

July 2016

## TOTE BAGS TO TECH: SMBs HAVE MANY OPTIONS



We'll admit it. At Idea Custom Solutions, we sometimes get excited about new trends and re-emerging product ideas that pop up in the promotional products industry. Companies in our sector are innovating and that means small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) have countless ways to promote their brands and what they offer to their customers.

One product idea we've talked about a few times in the past year is tote bags, items that have been around for years but seem to be gaining new life as [perhaps the ultimate promotional products](#) for both businesses and the items' recipients. The reason is that tote bags have a lot of pluses on their side.

- First, SMBs who have used totes as part of their promotions know these trusty bags are great for trade shows and events where relationships are established. Totes are practical items that help business people collect and carry business cards, brochures and other giveaways that they are bound to acquire.
- Second, after events people keep and use them. [Totes are one of the more durable promotional products](#). Plus, they present logos well, building brand visibility for the long term.
- Third, [tote bags are reusable](#). That's good for the environment because it cuts down waste from temporary-use plastic and paper bags.
- Last but not least, the tote kind of has its own fashionable following, appealing to those who aim to be stylish. *New York Magazine* even ran a piece on "[11 Tote Bags You'll Actually Want to Reuse](#)", with totes of every kind from the "sparkly, pink and festive" Hello Kitty bags, to others cleverly branded for Whole Foods, Chipotle and even fashion designer Kate Spade.

Yet, sustainable branding need not be restricted to what is wearable. We also know that technology is always changing and the cost of making and distributing tech tools [gets cheaper](#). So it's no surprise that SMBs have also taken to tech giveaways to promote their brands.

As we reported before, [tech-related promotional products are a growing category](#) among businesses that showcase at trade shows. The Advertising Specialty Institute reports that tech-related items generally have as much staying power as traditional products. Already, [11 percent of Americans own and use branded USB drives](#) and the number is [even higher in Madrid at 34 percent of residents](#). As such, a 2016 study by ASI says USB drives are one of the top promo products along with classics like drinkware, writing instruments and sportswear.

If you are a distributor of specialty advertising and promotional products, you're probably already talking with SMBs in a variety of sectors about giveaways. Promotional products act as excellent reminder advertising for brands. With items such as pedometers, smartphone accessories, earphones and more, you can help your customers tap people's natural

## QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY

Would you recommend this newsletter?

Nope  1  2  3  4  5 For sure

## CONGRATULATIONS

### LOGO MAKEOVER WINNER



**Hal Nunn** of Nunn Boys won our free logo makeover contest. To be eligible, he and other entrants had to follow us on Twitter ([@idea\\_custom](#)), tweet with the hashtag [#LogoMakeover](#) and write an email stating why they should win.

He told us that he hopes a new look will enable him to secure more customers. Idea Custom Solutions is excited to help transform Hal's brand to set him up for incredible success in business!

Look for another promotion coming soon on Twitter and you could be our next logo makeover winner!

### INSTAGRAM WINNERS



Each month, we give prizes to the team members who create the designs we feature on Instagram that get the most likes and comments. We're pleased to announce the winners for June are:

**Embroidery Digitizing:**  
**Jayvardhan Tayade**

**Vector Artwork:**  
**Deep George**

Be sure to check us out on Instagram: [idea\\_custom](#). You'll see a ton of impressive designs with new ones posted every day.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Embroidery Mart—Nashville**  
Nashville, TN  
August 5-6  
Attending

interest in tech by offering items their customers will want and use. To top it off, you can enable SMBs to provide to prospective customers with branded totes bag to carry all their gear!

Once your customers have selected products, make sure their logos will imprint or sew properly with Idea Custom Solutions' [vector artwork and embroidery digitizing services](#). We deliver award-winning quality 24/6, so you can respond quickly to customers' promotional needs.

## WELCOME THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR TO YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

The [hospitality business is ever-changing](#). An industry that was dominated a hundred years ago by local inns and eateries is now so diverse that large chains like Marriott, Choice and W, as well as restaurants including Chili's, Outback and Red Lobster, spread their big brands all over the world while smaller operations still pop up.

Last year in *Advantages* magazine, the Advertising Specialty Institute reported that [travel is on the upswing](#). This is one of the many reasons why promotional products distributors should consider targeting the hospitality sector for new and recurring business.

