

April 2016

IDEA CUSTOM SOLUTIONS' PARENT COMPANY WINS SECOND CONSECUTIVE "BEST EMERGING COMPANY FOR CREATIVES" HONOR



Affinity Express, the leading provider of white-label creative and marketing services for companies that serve small and medium businesses (SMBs) and parent company of Idea Custom Solutions, has been distinguished as the preeminent creative company in the information technology and business process management (IT-BPM) industry in the Philippines, taking home the "Best Emerging IT-BPM Company for Creatives" award for the second straight year. The company received the award at the 10th International ICT Awards Philippines in Manila, Philippines on March 22, 2016.

Creative has always been at the heart of our mission, and we strengthened our ranks this past year by naming Amod Dani as our first Global Creative Director. Dani drives the vision for Affinity Express brands AffinityX and Idea Custom Solutions' 2,000 highly-skilled creatives, who work seamlessly across the globe to bring SMB marketing visions to life.

"Receiving this distinction two years in a row is a great honor, and one that demonstrates our company's passion for delivering high-quality creative on behalf of our clients to SMBs across all verticals," said Ken Swanson, CEO of Affinity Express. "We continue to employ some of the best creative minds throughout the world, and we will continue to lead the SMB creative revolution in the years to come."

The International ICT Awards Philippines recognize outstanding contributors in the IT and business process outsourcing industry, with awards given to companies and individuals across 16 categories. In

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Would you recommend this newsletter?

Nope 1 2 3 4 5 For sure

UPCOMING EVENTS

NBM

Indianapolis, IN

June 2

Exhibiting: Joanna Grant and Jay Busselle

ASI Show!

Chicago, IL

July 13-14

Exhibiting: Jay Busselle and Kelly Glass
Booth 1138

Embroidery Mart

Nashville, TN

August 5-6

Attending: Jay Busselle

PPAI North American Leadership Conference

San Francisco, CA

August 14-16

Attending: Jay Busselle

ISS

Fort Worth, TX

October 6-8

Exhibiting: Joanna Grant and Jay Busselle

NOTABLE QUOTES

addition to the creative award, the company was also named a finalist for the Best-Filipino-owned Company category. Peter Maquera, Deputy CEO and Director of Livelt Solutions, a division of **Ayala**, Affinity Express' parent company, as well as Chairman of the Affinity Express Board of Directors, accepted the award at the ceremony.

Entrees were judged across a number of criteria, including: company growth; a large volume of clients with emphasis on quality work and diversity of services; depth and breadth of competencies; high-caliber company management; and promotion of the Philippines and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

SALES ENTREPRENEURS — A GREAT MARKET FOR PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS

Americans have been buying and owning things for a long, long time. The professionals who help us buy and protect our homes, vehicles, businesses and livelihoods deserve a lot of credit for their assertive, entrepreneurial nature.

But how do we come in contact with professionals such as real estate brokers and insurance agents? Sometimes it's by referral from friends or colleagues; sometimes we get to know our local specialists by their reputation and the way they market their businesses. As such, both insurance and real estate professionals make great targets for those of us who help promote businesses through specialty advertising products.

1. **Realtors are Roving Everywhere in Your Neighborhood.** As warmer months approach, realtors step up their showings of homes and buildings for sale, while striving to get more listings. In many parts of the U.S., **bigger sales are already blooming this spring.**

From commercial to residential, business news organizations such as **Money Magazine** stress the importance of salespeople to anyone in the market either to buy or sell. But to capture opportunities to serve the public, most **real estate pros realize the importance of getting their names out there.**

Many real estate agents appeal to customers through reminder advertising. For example, magnets can go beyond useful business cards to feature Major League Baseball schedules or calendars of local spring and summer events.

Realtors also can capitalize on warm weather fun with **branded promotional golf**, sports and **summer recreation items**. Specialty advertising distributors should make sure to talk to real estate professionals about marketing options that make them stand out.

2. **Insurance, Financial Professionals Know that Name Recognition Sells.** With all of the choices (and ambitious salespeople) in a vast marketplace, **those who succeed over time do so by reputation.** Insurance agents, stock brokers and financial planners know the value of having their names at prospects' fingertips.

