

The Exceptional Marketing Power of Promotional Products

(Special excerpt from the best-selling book **The Power of Promotional Products**,
by Maria Carlton and David Blaise 2004.

This condensed version written and developed exclusively for Promotion Products Pty Ltd,
by Maria Carlton, 2013

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Understanding Residual Value Marketing

Don't you want to make ALL of your marketing and advertising more accountable?

Believe it or not, Promotional products hold the key to quantifying the performance of every marketing medium you use. How? Let's go through some of the key performance aspects of how you can use a variety of Promotional Products and Business Gifts to keep all your other advertising honest.

Starting with, what exactly are Promotional Products?

In short, these are anything you can add your company name and/or logo to and use to enhance your stick-ability to your current and prospective customers. Stick-ability is what you most want to achieve out of any form of marketing. Quite simply, if they see or hear your name, and are aware of you for more than the 5-30 seconds it takes to see your billboard, hear your radio advertisement, see you pop up on Facebook, or view your magazine or newspaper ad, then you have some level of stick-ability. That's what's so great about promotional products – they have the power to dramatically increase your stick-ability.

The stickier your brand, the more effective your marketing and advertising will be!

While promotional products themselves are broadly considered to be any useful item featuring a company logo, name, or advertising message, the very best promotional products don't just identify your brand, they actually generate measurable results so long as these four rules are followed:

1. They must be **Audience Appropriate**. There is no point in giving business card holders to toddlers, or USB sticks to an athletic club, when sipper bottles or training towels would be far more appropriate.
2. They must have an **Effective Marketing Message** – a clear call to action that tells people what to do, where to go, and why they should bother.
3. They must appeal to **Targeted, Qualified Prospects**. Instead of trying to market to 'everyone', instead be selective about who your target market really is, where to find them, and what their most compelling reasons might be for wanting what you are selling.
4. They must be given out at the **Right Time**. The only difference between salad and garbage is timing – it's the same with your marketing thrust.

The best promotional products advisors in the world are those who can and will help their clients to master these four factors of successful promotions using promotional products and business gifts.

How to reap the rewards of 'Residual Marketing'

Promotional Products are so costs effective because of their ability o get in front of your target market, and then remain there (in most instances, and especially so if the four rules above are adhered to).

Consider this when using direct mail. Studies have found that by including a gift or promotional product the results can be increased by as much as 75% when it comes to the recipient actually opening and reading the mail item. This is particularly good to know when it comes to prospecting for new customers by sales professionals.

Once your mail item is opened and read, the promotional product continues to work, creating ongoing advertising in addition to a positive feeling about your company. It's a tangible reminder that remains long after the letter has been filed. This is what residual marketing is all about.

Long after your sales letter, or visit to that client has passed, the stick note pad, or quality pen is used multiple times, further imprinting your company image and the positive memory associated with it into the mind of the recipient. Frequency of exposure and low cost per impression is what makes Promotional Products extra valuable as a marketing tool.

If you send out Stick Notes with a message printing on them, and each pad has 100 pages, the message is seen 100 times. You can easily double or treble this if the pages are shared – as usually happens with stick notes.

If you give someone a coffee mug with your logo and message on it, every time the mug is used, washed, and for the duration of each drink, your image is on display. If the person drinks their coffee with others, this increases the exposure too.

Multiple impressions of your company generate brand awareness, and this is one of the keys to increasing your market share, which in turn is one of the keys to success in any business.

The Power of Purpose

Many companies just give away or use their promotional products as free handouts, but really there is so much more you can achieve when you have some purpose behind using them as part of your marketing mix.

Let's consider a car dealer who calls his promotional products adviser and orders 1000 key tags, to send out with a mailer card to 1000 households in his suburb. If the adviser asks the question – 'What are you trying to achieve by doing that?' he may learn that the dealer wishes to promote his finance rate or new range of vehicles in the hope that some of the recipients come in and find out more.