### Hotels

Corporations including the [Ritz-Carlton](#), Marriott, Hyatt and Hilton are rebranding to rejuvenate profits while also [reworking logos and interiors with new design](#). Meanwhile, [large hotels aim to fill more hotel rooms](#) with direct booking campaigns. Plus, new places to stay — from quaint country bed-and-breakfasts to urban hotels — are blossoming. Even Robert DeNiro has gotten into the hotel game with one in New York and another in development in London, suggesting the question to prospective hotel guests: "You stayin' with me?"

A recent article on a popular consumer finance blog called Money & Career Cheat Sheet talked tongue-and-cheek about how "everyone steals" and [Americans are comfortable snatching up these seven things](#) without much thought. The good news is that some hotel amenities, [pens](#) and other items, are designed to be taken to spread the brand names featured.

Independent hotels and hotel chains know that their guests love amenities. It is one of the many things that make guests' experiences pleasant and refreshing. That is why, aside from the usual hotel take-home items like soaps, shampoos, toiletries and stationery, hotels are beginning to offer other items to make stays cozier or reflect the local flavor.

For beachside locations, [promotional flip-flop sandals](#), beach balls or golf giveaways might be great perks. In addition, depending on what's happening about town, hospitality providers can also welcome guests with giveaways that celebrate local festivities, holiday celebrations like Halloween or the 4th of July, and [sporting events](#). [Some hoteliers even provide pop culture-related amenities](#).

### Restaurants

When you think about bar and restaurant promotions, it's easy to envision the colorful keychains and beer bottle openers we typically see around St. Patrick's Day or Cinco de Mayo. Yet there are plenty of independent restaurants and smaller chains that want to build their brand names. Instead of following the crowd with typical promotions, many new establishments want to differentiate themselves from other family restaurants, sports bars or restaurants within the same food category. To that end, *FSR* magazine, which publishes content about full-service restaurants, advises eateries [not to "fall prey" to commonplace beer promotions](#).

Moreover, just opening a great restaurant with an excellent menu doesn't guarantee success. In a post on RestaurantOwner.com, Jim Laube sites [the importance of marketing](#). "Marketing is getting the word out about the restaurant and positioning it correctly in the minds of the public. It includes public relations, community involvement, advertising, promotions and projecting the right image."

The good news is that food and drink establishments have plenty of options. Specialty advertising and promotional products can range from classy to campy and unique. For example, last spring *Eater* (the online magazine of all things cozy and culinary) posted "[A Brief History of Restaurant Matches](#)". The article points out that, like most promo products, matches are useful but also have become a collectible for some. That's why both high-end hotels and the local diners love giving away branded matchbooks to customers.

### PPAI North American Leadership Conference

Nashville, TN  
August 14-16  
Attending

### ISS

Fort Worth, TX  
October 6-8  
Exhibiting, Booth 745

## NOTABLE QUOTES



"Honesty is the cornerstone of all success, without which confidence and ability to perform shall cease to exist."

— Mary Kay Ash



"Advertising works most effectively when it's [in line with what people are already trying to do](#)."

— Mark Zuckerberg



"The starting point of all [achievement is desire](#)."

— Napoleon Hill



"Plan your work for today and every day, then [work your plan](#)."

— Margaret Thatcher



"I'm just an ordinary person that [did some extraordinary things](#)."

— Donna Summer

Restaurant promotional products that customers can take home definitely add sizzle. Among them, bottled hot sauce and seasonings are a favorite, as is quality branded drinkware. National diner chain Cracker Barrel went so far as to partner with college football's Arkansas Razorbacks on new shirts for hungry, football-loving fans.

For distributors of promotional products, the hospitality ground is fertile for generating new business. Hotels and restaurants comprise a sector that will never disappear. Make one (or more) your newest customer.

In addition to vector artwork and embroidery digitizing services, Idea Custom Solutions can help you with more creative campaigns. We have dedicated designers to produce t-shirt layouts and vector artwork designs that go beyond straightforward logos. And if it is time for your customers' logos to be refreshed or completely made over — we're your one resource for all things graphic design!

## MARKETING COLLATERAL IS MORE THAN SALES INFO

Marketing collateral is one of those funny terms. Depending on what line of business you are in — whether real estate, heavy machinery, technology or something else — marketing collateral could be a brochure or sales piece that shows off something your company makes. Whereas if you offer services, you're probably thinking that marketing collateral presents the bullet points that sell your expertise.

Recently, marketing collateral has been popping up outside the office suite. Organizations like the Northern Colorado Economic Alliance have been using it to bring business to Colorado. In addition, voices in the tech sector emphasize collateral's importance in building relationships and trust, even in an increasingly digital business world.

