

## **Promotional Products Build Brand Awareness at Trade Shows**

*Frank Tecca explains the strategy behind using promotional products at trade shows.*

Trade shows can be one of the most productive marketing methods driving sales. Therefore, how you use promotional products at trade shows greatly influences how well you increase brand awareness and return on investment from your trade show exhibit. According to Tradeshow Week's Quarterly Report of Statistics, (<http://www.tradeshowweek.com/info/CA386164.html>) shows held during the third quarter of 2004 generally saw growth in the areas of exhibiting companies and professional attendance. The average show in this report occupied 184,226 net square feet of space with 697 exhibiting companies and 12,077 attendees. With so many companies now attending trade shows, exhibitors have the opportunity to extend their corporate image and make a lasting impression on their target market. So, how do you use promotional products to make an impact at trade shows?

In order to determine the best product for the trade show we must first understand the types of trade shows. In the December, 2004 article titled, *Upselling in the Trade-Show Market*, in PPB magazine Julia O'Conner, President of Trade Show Training, Inc. lists three types of trade shows. First, B2B Marketing is one type of trade show where buyers and sellers get together to discuss problems, explore solutions and advance the sales process. Next, B2B Sales shows are retail oriented shows. The buyer is the direct retailer or involved in the distribution chain. Finally, a B2C show caters to the end user of a product or service. For example, fairs, shows and events that are open to the general public are B2C shows. Once you determine the type of trade show you plan to exhibit at you can then strategize to choose the proper promotional product for the event.

The first step in the strategy is to determine how to differentiate yourself from the competition. You have the opportunity to see over 12,000 potential customers; so, creativity and innovation are essential when choosing promotional products. Choose products that have lasting impressions with your potential customers. Heavy items are not suitable to carry around at trade shows. Items that can be used in the office tend to keep your company name and logo in front of the potential customer during working hours.

The next step is to realize the importance of branding. The promotional products you choose identify your company, product or service. Understanding your target market at the trade show helps you determine the best product for building brand awareness, which is vital to the success of the trade show.

Finally, create a connection between your company's product or service, the tradeshow and the promotional product. Understand your target market and determine what types of promotional products would appeal to them. Creating the connection between the trade show, your company's product or service and the promotional product will help you have a positive impact at the trade show.

Therefore, think about how you will use your promotional products to help build your company's brand awareness and achieve a better return on investment from the trade show. Understanding the type of trade show you will attend helps you choose the proper promotional product for the event and make the connection between your product or service, the promotional product and the trade show. A trade show can be one of the most beneficial marketing methods and choosing the right promotional products will help maximize the benefits and opportunities of the trade show.

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