

September 2017

## ENTHUSIASM FOR A COOL MARKETING SEASON



Fall is certainly filled with themes on which businesses can capitalize. For example, there is back-to-school, turning leaves and **pumpkin-spiced everything**. There is also the second-most lucrative holiday for most retailers, **Halloween**. Other important events include Thanksgiving and Veterans' Day, as well as marketing-driven occasions such as Sweetest Day.

Yet, for all of the fun this time of year, sometimes it can be overwhelming. So we have narrowed down to a few ideas you can use to help your customers promote their businesses. No matter who their target audiences are, our collective passion for wearables and sports provides opportunities for effective marketing and branding.

### Sensible Wearables

Really, no matter the month or where you are geographically, wearables remain one of the best (and most sought after) promotional products — both for businesses and consumers.

For example, hats and headwear are not so much a specialty but more of a staple in American attire. ASI says that **19 percent of Americans own hats or caps they got free from businesses**. In addition, hats are especially popular with Generation X, people of ages 35 to 44.

Meanwhile outerwear such as light jackets, fleece pullovers and zip vests are popular too. Outerwear is, according to some research, even more

## 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.



Under Insights, we also archive

powerful that any billboards or TV ads. ASI's study on outerwear found that nearly half of all consumers surveyed say they are **more likely to do business with advertisers who give them logoed jackets**. Plus, ASI has discovered that brands using outerwear as giveaways have a 95 percent recall rate in the minds of consumers.

**Items like scarfs have gained popularity** because of their warm functionality, but also because of the wearables' increased use in promotions for sports and educational institutions including colleges and local high schools.

### Tapping into Sports Enthusiasm

You've heard plenty before about expensive "swag bags" distributed at big award shows, the holy grail of promotional giveaways. Or when you hear the term, you might automatically think about trade shows. But branded promotional items can be used for anything, really.

Just ask football players who reported to the first week of training camp to find **swag bags full of promotional products**. ESPN noted that these giveaways were full of sleek gadgets such as helmet speakers and smart water bottles, as well as hats, t-shirts and other small and portable athletic gear.

But if your customers are not trying to reach pro athletes (and most aren't), there are millions of other people who will get excited by football-related promotions. **Businesses near colleges and universities** or in locales where high school football is big (basically everywhere) can boost their profiles with game day giveaways to fans or by distributing promotional products to existing customers.

Moreover, ASI suggests that **any wearable can get be enhanced** "by adding a team mascot on the pouch pocket" or team colors when that sport's season kicks off.

Whenever the sweaters come out and all year long, **Idea Custom Solutions** is here to deliver **the best vector artwork and embroidery digitizing**. This means you provide customers with the winning combination of your strong product recommendations with our superior graphics so their brands stand out.

## IS A SIMPLE BRAND A BETTER BRAND?

If you read our weekly blogs or follow Idea Custom Solutions on social media, you know we like to talk about the topic of rebranding. With all of the logo changes that occurred over the past few years, we have much to discuss!

Major companies including **Kraft and Heinz Foods have merged**, while tech stars **Spotify**, Google and others have put people on the edge of their seats with the unveiling of new logos.

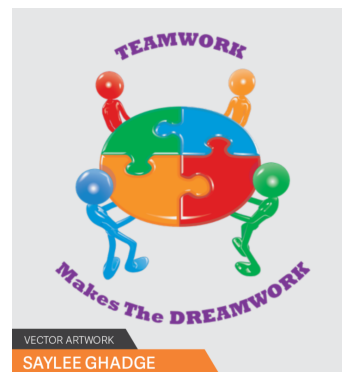
Sports teams in pro football, basketball and college sports are rebranding and so are America's towns and regional business hubs such as Richmond, **Newark Delaware**, and **Dallas/Ft. Worth**. And, not to be left out, educational institutions and non-profits consider their brands just as crucial to their success as multinational corporations do.

[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 **Saylee Ghadge** won for vector artwork. Keep up the great work, team!



## NOTABLE QUOTES



**"I dwell in possibility."**

— Emily Dickinson

But a rebrand can be set in motion by different initiatives. In addition to corporate mergers or some companies' needs to revamp older logos, sometimes the idea of simplicity comes into play. We've noticed that frequently, especially over the last year, companies and institutions are paring down logos or streamlining their looks with crisper, less showy fonts.