Today, marketing collateral is designed to be engaging and informative, while displaying something more exciting and inspirational than standard sales messages. For example, this summer New York City rebranded. The campaign goes beyond a reboot of the old "I Love New York" tourist slogan or TV commercials touting The Big Apple.

Along with some new logo graphics and promotional buttons pitching every neighborhood from Williamsburg to Wall Street, New York has put together a whole range of marketing collateral pieces that include colorful photos and maps along with narratives about planning trips to New York City and what folks can do once they are there. While the Statue of Liberty and Yankee Stadium are included in the attractions, the NYC branding campaign also promotes the city's wonderful events like NYC Restaurant Week, a guide to TV show tapings, "Shopping 101", and art and architectural tourism.

On top of that, to add a little flare and sense of direction, NYC's marketing collateral incorporates various "NYCgo City Icons" that denote features, including neighborhoods known for their vast array of eateries to the local phenomenon of bodega cats. Overall, NYC's marketing campaign integrates its print and digital brochures with the NYCgo website, social media and eye-catching information posters spread throughout the city.

It is true that brochures and catchy print pieces have been a staple in tourism for decades but the brochure has been equally important in hospitality and real estate as well. Still, smart businesses recognize that the way people consume information now is different than in the 20th century.

Tapping into this principle, automaker Nissan went a step beyond the showroom to help prospective new car buyers shop for cars. In putting digital brochures to work — on the iPad and other digital devices — Nissan can acquaint car shoppers with cars' new features and also help get the ball rolling for serious buyers. While technology allows car buyers to explore and compare models with interactive apps and slick marketing collateral, the brochure has played a historic role for other automakers like GM, in both highlighting products and telling stories.

As an expert in graphic design, Idea Custom Solutions partners with businesses that serve SMBs. Together, we enable their customers to convey what they offer in digital and print. Tap our expertise to make even the simplest marketing messages shine with design for marketing collateral, from brochures to flyers to newsletters and more!



"You have to be able to accept failure to get better."

— LeBron James



"I'm wholehearted about whatever I do."

— Melinda Gates



"Believe you can and you're halfway there."

— Theodore Roosevelt



"The hours of folly are measured by the clock; but of wisdom, no clock can measure."

— William Blake



"I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.'"

— Muhammad Ali



"Credibility is a basic survival tool."

— Rebecca Solnit

## TWEET THAT!

Stuff "everyone steals". Good thing [#PromoProducts](#) like pens, lighters, hotel amenities are designed for taking. <http://goo.gl/iL4vi9>

Tweet That!

Look how the Olympic [#logo](#) for [#Rio2016](#) was created. Fonts and color play a big role. <http://goo.gl/JG9yA8>

Tweet That!

Guinness brews up a new [#logo](#). Design experts and [#beer](#) lovers weigh in on the new but classic look. <http://goo.gl/AKG32C>

Tweet That!

Restauranters know that a standout [#logo](#) is key to building a name. Bars, bistros must [#brand](#) well. <http://goo.gl/6cGqba>

Tweet That!

[#TradeShows](#) are a great way to gather leads and build relationships. [#PromoProducts](#) help draw a crowd at your display. <http://goo.gl/6z8Toa>

Tweet That!

How do [#SMBs](#) track their ROI at a [#TradeShows](#)? [@TSNN.com\\_US](#) has a few tips. <http://goo.gl/LFsgak>

Tweet That!

Tribune Media [#rebranded](#) this month. Here are 22 famous firms that have rebranded. <http://goo.gl/F3qGol>

Tweet That!

Google's I/O conference attracts those who savor new tech. Guests also grab branded [#PromoProducts](#). <http://goo.gl/pSkVFJ>

Tweet That!

With [#StarTrek](#) returning to TV, CBS and producers beam up an new [#logo](#) set to drive future and 60s nostalgia. <http://goo.gl/pkJWDC>

Tweet That!

Instagram changes its logo and everyone goes wild. <http://goo.gl/1LLS51>

Tweet That!

Oreo has been around for a century but leads with way in spreading its [#logo](#) and designs all over [#SocialMedia](#). <http://goo.gl/YX7VwW>

Tweet That!

Banks aren't boring! Just ask community banks. They're experts on warm [#design](#) to invite new customers. <http://goo.gl/JRfycw>

Tweet That!

Through its [#logo](#) and font, clothing retailer Bennetton has sculpted an indelible [#brand](#) identity. Eye-catching [#ads](#) help too. <http://goo.gl/IXbmcC>

Tweet That!



"It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves."

— William Shakespeare



"Genius might be the ability to say a profound thing in a simple way."