Surprisingly, just when you thought everything has become



"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. **Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.**"
— Helen Keller



"The best way to find yourself is to **lose yourself in the service of others.**"
— Mahatma Gandhi



"Firms need to ensure that their ability **to provide effective customer service** keeps pace with their growth."
— Arthur Levitt



"Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, **it's always your choice.**"
— Wayne Dyer

completely digital, **sales of pens are on the rise**. Writing instruments are definitely one way agents can keep their contact info in customers' hands, but with **promotional product sales rising** across the board, there are lots of options for insurance and financial professionals to break out of the mold.

3. Industrial Salespeople Rely on Good Communication.

Gathering **important information about customers'** future plans is very important to better understand their situations, writes Dave Kahle in *Industrial Supply* magazine. In heavy industry, accumulation of data and specifications can help professionals solve problems, but that shouldn't be their entire focus. He also hints that longer sales cycles don't eliminate the need for quick, **succinct value propositions** and good communication.

While the market may be less about traditional sales practices, name recognition still does help. Plus, engineers and tech people love useful items and gadgets too. After all, one promotional product, the **ball point pen, was invented** in the 20th century specifically to satisfy the needs and demands of engineers and other technical professionals.

As a distributor of promotional products and specialty advertising, the key is to demonstrate to these professionals how to extend their reach. The self-employed are often open to good ideas on how to grow fast. Don't hesitate to tap into salespeople, a market that is almost endless, as well as profitable.

If you want to build compelling proposals for these professionals, tap in **the design skills of Idea Custom Solutions**. We can add logos to product images, design proposal templates and provide the vector artwork and embroidery digitizing you need for production of hard goods and wearables.

T-SHIRTS: BILLBOARDS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Here's a fact that probably won't surprise you: 95 percent of Americans wear t-shirts as part of their standard attire. According to the *New York Times*, 89 percent of those who wear them, **sport t-shirts at least once a week**.

It's fair to say that the t-shirt isn't just functional. Rather, it's a staple of fashion, expression and comfort that has become synonymous with the American way of life. Some historians say **the t-shirt was first introduced** as part of the clothing standard in 1913 in the U.S. Navy and, by the 1920s, the word "t-shirt" had become part of the American lexicon.

But it wasn't until the 1950s, when movie stars like Marlon Brando and James Dean donned tees that this plain piece of clothing became a wearable statement suggesting comfort, cool and perhaps a little bit of rebellion from a buttoned-up way of life. Also in the 1950s, brands like Disney began to mass produce the printed tee, while t-shirts with **rap music bands and statements** and **concert t-shirts became commonplace** over the next two decades.

But, according to the Advertising Specialty Institute, **it's not just the Rolling**



"I believe in **emotional branding**."

— Roustam Tariko



"Repetition makes reputation and **reputation makes customers**."

— Elizabeth Arden



"Spring is nature's way of saying, **'Let's party!'**"

— Robin Williams



"If I have **a thousand ideas** and only one turns out to be good, I am satisfied."

— Alfred Nobel

Stones or Mickey Mouse who have made t-shirts work for them. While almost the entire country owns and wears t-shirts of every type imaginable — from sports teams to memorabilia for favorite bands, movies and TV shows — ASI also points out the **44 percent of U.S. consumers own a promotional t-shirt** branded by a business or familiar institution.

Echoing the cultural and business importance of t-shirts, a LinkedIn article recent called them “walking billboards”, noting that “**t-shirts are a cost-effective way to increase companies’ exposure** and promote awareness of your brand.

McDonald’s started using **t-shirts as a business promotion in 2015**. Instead of product ads or simply placing the golden arches across the front, the fast food giant teamed up with Threadless to hold a contest offering up-and-coming artists the opportunity to showcase their work and win \$10,000 cash for the winning design. Along with the t-shirts, Threadless and McDonald’s developed other promo products like branded smartphone cases.

For most small businesses, a simple design such as the company logo screen printed on the front does the trick. But t-shirts designed to promote the businesses you serve can be decorated in a variety of ways. Last summer ASI published an article in *Advantages* on many of the **new garment decorating techniques**, such as sublimation and direct-to-garment digital printing. Also available to businesses are a slew of decoration options including multimedia embellishment for high color graphics, as well as distressed design for that broken-in, vintage look.

