

June 2018

WELCOME SUMMER WARMTH WITH WINNING OUTDOOR PRODUCTS



It's officially summertime (Well, not officially, but we only got about a day of spring!). Warm weather means outdoor parties, cold drinks at the lake, grilling, catching rays on the beach . . . Essentially, it means a plethora of opportunities for promotional products companies to capitalize on the heat. If you haven't yet hopped on the bandwagon of outdoor promos, follow these tips to make sure you do so in the best way possible.

- **Find the easy get: outdoor products that always do well.**
Think about the products you would use or enjoy during the summer. **Things like can koozies, pop-up tents, garden flags and foldable chairs.** Some products sell well every year because they're consistently used throughout the warmer months. They often get added visibility for your customers as well, when their users take them to events such as picnics or parades.
- **Learn the difference between indoor and outdoor products.**
You wouldn't sit your sofa outside for the duration of the summer because it would get ruined, right? **Outdoor products are at the mercy of the weather and the bright sun**, which means they need to be made from special material and have extra features to help fight the elements. Research these aspects of the products before you begin to sell them, then you'll be able to advise your customers on the best way to decorate them. And remember that typical decoration techniques probably won't work in the great outdoors. You want to go for processes that won't fade, crack or wash away.
- **Don't forget about the decoration — it needs to be visible.**
Since most outdoor products are used at big events, the average end-user will have to see through a cacophony of color and noise to focus on your products. Consult with your clients to make sure they will get the biggest bang for their buck with what Karen

QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY



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 [past issues of this newsletter](#).

Obradovitz from Picnic Time says should be a wow factor. “The most important thing with our product line, and I would say anybody’s, is that you want it to be attractive,” she told Promo Marketing Magazine. “**You want it to attract attention because you’re outside and there are so many distractions going on.**”

- **Vary your product offerings to account for everyone’s preferences.** Remember, some people don’t like warmer weather. **You’ll want to suggest products for both outdoor enthusiasts and for people who just don’t get along with the sun.** Think handheld fans to beat the heat, fun hats to block the sun and make a statement at the same time, and even multipurpose products that can be used for anything but often fall into the outdoor category — pocket knives, for example.
- **Remember: It’s not just your customers who need outdoor promos.** If you really want to capitalize on the weather, **drum up some more business for yourself while you sell to your clients.** Promote your own brand on the same products. And think big — marathons and other like events are a huge opportunity. Sign up for a vendor booth. Thousands of people participate, so you never know who might walk up to your branded, tented table for some logoed bottles of water and shade. It could be a buyer who needs products for their clients.

Not exactly sure how to translate your customer’s logo into summer-friendly form? Let Idea Custom Solutions help with our **vector artwork and embroidery digitizing**.

THE HISTORY OF THE PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

In 1789, George Washington took his position as the first president of the newly formed United States. With that came **the first purposeful use of promotional products: commemorative buttons**. They were printed and distributed throughout his campaign and then became so popular that similar items became available, including rulers, calendars and almanacs.

It wasn’t until about a hundred years later, in 1886, when the actual industry began to come to fruition. Jasper Meek was a printer and newspaper owner in Ohio. During slow times, he had nothing to do to keep his printing presses running. So, **he decided he would print advertisements onto products — specifically on bags for books**, because he’d seen a child struggling to carry books to school. He got buy-in from a local shoe shop and, shortly after, began printing burlap bags with the phrase “Buy Caldwell Shoes.” The idea was a hit and another local printer, Henry Beach, started doing the same. **Soon all types of products were getting imprinted — everything from aprons and fans to buggy whips and horse hats.**

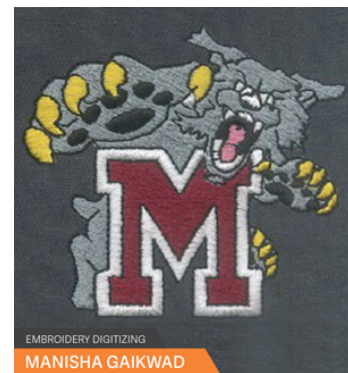
By 1904, the new industry had about a dozen manufacturers. The 12 decided to join forces in an association that enabled them to discuss and advocate for pricing, procedures and product ideas. They named it the Advertising Manufacturers Association or, as we all know it today, the Promotional Products Association International. In only two short years, the association had 56 official members. Today, it has more than 10,000. In 1914, they held their first trade show, which has continued to present times as the PPAI Expo.

