #rebrands by reaffirming its market and messaging. <https://goo.gl/Q5jYCu>

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

The internet supposedly hates this #logo. But should Gwinnett, Georgia care? <https://goo.gl/w9d1n4>

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[That!](#)

Beyond #logos, fonts play a huge role in visual #marketing for shoe companies [@Nike](https://goo.gl/ECMa24), [@newbalance](https://goo.gl/ECMa24). <https://goo.gl/ECMa24>

[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)



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