*Brand New* and *Under Consideration*, which review logo changes among big brands as well as small businesses and other organizations, have both kept abreast of some of the more remarkable rebrand simplifications as of late.

Take Pinterest, the popular visual social media channel. It recently redesigned around its iconic red, circular "P" logo, keeping it intact while opting for a crisper and simpler sans serif font next to it.

Also this summer Joann Fabric and Craft Stores, a national chain that has been around for 75 years, rebranded as simply JOANN. More importantly, the retailer opted to change its logo but keep the same feel, choosing a sans serif font similar its previous logo. They also traded in a dark hunter green for a brighter one.

A year ago Australian airline Qantas reworked its logo ever so slightly — made up of an airplane's tail fin and its name — to mark the introduction of new airplanes to its global fleet.

Yet simplicity isn't just critical for logos made up of fonts or letters. Just a month ago *Fortune* declared that the logo is "the most important quarter inch [of space] in business". To elaborate on the point, the magazine identifies the "10 most memorable logos" and makes note of the fact that eight of the ten, such as Nike, Apple, Target and Microsoft, all have a simple shape. Meanwhile the two made up of letters — Coca-Cola and Amazon — are equally simple in design and color choice.

Other major brand logos like Twitter, NBC and PBS all have simple but unique logos that stand out and are memorable. Let's not forget General Motors, or "GM", whose major corporate brand logo is about as simple as it comes, which perhaps is what lets GM's lines like Chevy and Cadillac be more showy and playful with their logos.

Some other key points to branding and rebranding:

- Don't be hasty, be who you are and let that shine in your logo and brand.
- Don't be too similar to other logos and brands, or too complex.
- Don't hire or use amateurs.

Most of all, whether you are the entrepreneur of a new business or a marketing services provider who serves them, remember that a good brand often starts simple and builds from there. Furthermore, having a skilled partner for logo design and production can make all the difference.

## PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS ACTIVATE PEOPLE

Reminder advertising — that's what people outside the industry used to call promotional products.



"You usually can't tell what's inspiring until you look back on it."

— Carly Simon



"I like it when stories are left open."

— Alan Rickman



"I am not afraid... I was born to do this."

— Joan of Arc



"Life is short. You have to be able to laugh at our pain or we never move on."

— Jeff Ross



They are an excellent way to put businesses' names and contact information in front of future customers, helping to make contact at the right time. They are also effective for SMBs to brand at public events, such as trade shows, 5K races and fun runs, music fests and even in swag bags.

But one thing we and the thousands of promotional products distributors that work with Idea Custom Solutions know is that promo products are also a great way to engage customers actively. Increasingly these items are being used as carrots or incentives to sign up with businesses, non-profits or educational institutions.

### Sign Me Up!

One online journal called *Finance & Commerce* is known primarily in the banking community as a source of news on noteworthy trends in banking, lending and economic development. At the end of July, the journal honed in on a trend among smaller banks and community banks especially: the use of incentives to gain account holders.

Now it's true that for years banks have used promotions to lure in new customers. Everything from beverage coolers, desk toys, Nerf footballs, toasters and **local sports promos** have been popular. Many years ago, one bank in hunting country even made news when it **gave out guns to new account customers**. But community banks are a little different.

*Finance & Commerce* said that a federally-chartered credit union known as Village Trust Financial Cooperative has **plans to give its members incentives that include "branded swag** such as T-shirts or coffee mugs for those who make monthly pledges or commit to signing up 10 or more (other) members."

A director of this African-American owned bank, Me'Lea Connelly, thinks tying incentives to word-of-mouth will help build a strong community bank while minimizing marketing costs.

"The black community in Minnesota has a really rich history of economic power and economic growth and cooperative economics," Connelly said. The plan is to offer incentives to bank's regular checking and savings customer essentially to recruit their friends and neighbors to come in and open new accounts of their own.

While this presents an innovative approach to promo products branding, it's probably still true that most SMBs and larger companies still prefer the simple giveaway approach.

