

DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



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SWAG BRAG: PROMO ITEMS SHOULD SPEAK FOR YOUR BRAND



Humans have been living indoors for a long, long time. It's odd to think about it, but the home is probably the world's oldest possession. Nearly 87 million Americans [own](#) a home, and every sensible homeowner owns some sort of insurance policy to protect it. [can't find this stat in the link]

For those of us who have ever bought or insured a house, car or anything else, we know that both the real estate and insurance industries provide us with countless choices of partners. Walk around your block on any given day and you will probably see a "For Sale" sign from a realtor. Type "insurance" into your browser or smartphone and you will find dozens of people to call, or insurance salespeople who would be glad to call you. The choices are endless, since the real estate and insurance industries are massive.

Because these markets are so large and have so many sales agents, it is fair to say that salespeople in both sectors have a significant need to differentiate themselves. Likewise, name recognition for both the sales agents and their affiliated firms is essential.

According to *Bloomberg Businessweek*, real estate firms in particular are [doing well](#). Prices for existing homes on the market have stabilized since the 2008 recession and begun to increase, indicating greater demand. On average, real estate agents who weathered the financial storm are earning more. Yet there is still a ton of competition within the market.

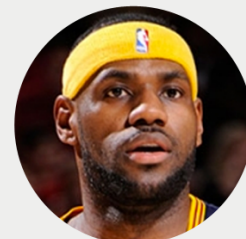
It's true that you can't really buy a home online (yet), but insurance is a different animal. Thanks to GEICO and other quality big box insurers, your local insurance agent is fighting off competition based on price and brand name. Now more than ever insurance agents and salespeople

CLIENTS ARE RAVING

"The following came from my customer. 'Mike, they are awesome! Thank you so much. These beautiful shirts are going to knock their socks off. Can't wait to give them to the girls. Thanks again! I'll be back for sure.' Thank you and all your designers for such great work. This was a left chest design for a girls' week t-shirt. Thanks for helping me look good."

— Mike Prophater
Stitchin' It, LLC

NOTABLE QUOTES



"There are some teams and logos you see, no matter where you are in the world, and [you know exactly](#) who they are and what they mean."

— LeBron James



"When people use your brand name as a verb, [that is remarkable](#)."

— Meg Whitman

need to build their businesses on personal relationships, reputation and word-of-mouth.

The good news is that branding through promotional products works, especially for small businesses and entrepreneurial sales firms like those in real estate and insurance. Just this year, ASI commissioned the 2014 Impression Study, which speaks to the strengths of specialty advertising products.

In the study, ASI found that consumers not only hold onto promotional products, but also remember the brands and companies on logoed items. For example, 56 percent of U.S. consumers own and use logoed pens, while 85 percent of consumers remember those who give them outerwear products like jackets or sportswear. This is exactly the kind of reach and recollection sales-based businesses want.

As a specialty advertising distributor, doing business with real estate and insurance firms may be as easy as thumbing through the personal and business contacts that you already have. Talk to the agents you know. Ask them for an introduction to their sales managers. Think about how you can drop into their weekly sales meeting — providing breakfast or refreshments of course — to do a demo and talk about how their salespeople can improve their own personal branding.

For these sales-based firms, getting their names out to cast a wider net of prospects is everything. You are in the ideal position to help them!

EXPERT SOLUTIONS CAN BOOST BRANDS

For a lot of SMBs, success comes from being the best at what you do. Whether you manufacture products or offer services to consumers or other businesses, chances are that you can benefit from professional assistance when it comes to the marketing of your business.

Building the brand and reputation for which customers and future customers recognize you is vital to continued success in business. However, even the most market-savvy and resourceful SMBs often don't have the time or expertise to construct their logos and other design elements to best serve their brands.

According to *Corp Magazine*, a good visual identity is essential to a small business and the growth of its brand, no matter what the industry sector. *Corp Magazine's* contributing editor, Michael Carmichael, points out in a 2014 article that a brand is a culmination of things, including a business's name, its growing reputation and the value added from its products or services. If you consider a brand to be a wheel, perpetually turning toward progress, the company's logo is the hub and the other visuals, design elements, stationery, brochures, websites and more are the spokes that extend from it.

On its small business blog, Staples offers some guidelines for building a strong brand that positions small businesses clearly and effectively in the marketplace to help attract repeat business and referrals. The company reinforces that it is important to keep messaging and visual identity professional and consistent — whether on brochures, ads or websites.

In addition to this, an article published by *Inc. Magazine* points to the fact that simplicity is essential in designing a logo for a successful brand. In "4 Characteristics of Great Logo Design", *Inc.* reinforces some things



"Good design is making something intelligible and memorable. Great design is making something memorable and meaningful."

— Dieter Rams



"Everyone wants to be appreciated, so if you appreciate someone, don't keep it a secret."

— Mary Kay Ash



"Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning."

— Bill Gates



"Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens."

— Jimi Hendrix

**IDEA CUSTOM SOLUTIONS
EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT**

about [logos and branding](#) that seem obvious.

“Strong logos translate well across different media,” Inc. advises. It is truly important to think about your logo displayed on several places rather than just a sign or newspaper ad. Taking logos a step further, the author asks: “Will your logo evoke the same meaning on a business card as it will on a billboard?”