So what about putting a key onto each key-tag and inviting recipients to come and try it in the door of a car in the new range, and every key that is successful opening it gets a prize and the chance to win a major prize - maybe even the car itself? That's a promotion.

Let's consider a pharmacy who has just launched a new website and wants to ensure all the householders within a 2 km radius of his store know about the website and all the helpful offers and special medical tips on there. He could just send a newsletter, but for a small increase in investment he could send a fridge magnet attached to the mailer and invite everyone to go online and check a winning number to win prizes – and if they bring the magnet with them next time they call, they can exchange it for a super version of it that doubles as a great looking bull dog clip for fridge art or lottery tickets.

Then you have a promotion!

Each of these promotions' ability to generate more traffic is enormous compared to the simple 'give away – flag waving exercise'. The best part is that each is specifically measurable so that you can see exactly what you spent, how much your traffic and sales increased by directly relative to the promotional product – and the customers get to keep the item for a long time after the promotion.

Always consider these critical questions:

- What do I wish to accomplish by doing any form of marketing?
- Do I want to motivate someone to do something, and if so what?
- How can I measure my results?
- Am I interested more in getting attention and creating awareness, or actually increasing sales?

Then talk with your Promotional Products adviser about what you really want to achieve so that he or she can best work with you to come up with creative solutions that address your desired outcomes.

Types of Promotional Products

When you are starting out with promotional products, the array of options might be totally overwhelming, but it helps to identify them by group first.

- Wearables,
- Writing instruments
- Desk/Office/Business accessories
- Calendars
- Bags
- Glassware/ ceramics
- Recognition awards/ watches and clocks
- Trophies/ Emblematic Jewelry
- Magnets/Buttons/Badges/Ribbons/Stickers/Lanyards
- Automotive Accessories
- Sporting Goods/Leisure Products/Travel Accessories
- Computer and IT Products
- Games/Toys/Playing Cards/Inflatable Items/Soft Toys
- House-wares/Tools
- Textiles
- Electronic Devices/Phone cards/USB Sticks
- Personal Pocket/Purse Products
- Food Gifts

This list is loosely compiled into most popular to least popular based on data compiled by the Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) and the Promotional Products Industry International (PPAI).

The thing to remember is that you must make your promotional products be appropriate to the market you are directing them to. Here are just a few examples of some perennial favourites that really do work when used thoughtfully.

Umbrellas are the most wonderful of walking billboards that people hang on to and appreciate for the life of the [promotional umbrella](#). As a sponsorship item relative to sports or as a small handbag option used as a value-add or thank you item by a clothing retailer, umbrellas are useful, valued by the recipients, with a very high impression rate for a very low investment.

Pens are brilliant for their usefulness and also high visibility factor. Whether very low cost and therefore highly lose-able (ideal if you want your name to travel – and people are forever picking up and keeping other people’s pens) or as high quality gifts for executives which are kept and valued – good quality pens are still one of the most prized and high impression rate items you can invest in.

Computer items – there are so many of these that it’s impossible to list them all, but anything that sits on someone’s desk, is useful, and appropriate to the market selected for will be something kept and valued. For example USB sticks, also referred to as Flash Drives, are excellent products due to their being able to contain information on the stick, such as your website or a special offer slide show, as well as being imprinted with your logo. These items remain useful to the owner for a very long time, further increasing their effectiveness at brand exposure.

Clothing items and other things that make you and your staff highly visible and instantly recognizable is worth doing well. A trap that is often fallen into is having low cost t-shirts that end up just making your own brand look scruffy. Avoid this by talking with your promotional products adviser about what lasts, and how wash'n'wearable it can be.

Buttons and Lanyards, and anything else that makes you highly visible and attractive at trade shows is a great investment. If you've paid a lot of money to be there and working a stand, make sure you and your team look the part – be in a uniform even if you don't normally wear the same clothes to work – with bold imaging complimented by bright lanyards, good giveaway items such as post it notes, pens, and in some cases you might want to extend to USB sticks with your special offers and catalogue of products on. The USB stick should also have your website and name/logo on it and feature a special page on your website for tradeshow specials so you can further measure the results of how many people visit the site.