### Incentives Everywhere

Take Uber, for example, which rallied beach lovers and summer enthusiasts to sign up for its ride-sharing service with **branded beach balls, beverage bottle openers and other Uber swag**.

Moreover, branded "company swag" is a popular tool not only in signing up new customers, but also in rallying enthusiasm both inside offices too.

The Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) published a story about a study



"Storms make trees take deeper roots."

— Dolly Parton



"Only **strength can cooperate**. Weakness can only beg."

— Dwight D. Eisenhower



"Education is **learning what you didn't even know** you didn't know."

— Daniel J. Boorstin



"Normal is **nothing more than a cycle** on a washing machine."

— Whoopi Goldberg

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

that cites **increasing use of incentives within the office to engage employees**. Especially in the services and tech sectors, firms are using **branded promotions as a way to keep connected with remote employees**. Others use them to **reward employees** or **welcome new workers** into their companies.

Whether its employees, association members or new customers that your SMBs have in mind, Idea Custom Solutions provides promotional products industry suppliers, distributors and decorators with the best graphic design services. Our **vector artwork and embroidery digitizing** will set you apart with customers, while freeing you up to spend more time focused on supporting them!

## MARKETING COLLATERAL STILL AN IMPORTANT PART OF MARKETING

You hear it now and again: print is not dead! Every day, Americans still pick up magazines and newspapers to read. Plus, the rise of digital media has not stopped the steady flow of printed circulars, promotional postcards and coupons to our physical mailboxes at home and at work.

But does marketing collateral still work for the average business?

There's plenty of evidence to suggest that the global business community still relies on the power of visual marketing. The use of brochures, product one-sheets, flyers and other documents is still vital to convey important marketing messages to new and existing customers.

For certain, all your marketing efforts and those of your customers should have digital assets. This is important not only because people use the internet and social media often first when making buying decisions. It's also because marketing collateral works and complements your social media, website and mobile marketing efforts.

### Relevant and Necessary

Last month *Forbes* published an article that went straight to the point. **It addressed presumptions about marketing collateral** and perhaps stereotypes around the companies out there that still use print as a part of their branding.

"Antiquated. Outdated. Unnecessary. Ask an inbound-only marketer about print collateral, and these are the words you might hear in response," *Forbes* wrote. "Meanwhile, marketers who see the big picture are using creative, conceptual leave-behinds to put a bow on their brand experience and make a tangible impression."

*Forbes* went on to explain that "print is primal" in part because the use of paper "is ingrained in humanity" dating back millennia.

But also the author of the piece says that marketing collateral (and even packaging) that is "unique, thoughtful and creative" can reach the buyer. One key is using color, photography and all of the potential of space that marketing collateral offers.

"Think sizes, shapes, finishes and other fine details that will make your piece more valuable than the paper it is printed on. **Consumer packaging**



**Nitin Antapurkar**

Senior Production Associate,  
Artwork Team

Nitin has been with Idea Custom Solutions for more than eight years. His primary function is to ensure artwork orders meet the company's high quality standards.

He enjoys the opportunity to learn something new almost every day. To date, his favorite accomplishments are when he won the "star of the month" award twice. He also secured first prize in an Instagram competition for rhinestone artwork.

Despite these highpoints, Nitin would ultimately like to be known as a good mentor who can enhance the skills of other employees. He says he and his team members cooperate well and have a good mutual understanding of what needs to be done.

When asked about the company, Nitin tells us, "I believe Idea Custom Solutions is a well-known brand in the graphic design field."

When not at work, Nitin enjoys listening to music and watching movies with his wife and kids. He also likes to develop creative designs in 3ds Max and draw. To relax, he takes long drives to new places and explores.

An artist to the core, Nitin explains his dream: "I would like to go to America and Japan and try to make some sculptures or half relief work in different materials."

**TWEET THAT!**

can serve as a great source of inspiration,” Wagner writes.

Moreover, Wagner concludes that “print collateral builds and strengthens relationships,” particularly by leaving a lasting visual impression so long as it ties into the value of the product or service so it subtly reinforces your brand by keeping you “top of mind”.

## Power and Punch

Several times the Idea Custom Solutions blog has [outlined the power of marketing collateral](#) and the way in which different industry sectors depend on it.

