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The Independent Voice of the Promotional Products World



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Practice What You Preach

Seven steps to increase your
business with self-promos

BY BRAD SHUMAN

There's a very clear irony in the way many of us run our businesses every day. Though we sell, promote and share ideas with our customers and hope that they'll purchase our promotional products, we salespeople forget how important it is to give away self-promos. Funny paradigm, isn't it?

How many times can you tout the value of your wares to your clients and prospects without realizing that they are equally effective for your own organization? Through the years, I have increased my business by using what we ask our customers to purchase from us every day. Simply put, if you give it away, they will come and buy more.

Keep in mind, as with any promotion, you must have a plan, and it's important to think well in advance when developing your personal promotional calendar. If you fail to plan ahead, your approach cannot be implemented in a timely manner. To be successful, you need the right mailing lists; the correct catalogs for your potential or current clientele; and, most important, self-promos that they will use, keep and talk about.

A well-developed plan will shape good decisions with your customers. When you target the proper decision makers, the combination of having the right self-promos and the correct prospect list will lead to increased sales.

In my office, I always keep a handful of self-promos with catchy tag lines that sell product. They are sure to keep my name current in clients' minds and may even prompt them to want a similar promotion for their businesses.

Here are a few of my favorites:

Highlighters — "Highlight your business, call ..."

Emergency flashlights — "When your need is urgent, call ..."

Pocket mirrors — "We make you look good. Call ..."

Mints — "To add excitement to your promotion, call ..."

Sharpie pens — "For sharp ideas on your next marketing project, call ..."

We know that promotional products work. So why wouldn't you use them yourself? Many suppliers will even offer you a discounted price for self-promos. Once you've made the commitment and placed your order, follow these tips for increasing business:

Tag Along. Include a self-promo with every sample or order you ship to a customer. They are paying the freight charge, and your name and contact information are left behind. Make sure to keep fresh products with different slogans on hand so you are always sharing new ideas with your clients. ▽



➔ **Celebrate.** Take advantage of the holidays. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Flag Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Halloween and Thanksgiving are wonderful opportunities to give self-promos to current and potential clients. Customers want to know that you love and appreciate their business. Plus, holidays lend themselves to great catch phrases. Try, "No tricks. Just treats from ..." for Halloween, "We Love Your Business" around Valentine's Day or "We are thankful for your business" on Thanksgiving. If you time it right, you can mail these to arrive on the actual holiday.

Mmm, Chocolate. Promote your business using self-promo chocolates. Put together a box of chocolates, candy bars or truffles printed with your name and contact information. Then, leave them behind when you drop in. Visiting clients just before the lunch hour or late in the day is a great time to give out your personal chocolates.

Lumpy Mailings. Continue to send lumpy mailings. Despite higher postal rates, this type of mailing is worth it for the attention it gets. Using different shapes and sizes of envelopes works well, too. Create a preferential list of your top 25 customers, and, on a quarterly basis, send them three to five self-promos, a few catalogs and a personalized letter. This will give them ideas to build their businesses, which will ultimately increase your revenue, too. This is a win-win situation, and it works!

Family First. Use pictures of important activities, such as your grandchildren's or children's birthdays and celebrations. Put a digital picture on a candy tin or plastic tub of jelly beans, and maximize the celebration. For most people, family comes first, and they'll want to know what's going on in your family life.

Business Tools. Whenever you send catalogs to customers, always include a few products that will promote their business. Useful items, such as sticky notes, pens, magnets, letter openers, highlighters and rulers are wonderful products to complement your mailing.

Travel Companions. Carry a box of exciting self-promos in your car. In our business, everyone is a potential customer. Develop a great elevator speech, and give out your samples whenever you are out and about.

I have found self-promos to be tremendously successful with my clients. We are always trying to encourage our customers with ways to market their business using promotional products. Thanking them and giving away samples of what we sell to our customers will bring a smile to their faces and yours.

Brad Shuman is a corporate sales executive at Pro Specialties Group in San Diego. His 25 years experience in the promotion business has enabled him to secure customers and clientele nationwide. He can be reached at 800.544.5646, extension 104 or brad@psginc.com.





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