Quality vs Quantity and Budgeting Your Promotional Products Investment

Obviously there is a lot to consider with so many options of product, and let's not overlook the issues of budget – how much you wish to spend and what exactly can you get for your money?

Let's consider a budget of \$2,000.

- This may get you 200 gifts at \$10 each for your top 200 clients
- Or 2,000 low cost (\$1 each) items that will stay in the hands of the recipient for a few days – things like note pads, pens, magnets, gadgets and gizmos
- Or, at 50 cents each, 4000 items that are essentially 'throwaways' but may still serve to deliver a message or create interest.
- You may also split this budget with a \$20 gift for each of your high value top 40 clients and \$7.50 to spend on your 160 'B' clients

A trained professional promotional products adviser will be able to best help you determine the ideal way to commit your budget based on exactly what is available that is suited to your target market, and what you wish to achieve. Remember, he or she will go right back to those four golden rules as they help you through this.

You may also like to use the charts on page 10 to help you formulate in your own mind the specific issues to address as you start working through the many options.

Another thing to consider is that price per item does not necessarily reflect the same reality of a retail store. You can perhaps get most items at well below standard retail value based on the quantity you purchase, but the perceived value by the recipient will still be higher than what you paid for said item.

Printing the Items

Promotional Products can be imprinted in a variety of ways depending on the product itself. Your supplier can work with you to determine the best options, but whatever that may be it will be simplified by your having invested in good quality graphics.

Excellent imaging can turn a generic product into a unique marketing talking point. Work with a supplier who understands that *superior graphics achieve superior results*.

A Note About Quality

Most professional promotional product providers have visited the factories and worked with their suppliers and printers for a long time. They will know of the quality levels assured by their suppliers and whether it's better to pay a little more for some things vs others. When your promotional products professional makes a guarantee of the products they are supplying, this is usually backed by a similar guarantee they get from the manufacturers.

Some people think it's easy to just go online and order 1000 pens or USB sticks directly from China, but it's always worth working with a professional from the promotional products industry simply because you will get what you want, at the best time, at the most realistic prices, and backed by the certainty that the products will be well printed and non-faulty.

Be cautious of approaching Chinese factories directly in favour of saving on a commission fee. Ongoing relationships that a regular buyer enjoys will potentially save you a lot of time, stress, and quality issues. By your dealing with a local Australian supplier you are protected by local contract laws and legal protection. *There is no such thing as having a legal dispute with a Chinese factory.*

A Promotional Product must be fit for purpose and the 'cheapest' option will give you a lower Cost Per Impression. Your Promotional Products professional will not only give you excellent help in determining your best product options, with a firm understanding of the four golden rules, but they will back the products they supply and ensure you really do love the outcomes!

You can use this table to help you decide on what types of products will best suit your purpose. It's a think chart to help you refine your ideas about your campaign, who it is intended for, and how you will distribute your promotional products. Then use Table B to think about your budget.

(Table A)

	Y	N	DK
Do I want a lot of low cost items?			
Do I want fewer items but of higher quality?			
Do I need to have a large imprint area to accommodate more than just a logo?			
Does the product need to last for more than just a few days of a promotion?			
Will it be distributed by hand?			
Will it be sent by courier or post?			
Is my company or this project suited to fun or unusual novelty items?			
Is the item likely to get in front of and stay in front of the decision maker?			
Should I be conservative in my selection? (more traditional rather than funky)			
Do I want the recipient to keep the product for him or herself?			
Do I want, or do I mind, the recipient passing the product on to someone else?			
Should the item be useful and practical?			
Does it matter if the item breaks or looks worn after the promotion is finished?			
Does the item need to prompt any specific action from the recipient?			
Does the item have sufficient perceived value to prompt such an action?			
Will the item be used to test the effectiveness of other media as being part of a larger integrated marketing campaign?			