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, **Manisha Gaikwad** won for embroidery digitizing (for the third month in a row!) and **Manjiri Ratnaparkhi** won for vector artwork. Keep up the great work, team!



VECTOR ARTWORK
MANJIRI RATNAPARKHI

NOTABLE QUOTES



“Every life a legacy, every small business a school.”

— Michael E. Gerber

When the Depression occurred, the industry took a big hit. But it bounced back. By the late 1940s, sales were soaring to more than \$120 million across the industry. The Advertising Specialty Institute emerged onto the scene in 1950, founded by a graduate student selling promotional products to work his way through school. Together, PPAI and ASI are the largest industry organizations and central resources for anyone in the promotional products world. The 1950s saw the entry of the promotional products industry on British soil as well, leading to the founding of the British Promotional Merchandise Association in 1965.

It's true what they say — **you can't know where you're going unless you know where you've been.** Idea Custom Solutions has a long, award-winning history of serving the promotional products industry. We look forward to putting our experience to use for you with graphic solutions, including **custom logo design.**

WOW YOUR CLIENTS WITH TECH ENHANCED MAILERS

We may live in an almost completely digital world, but direct mail is still seeing great returns — and in some cases, it's doing better at driving sales than many other marketing channels. One of the perks of our digital existence, though, is that we can combine the latest technology with traditional methods in order to get more attention for things we want to promote. In other words, you can go beyond the standard catalog or postcard mailer and add some new-age interest to it.

These 5 tips show how you can grab your clients' interest with technology enhancements to direct mail campaigns.

1. Use Personalized URLs

Say you're sending out a coupon to clients offering 25 percent off their next order. Everyone loves coupons! But they'll love them even more if they feel like they've received an offer just for them. **Printing a personalized URL on the mailers with their names** — something like ideacustom.com/justforstephanie — will make your clients feel special and noticed, not to mention more likely to purchase from you using that coupon.

2. Use Programmatic Mail

This is similar to retargeting ads or emails to customers who visited and left your website previously. Remember Stephanie, your client getting 25 percent off with her personalized URL? **Imagine if the mailer you send to her also includes information about and a photo of something she put in her cart but didn't buy.** It might just pique her curiosity again and lead to the completion of the sale.

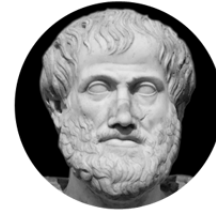
3. Add Augmented Reality

In the world of augmented reality, fantasy becomes reality. It combines print and technology when used with direct mailers. **A specific image of a product can be designed to have an augmented reality experience attached to it.** Your clients get the mailers, scan the images with their phones or tablets and suddenly they're able to interact with the products on their screens. IKEA even has an app that lets users virtually place pieces of furniture in rooms. Augmented reality makes the products you're trying to sell feel more real — especially if clients can see how they look on their desks or other spaces before they buy.



"I can't imagine a person becoming a success who doesn't **give this game of life everything** he's got."

— Walter Cronkite



"We are what we repeatedly do. **Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.**"

— Aristotle



"We are really **competing against ourselves**, we have no control over how other people perform."