For example, the automotive industry relies on print and digital collateral because they know that TV commercials alone and even that “new car smell” are not enough to reel in picky consumers with tons of options in 2017. As such, [Nissan uses digital collateral](#) to tout its cars’ new high-tech product features. Meanwhile, [Jaguar Land Rover has put both print and digital to work](#) in its subtle rebrands and [Mercedes-Benz uses it in its co-branding efforts](#).

Likewise, we’ve noted [in luxury real estate](#), as well as [tourism](#) and [hospitality](#) that marketing collateral and print ads are an essential part of selling through compelling visual images. It works for travel firms pushing the sandy beaches of Florida or the Bahamas, as well as for those promoting [vacations in the quaint Welsh countryside](#) and for [the scenery of Wyoming](#).

That said, businesses don’t necessarily need to be in the business of luxury or scenic views to use marketing collateral to gain business. For SMBs, print still packs a punch. According to one [tech entrepreneur](#) who wrote recently for *Business 2 Community*, [print marketing is as an essential part of brand building](#) as well as a great way to “double down on social media” and other marketing campaigns.

Whatever industry sector you are in, no matter what types of businesses you work with, marketing collateral in both print and digital form can serve a bigger purpose. Idea Custom Solutions provides [expert graphic design for marketing collateral](#) that can make any business stand out when striving to reach more customers.



2017 on its way out. Talk now with [#SMBs](#) about [#branded](#) calendars for [#TradeShows](#) and giveaways <https://goo.gl/uTf67n>

[Tweet That!](#)

12 ways to communicate [#brands](#) to customers for increased recognition. Embrace [#swag](#)! <https://goo.gl/M9sd7Z>

[Tweet That!](#)

At training camp, [@NFL](#) players got [#swag](#) bags of smart water bottles and more [#PromoProducts](#). <https://goo.gl/QlDCxt>

[Tweet That!](#)

Want some decorating advice for apparel? [@Promo\\_Marketing](#), [@Complex](#) say ask Kanye. (No, really) <https://goo.gl/GpNkfM>

[Tweet That!](#)

So are we overdoing it with [#PromoProduct](#) fidget spinners? Depends who you ask. <https://goo.gl/HKCbp7>

[Tweet That!](#)

Thank NASA and the “space pen” for revolutionizing the pen’s reliability. [#PromoProducts](#) <https://goo.gl/MhDN7B>

[Tweet That!](#)

Are [#logos](#) the most important “quarter inch” in business? [@Fortune](#) thinks so and explains why. <https://goo.gl/6z8T3x>

[Tweet That!](#)

Don’t be hasty. Stay true to you. Some key “Dos and Don’ts of the [#Rebrand](#)” according to [@Forbes](#). <https://goo.gl/DbxMU5>

[Tweet That!](#)

YouTube [#rebrands](#) and unveils new [#logo](#). Get a look at the [#design](#) and decision process. <https://goo.gl/p7Wn5B>

[Tweet That!](#)

How do colleges and universities build their [#brands](#)? Understanding the role of the [#logo](#) helps. <https://goo.gl/ZGoKbb>

[Tweet That!](#)

International office supply juggernaut

[Tweet That!](#)



## Embroidery Digitizing



Vector Artwork



Staples needed a [#rebrand](#) to woo Australians.  
<https://goo.gl/qGSAZx>

A major university challenges a high school that has a similar [#logo](#), forcing a redesign.  
<https://goo.gl/9iBKqk>

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

Many cities [#rebrand](#) but this county department went with a new name and [#logo](#).  
<https://goo.gl/bYiYPf>

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

Print gives [#SMBs](#) a [#marketing](#) edge. Designs have 70% higher ad recall than digital. [#Infographic](#)  
<https://goo.gl/76tTfx>

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

## CLIENTS ARE RAVING

“ Very smooth transaction. You did what you said you would at the price. ”

**Embroidery digitizing customer of Idea Custom Solutions**

“ There was not a time that I needed to make changes, either adding words, moving around part of the art structure or requesting quotes when the team did not respond. The quality of the work is outstanding. Very positive team attitude! ”

**Vector artwork customer of Idea Custom Solutions**

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.