

Promotional products increase customer loyalty

By Monica Kulesa, CAS

If you have a t-shirt with your favorite rock star on it, an engraved award on your bookcase, or a pen with your accountant's name on it, then you know what promotional products are. These products are everywhere you look but not always recognized for their impact potential.

A yellow silicone band has raised millions for cancer research; t-shirts are rarely seen without a message on them; and food establishments and sports teams are readily recognized by their logo, which is on everything.

No business is too small or too big to take advantage of the power or promotional products.

Although once thought of as "trinkets and trash" promotional products is now an \$18.8 billion industry.

It includes wearables, writing instruments, calendars, drinkware, technology, awards and many other items from over 4,000 suppliers, usually imprinted with a company's name, logo or message.

They are useful or decorative items designed to promote things such as a company, product, service, event, meeting, or program.

Promotional products are the only

medium that engages all five senses. Customers can see, hear, touch, taste and even smell them.

There are products ranging from low cost magnets to exquisite crystal awards. They are cost-effective and their impression is long-lasting and readily measurable.

Calendars, for example, are looked at several times a day for over a year. The advertiser's information is subliminally impacting you every time you refer to the calendar yet the cost per impression is less than a penny.

The planned and targeted use of promotional products can develop brand recognition, increase repeat business, boost trade show traffic, encourage customer referrals, build employee retention, and increase customer loyalty and goodwill.

The value of promotional products is in their ability to carry a message to a well-defined target audience.

Because the products are useful and appreciated by the recipients, they are retained and used, repeating the imprinted message many times, without added cost to the advertiser.

No one ever refuses a promotional product when they are given one and the majority of the time they make the recipient happy.

According to a recent study by PPAI (Promotional Products Association International), 76.1% of respondents could recall the advertiser's name on a promotional product they received in the past 12 months.

Three out of four respondents (76%) were able to recall the name of the advertiser who gave them the product and they kept it because it was useful.

Just look on your desk top, bookcase or closet, and you are sure to find many examples of promotional products.

If you include promotional products in your advertising budget, it will increase the effectiveness of other media. Keep the message the same, but utilize different products to reinforce your theme.

Once you have identified your goals and budget, it would be to your advantage to enlist the expertise of a qualified promotional consultant who will know the latest trends, technologies and products to give you the best return on your investment.

A professional consultant will also be up to date on imported products, knowing which suppliers are complying with safety issues (i.e. lead paint) and who are producing eco-friendly products. These are important factors in to-

day's economy.

A professional will also be able to recommend interesting packaging and help determine an effective method for the distribution of your products as well as a method to evaluate your results.

The variety of products that can be utilized is endless, so a professional can help narrow down the choices to ones suited to your tastes.

It is important to buy quality products as they will reflect on your business.

A pen whose imprint wears off within a few uses will give the recipient a bad impression of the company who gave it to them.

Be creative with promotional products and perhaps one day your business name will be as recognized as Pepsi, Nike, or the Philadelphia Eagles.

Monica Kulesa, CAS (Certified Advertising Specialist) is an independent promotional consultant representing Geiger, the world's oldest and largest privately held distributor of promotional products and programs. Monica has 12 years of experience in the industry and has won an international award from the Promotional Products Association International (PPAI) and numerous Geiger awards. She can be reached at (302) 698-1220 and www.ESS-Geiger.com.