— Charles Bukowski

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



**Balasaheb Jagtap**  
Unit Process Specialist, Digitizing

Balasaheb has been with Idea Custom Solutions for nine and a half years. He is a member of the digitizing team and is responsible for checking the quality of designs before they are delivered to customers. He also shares feedback received from customers with the production team and works to improve the overall quality of our designs.

His greatest accomplishment at the company to date has been his promotion to unit process specialist. Balasaheb's favorite thing about Idea Custom Solutions is the employee events organized by the Human Resources Department on festival days.

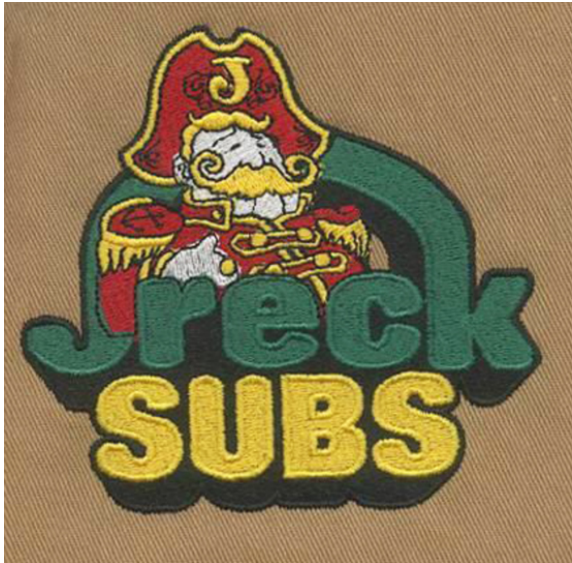
"I live in Wadgaonsheri, Pune, with my family and was born and brought up in Pune." He is married and has two sons. When not at the office, he likes to go on long drives with them. He also enjoys watching movies ("Sairat" is currently at the top of his list) and riding his bike.

With his friends on the weekends, Balasaheb watches and also plays Kabaddi (an ancient contact sport that is the state game of Maharashtra, in which Pune is located). He watches news channels to monitor current events.

We asked about Balasaheb's

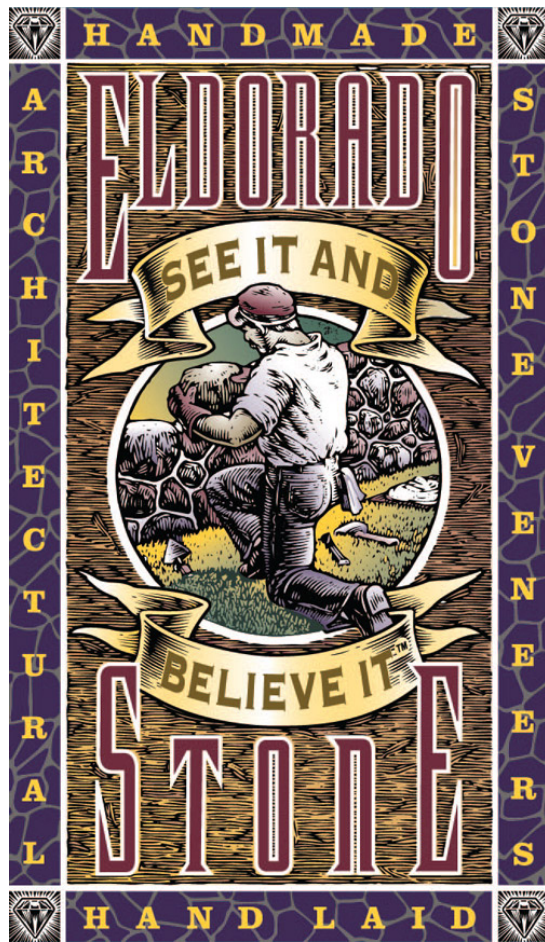
## DESIGN SHOWCASE

### Embroidery Digitizing



Vector Artwork





source of inspiration and he told us, "My mother always inspires and keeps me motivated to face challenges and achieve success."

#### CLIENTS ARE RAVING

"Idea Custom Solutions is EXCELLENT! Before I put the program in place for our affiliates, I had them do a couple of things for me and the process is smooth. The end result is great. One affiliate called and said, 'My embroiderer, who also does digitizing, asked me where I got my design digitized. I asked him why. He said the quality was so good, that he will use them instead of doing it himself.' Quite the testimonial!"

**Cliff Quicksell**  
Director of Marketing  
iPROMOTEu

If you have any designs created by our team that you would like to share in this newsletter, send them to us at [marketing@ideacustom.com](mailto:marketing@ideacustom.com)