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(Table B)

	Example:	
What is your maximum budget	\$2000	
How many items do you need?	100	
Are all recipients 100% the same? <i>(If yes, available dollars per item = A/B)</i>	\$20	
If not, how will you split your budget? i.e. 80/20	20 items x \$80 And 80 items x \$5	

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Artwork and Industry Buzz-words

Art vs. Artwork

Your artwork must be created and provided in a way that enables printers to reproduce it in a wide variety of acceptable options. The colour logo must be provided as a high resolution (Hi-Res) format, ideally an EPS or IA file, so that the colours are clear and reproduce well with no fuzzy or blurry bits. If you don't have these types of files, a good design or graphics specialist will be able to redraw your PDF or JPG at little or no cost.

If you are printing in one colour, please produce your artwork not as a printed copy off your inkjet printer, but in a hi-res one colour (black) version and use file sharing options such as emailing it to whomever needs it.

Some items are unable to be produced with a perfect option for colour reproduction in which case you are best to default to either one colour white, silver, gold, charcoal, or black (depending on the base colour you are printing onto). In many instances too, you may find that your rectangle shaped logo simple does not fit onto your square or round shaped item.

It is always a good idea to work with your designer to have him or her create a full branding suite, which specifies what colours may be used (PMS Colours) and what one colour or shape variations may be used. Again, a good Promotional Products professional will actively take part in this role and help provide a few different options in the absence of your having a dedicated style guide.

When embroidering anything, you will simply not be able to work with PMS colours, as these are printing standards, but instead, advise what the PMS colours are, and have your embroiderer work on a colour match and have them provide a sample for you. They may charge a set up fee for this as embroidery is based on calibrating their machines and running tests which takes time and careful selection as well as threading the colours through individually. Therefore there is also no set charge for multiple colour embroidery but each job is taken individually.

You will nearly always pay a set up fee for a first time run of anything whether it's embossing, embroidery, screen printing, or offset printing. However a new breed of online companies will often absorb these set up costs as part of your initial order.

Summary

Finally, allow plenty of time for your products and the campaign to be put together properly. When things are very rushed, that is the most likely time to test Murphy's Law – *“if it can go wrong, it probably will!”*

Remember you are sometimes coordinating a manufacturer or two, a printer, a packaging company a delivery company, and the promotional products professional who will be keeping his or her finger firmly on the pulse of managing your order. The best thing you can do is allow them to do what they do best and give them plenty of time to do this.

Over time you will develop a close relationship with your promotional products advisor and he or she will come to understand your brand, your logo and the rules your company has around it's reproduction and use, as well as knowing what works for you, the things you are likely to be excited or impressed by and the things to not waste your time with.

Promotional products are an essential part of a total marketing mix, and your choosing to use professionals in the industry, who will be fully aware of all the options, the delivery and printing methods that work best and the best ways to package and deliver your products is what sets them apart from the various printers and advertising agents who think they can also dabble in providing you with some of these products. Choose your promotional products advisor with care and you will achieve excellent outcomes when you use this medium to test, measure and create outstanding results with residual marketing.

Production times are constantly changing. Your Promotional Products Professional should be able to advise timeframes and commit to them in writing.

About Maria Carlton

Maria Carlton enjoyed nearly a decade running her own promotional products company in New Zealand before selling it in 2001 to pursue a career as a writer and specialist business consultant/coach. She has authored and co-authored 8 books and is currently working on her second Novel. Based in Brisbane, Australia, Maria has spoken professionally in the USA, South Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand and is past president of the National Speakers Association of New Zealand. She is founder of Maruki Books – a collaborative non-fiction publishing company, and The Retailers' Resource – a specialist coaching, marketing, and training company, and has won several awards for her business and writing skills.

About Promotion Products

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The Promotion Products Team

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