Whatever industry your customers are in, t-shirts are classic, practical and useful for any business interested in expanding its name recognition. Idea Custom Solutions is **your partner for the vector artwork** you need to ensure designs render well, regardless of decorating technique you choose.

JAY BUSSELLE NAMED TO THE 2016 #Online18



Dale Denham announced the 2016 **#Online18** for *Promo Marketing Magazine* and we’re thrilled that our own Jay Busselle made the list, and for very good reason. Dale wrote: “Jay may be the primary voice for the art and design-related content in our industry. In an industry all about logos, that is a pretty important voice, and he does an excellent job with his content.”



“When you can't make them see the light, **make them feel the heat.**”

— Ronald Reagan



“**I praise loudly.** I blame softly.”

— Catherine the Great



“Risk isn't a word in my vocabulary. **It's my very existence.**”

— Slash

If you would like to follow Jay, his Twitter handle is [@JayBusselle](#). And don't forget to follow Idea Custom Solutions: [@Idea_Custom](#). Congratulations, Jay!

SEE OUR BEST WORK ON INSTAGRAM



Want to learn more about our creativity and see the types of work we do for our clients in the promotional products and ad specialty industry and their end customers? Want to check out our latest videos and award-winning holiday cards? Then you'll love following Idea Custom Solutions on Instagram: [idea_custom](#). We look forward to your comments!

CLIENTS ARE RAVING

“Great service, excellent communication and fast turnaround. My files look great! Thank you!”

Idea Custom Solutions distributor customer

“Very good work.”

Idea Custom Solutions distributor customer

“You're awesome ”

Idea Custom Solutions distributor customer



Embroidery Digitizing



“Sometimes you can't see yourself clearly until you see yourself through the eyes of others.”

— Ellen DeGeneres

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Viswakiran Parankar
Unit Supervisor, Artwork Team

Vishwakiran has been with Idea Custom Solutions since November 2006, when he started as a production designer. Currently, he is a team leader for the Artwork Department, which involves driving creativity and ensuring quality designs within required turn times.

He is proud to say that he was recognized for his work and awarded as “Star of Month” twice. For anyone thinking of joining Idea Custom Solutions, Vishwakiran says: “Idea Custom Solutions is the best company in the creative field, where you get to learn and expand your skills.”

Furthermore, his advice is: “Work hard and you will always get rewarded for that. I strongly believe the combination of hard work and smart work is the key to success.”

He has ambitious goals and says:



Vector Artwork



"I would like to become the best artist as well as the best creative mentor to enhance the skills of my team members."

When not at work, Vishwakiran likes to stay in touch with the latest technologies and software. He spends a lot of time with his wife and child. For hobbies, he sketches caricatures and volunteers for social causes. He also enjoys watching movies and exploring nature. In fact, his dream is to tour the world with his family. We hope all his dedicated efforts pay off and his dream comes true!

TWEET THAT

Small businesses need strong [#logos](#). Here are 5 tips to brand your [#SMB](#) with smart design concepts. <http://goo.gl/YodL7o>

Tweet That!

Color, typography can illustrate your mission and ensure the best [#logo](#) for your business. <http://goo.gl/1kYnWs>

Tweet That!

Logos are important to [#millennials](#) too, retailers find, but less is more. Keep your [#logo](#) crisp and simple. <http://goo.gl/36NXE1>

Tweet That!

Power of free stuff: [#PromoProducts](#) like tees, totes, snacks, fanny packs get your brand and [#logo](#) in customers' hands. <http://goo.gl/P9p2BZ>

Tweet That!

Apple, Lego and Microsoft are some of the world's most favorite [#logos](#), but they've evolved over time. Here's how: <http://goo.gl/hKXBE7>

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[@USAToday](#) highlights 9 secrets to [#tradeshow](#) success. How many is your business using? <http://goo.gl/xYYTNO>

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tags, ear buds and
travel mugs make long
flights a delight.
<https://goo.gl/SXe5OT>



Reusable
[#PromoProducts](#) like
tote bags are a hit with
[#TradeShow](#) guests.
Here are 5 ways to “go
green”.
<http://goo.gl/qU2FGQ>



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