Hiring experts are often your best bet, whether you are looking to design a new corporate logo, revamp a website or create marketing collateral, brochures and trade show handouts. And the good news — you don’t need a gigantic budget or a New York ad agency to get the best results. By partnering with Idea Custom Solutions, SMBs can access complete turnkey marketing solutions. We provide the design capabilities and graphic support SMBs need throughout their marketing lifecycle.

When it comes to running your business, we respect and honor the DIY spirit. By offering expert “do-it-for-me” branding and design solutions, we’ll help boost your brand while your business continues to grow.

FIRE UP SUMMER WITH BBQ PROMO PRODUCTS

Summer is here and no matter where you live, you are probably already smelling (or at least dreaming about) smoldering charcoals and grilled meat around your neighborhood. Moreover, with the July 4th holiday just around the corner, grill masters everywhere are strapping on their aprons and digging out tongs, spatulas and hot sauce to celebrate.

Whether you prefer grilling burgers and hot dogs, mahi-mahi or veggie kebobs, Americans love grilling outside so much that barbeque should probably be our official national pastime. It has moved from a rough-and-tumble means of cooking for settlers in the country’s early history to an art form with multiple [disciplines](#) and specialties from Texas brisket to Carolina-style.

According to the Advertising Specialty Institute, [80 percent of American households](#) own some type of grill or smoker. Seasons aside, 97 percent of grill owners have used their outdoor cookery in the last year. Although your average Weber grill or Primo brand smoker are known to last for several years, it is always helpful to have an ongoing supply of grilling utensils and accessories to make each cookout run smoothly.

Some of the more popular and most-used items in grilling consist of hardware metal spatulas and flippers for burgers, as well as stainless steel tongs that are helpful in handling hot foods like corn on the cob and chicken. These specialty items are easily logoed and last for years, with a special place right at the grill. For the more ambitious, multi-piece utensil sets including carving knives and skewers make a nice gift for your customers’ existing or prospective clients.

Of course, wearable promo products have a special purpose when the grill is fired up. Aside from the classics like hats or outerwear for those who inhabit cooler summer climates, barbeque-specific accessories like logoed oven mitts and aprons protect a grill guru’s body while he or she is hard at work.

In addition, SMBs and entrepreneurs interested in BBQ promos can put their brands on canned spice rubs and bottled items such as marinades and barbeque sauce!



Shantanu Puranik
Team Leader, Quality

Shantanu Puranik has been with Idea Custom Solutions for 15 years. He is currently the unit supervisor of quality for digitizing. In this role, he ensures digitizing orders meet the company’s high quality standards. He is proud that he won the award for best team leader in 2011.

He believes Idea Custom Solutions is a well-known brand in graphic design and one of the best companies to work for in this field. While at work, Shantanu says it is important to keep a positive attitude, as it helps you overcome challenges. He notes, “I am a very positive person, full of life.”

When not in the office, Shantanu likes to go on long drives and explore nearby villages on his bike. He has a supportive and understanding family. His wife is currently pursuing her PhD in finance. The best thing to happen to Shantanu was the birth of his daughter.

In his spare time, he enjoys reading books, listening to classical music, photography and writing poetry. His favorite TV show is “Ancient Aliens” on the History Channel. “I like it because it provides information on ancient civilizations and structures. This show makes

America's big taste for summer and summertime foods won't diminish anytime soon. So, putting your logo or your customers' logos on BBQ promo products will boost name recognition and put your brand in everyone's hands while they are enjoying themselves and sharing good times with friends and family.



DESIGN SHOWCASE

Embroidery Digitizing



Vector Artwork

you think differently about the past.”

Two of Shantanu's aspirations are to learn to speak Urdu and become a well-known poet. His motto is to learn from every second of life and remain positive. It's an attitude that seems to be working quite well for him!

TWEET THAT!

Let Idea Custom Solutions help you find content for social media:

The art of the giveaway: Think "customer first" not "company first" on [#PromoProducts](#) says [@Forbes](#).
<http://goo.gl/dKO5nI>

[Tweet That!](#)

[The Hess Truck, one of the most well-known](#) [#PromoProducts](#), is 50 years old. Batteries now included.
<http://goo.gl/ESQ5QQ>

[Tweet That!](#)

Investing in marketing tools like [#PromoProducts](#) is just part of "creating a rally point" to build a great brand.
<http://goo.gl/m4LuMF>

[Tweet That!](#)

80% of American households own a grill or smoker. BBQ [#PromoProducts](#) put your brand in everyone's hands this summer.
<http://goo.gl/e61Xdb>

[Tweet That!](#)

See how [#SMBs](#) are spending much more on their [#websites](#), plus searchability.
<http://goo.gl/W2vDJM>

[Tweet That!](#)

Printed collateral, promotional materials are still important in great [#marketing](#) for [#SMBs](#).

[Tweet That!](#)



@USAToday.
<http://goo.gl/96N3Kb>

Can customers draw your brand's [#logo](#) by memory? Simplicity is one of four essential design aspects. [@Inc.](#)
<http://goo.gl/P7wHw4>

[Tweet That!](#)

Draymond John's six [#branding](#) tips for [#SMBs](#).
<http://goo.gl/jbkO7Y>

[Tweet That!](#)

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