— Pete Cashmore



"Let us make our future now, and let us **make our dreams tomorrow's reality.**"

— Malala Yousafzai



"Try to **be a rainbow in someone's cloud.**"

— Maya Angelou

4. Add Sound

You know those greeting cards that start to play a song when you open them? **Well you can use that same method for your own mailers with sound chips.** Just remember to be polite about it. Keep the volume at a reasonable level and don't make whatever plays something incredibly annoying that will effectively kill sales (like that old Quizno's commercial did to the sandwich chain).

5. Include Video

Thanks to the ever-shrinking size of devices and screens, you can now send out mailers that have their very own video screens inside that play videos of your creation. These are kind of expensive to send, for obvious reasons, but the impact is huge. Once your prospects open the mailers, you can have video play automatically or even include play buttons.

Let your imagination soar about all the ways you can incorporate this kind technology to stand out in the mailboxes of your clients and prospects. **With Idea Custom Solutions, you can design direct mail and other printed marketing materials to wow them!**

SPOTLIGHT ON THE TOP 5 PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS COMPANIES



Every year, ASI releases a list of the best places to work in the industry for both suppliers and distributors. Some interesting facts from this year? Washington won out as the state with the biggest concentration of winners (five in total) and small companies with 25 employees or less accounted for the majority of the list. Here's an inside look at the top five companies winning the "best place" honor this year and why they made the grade.

5. Superior Printing Co.; Medford, Massachusetts

Aside from a beautiful, modern showroom with bright colors and a fireplace, there's also a "chill-out zone" for employees. Breaks in that room include a fully-equipped lounge and video games. Plus, employees get some pretty good perks: year-end bonuses and 401Ks, holiday parties, early releases on Fridays and profit sharing. **Employee Stephanie Rego explained part of why she**



"Each day provides its own gifts."

— Marcus Aurelius



"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty."

— Winston Churchill



"It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation."

— Herman Melville



"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."

— Thomas Edison

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

likes working at Superior so much to Counselor: “The atmosphere is casual. We’re like one big family here. We truly enjoy each other’s company and we all feel like Superior is a great place to work. We work hard, but we make sure we have fun while doing so.”

4. Harper + Scott; New York, New York

At Harper + Scott, it’s all about the unlimited. There are unlimited vacation days, unlimited free food, unlimited chances to lounge in the company’s living room and mostly unlimited potential. Each employee is encouraged to help build the company along with everyone else and to really create their own paths. Of course, commissions for new projects help and so do the multiple health benefit options and an open, casual feel in the office.

3. ScreenBroidery; Indianapolis, Indiana

ScreenBroidery launched from founder Tom Rector’s couch in 2008, and since then, it has grown into a Midwestern powerhouse with offices and a warehouse in Indianapolis and a storefront in Muncie. The company follows the golden rule of America’s heartland: treat others how your mother would treat them. That means everyone is a friend, customers and employees included. That friendship is reflected in the work culture; team members frequently plan social gatherings ranging from happy hours to community clean-ups. ScreenBroidery also offers a unique perk to employees — there’s a certain amount budgeted every month for potential mistakes or reorders. If there’s a problem with an order, that money is deducted from the fund but, at the end of the month, everything left is divided and given to all the employees as an incentive to keep up the good work.

2. Mac Mannes, Inc.; Bethesda, Maryland

These days, it’s odd to see one of the best places to work that doesn’t have all the perks expected by Millennials — like open office plans, free food and lounges. Mac Mannes doesn’t have those things, but it does offer something potentially more important: autonomy. The majority of staff works from home because management really doesn’t see the value in having everyone stuck in traffic just to come into an office where they can do everything they could do at home anyway, thanks to cloud computing. But there are still regular check-in conference calls and networking and team-building activities throughout the year. For those that do come into the office, they get half days on Fridays and a casual dress code.

