

# THE HISTORY OF THE PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY



1789

## COMMEMORATIVE BUTTONS

Commemorative buttons were printed and distributed throughout George Washington's campaign to become the first U.S. president. They were popular, so similar items became available, including rulers, calendars and almanacs.



1864

## FERROTYPES

A ferrotype or tintype with a locking pin was made for Abraham Lincoln the year he was reelected (a photograph made with a direct positive on a thin sheet of metal coated with a dark lacquer or enamel). This pin was sold by vendors at campaign rallies and sold in small quantities to vendors.



1886

## BOOK BAGS

Jasper Meek, a printer and newspaper owner in Ohio, wanted to keep his presses running during slow times. He got buy-in from a local shoe shop and began printing burlap book bags with the phrase "Buy Caldwell Shoes."

The idea was a hit and another local printer, Henry Beach, started doing the same and soon all types of products were getting imprinted — everything from aprons and fans to buggy whips and horse hats.

Adolphus Busch helped pioneer the Anheuser-Busch company but also sent salesmen into taverns to supply logoed items like corkscrews and pocket knives to give to potential and current customers.



## COCA-COLA

Since Coca-Cola's inception, the company has promoted its brand with merchandise. Antique shops sell vintage beverage trays and bell-shaped glasses. The World of Coke museum in Atlanta has an exhibit detailing the history of the company's advertising. There is also a gift shop where people can buy current products.

Two more newspapermen, Thomas Murphy and Edward Burke Osborne, both of Red Oak, Iowa, are credited with inventing art calendars that became immensely popular in the late 1880s.



1900

## MATCHBOOKS

The branded matchbook had become one very popular branded item for advertisers. Although matchbooks peaked as advertising tools in the mid-20th century, bars and restaurants continue to use them in their branding efforts.



1904

## PPAI

The industry had about a dozen manufacturers who joined forces in an association that enabled them to discuss and advocate for pricing, procedures and product ideas. Originally called the Advertising Manufacturers Association, today it is Promotional Products Association International and has more than 10,000 members.



1914

## TRADE SHOW

PPAI held its first trade show, which has continued to present times as the PPAI Expo.



1920s

## BOBBLEHEADS

The first bobblehead to be used for promotional purpose was one created for the New York Knicks.



1936

## POSTCARDS

To advertise lube jobs, the Chevrolet garage sent out photographic postcards.



1937

## STRESS RELIEVERS

The demand for a rubber substitute during World War II led to the development of polyurethane. This enabled the development of stress relievers.



1940s

## SALES

The industry reached \$120 Million in sales.

**\$120**  
MILLION

1950

## ASI

The organization was founded by a graduate student selling promotional products to work his way through school.



1965

## BPMA

The British Promotional Merchandise Association was founded.



2000

## IDEA CUSTOM SOLUTIONS

Our company was incorporated this year.



2008

## ELECTION MERCHANDISE

President Barack Obama created an online store with promotional SWAG — this was a different take on presidential election campaigning. The industry comes full circle!



2018

## GRAPHIC DESIGN

We continue to dedicate our brand to the promotional products and related industries with graphic design, from vector artwork and image editing to embroidery digitizing and custom logo design.



IMAGE SOURCES:  
<https://www.collectorsweekly.com/coca-cola/flags/stories>  
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<https://www.ppai.org/>  
<http://www.cartidow.com/709432/boston-massachusetts-1936-chevrolet-master-deluxe-advertising-bus-transportation-cars/>  
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