1. **Brand Blvd; St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada** Brand Blvd is a young company in more ways than one. It was founded in 2007 and only has 26 employees — whose average age is only 31. Even the company president, Shaun Lichtenberger, is a young 39, a stark contrast to the typical older business leader in the promotional products industry. The culture at Brand Blvd reflects that youthful mentality. There are awards for high performers, 3-day conferences full of perks, a weekly business consultant visit to discuss goals with staff members individually, 170 charitable initiatives annually and, what may seem like the best perk for employees: the annual Million Dollar Dinner. At this event, the top producers in the company are treated to a limo ride with the owners, an extravagant meal and high-end gifts like custom suits and watches, car detailing and gym memberships. The mentality in the office is focused on fun and innovation and that’s part of why the employees love it so much.



Mangesh Malwade

Senior Production Associate,
Digitizing

In his 12 years with Idea Custom Solutions, Mangesh has received monthly performance awards several times. Then in 2016, he received Employee of the Year! He explains, “This is one of the best companies in the embroidery digitizing and vector artwork field. If you are creative, then Idea Custom Solutions is the place to work for you.”

As a senior production associate, he starts each day by checking the incoming volumes and orders of the trainees. His objectives are to complete his own tasks within the required deadlines and also ensure the orders of other employees are free of errors and issues.

To other employees, his advice is, “The only key to success is hard work. There are no shortcuts.”

He is married and has a son. During his free time, Mangesh says, “I love to go on long drives with my family and to read books.”

Otherwise, he likes playing snooker and billiards. In fact, he won a gold medal in a billiard-snooker tournament held at Mahabaleshwar back in 2004.

Someday, Mangesh would like to achieve the rank of team leader at Idea Custom Solutions and be an employee remembered for hard work and sincerity. In his personal life, he wants to travel all over India with his family.

TWEET THAT!



Idea Custom Solutions congratulates everyone who made the list!

CLIENTS ARE RAVING

"I just wanted to say thank-you for the last six designs I needed for an urgent order. They came in today, are looking fabulous and have taken my stress level away. Have a great weekend!"

Owner, retail promotional products distributor



DESIGN SHOWCASE

Embroidery Digitizing



Vector Artwork



An 1802 [#embroidery](#) sampler from Boston was recently x-rayed in Colorado.

[#PromoProducts](#)

[#history](#)

<https://goo.gl/gyUVA4>

[Tweet That!](#)

There's a truck driver shortage in the US. Here's how it can affect the [#PromoProducts](#) industry.

<https://goo.gl/QM1VYB>

[Tweet That!](#)

Plastic bans on straws, bags, cups, more could spell trouble for the [#PromoProducts](#) industry.

<https://goo.gl/gEjrsB>

[Tweet That!](#)

Purely commission-based income in the [#PromoProducts](#) industry is starting to phase out.

<https://goo.gl/qBDSxy>

[Tweet That!](#)

Want an [#embroidered](#) [#logos](#) with heat elements or technology sensors? Now you can get them.

<https://goo.gl/bo4HFy>

[Tweet That!](#)

So long, coveralls! The [@USNavy](#) is testing new two-piece [#uniforms](#) for working sailors.

<https://goo.gl/hhr4XN>

[Tweet That!](#)

Too bad for Zac Posen — it looks like the new [@Delta](#) [#uniforms](#) are causing a rash!

<https://goo.gl/BkEAgj>

[Tweet That!](#)

Check out this fun video of 100 years of [@packer](#) [#uniforms](#). [#Packers100](#)

<https://goo.gl/nL1DkS>

[Tweet That!](#)

Former [#IHOP](#), now [@IHOb](#), has an issue with their new [#logo](#) — it looks like a tampon company's.

<https://goo.gl/Bdyzpx>

[Tweet That!](#)

Looks like [@Apple](#) is under fire for a [#logo](#) to similar to Shift's for its new shortcut feature.

<https://goo.gl/4NAJ66>

[Tweet That!](#)

The [@newyorker](#) has unionized, changing its [#logo](#) to swap the famous monocle for a raised fist.

<https://goo.gl/jHnGf8>

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Looking for [#marketing](#)
success? Try using the
power of persuasion.
[#SmallBusiness](#)
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