

Briefing

The promotional merchandise market is extensive and covers all manner of items from clothing to conference folders, clocks, pens, desk items and so much more.

Design the ideal promotional product

Companies and organisations that use promotional branded products do so because they wish to achieve a number of objectives. In most cases they want to raise brand awareness of their brand, product or service. Here are some of the reasons what people use merchandise for

- Brand Awareness
- New product launches
- Conferences and events
- Employee/new customer welcome packs
- Retail and souvenirs
- Dealer and reseller programmes
- Exhibition and trade show giveaways
- Rewards and recognition
- Referral and thank yous

The use of promotional products is usually part of a company's Marketing plan. This plan often includes other activities such as advertising, pr, mailshots, sampling programs, exhibitions, events, and internet marketing. The budget available for promotional items will be competing with the costs of doing these other marketing activities, so promotional items often have to be fairly low cost items.

Also, the more **useful** a promotional item is to someone, the more likely it will be chosen and used by a company as a promotional product.

About the design

Many companies are looking for a new promotional item or gadget that they can use, which has their brand or logo on it. Your design needs to reflect an innovative approach to this, however there is no reason that traditional favourites like the pen, mug or mousemat can't be altered in some way to include another feature that exists separately, but not yet in combination with the pen, mug or mousemat. So you can now find a pen which also dispenses mini 3M post-it notes, a mug printed with matt black ink so that you can chalk messages onto it like a blackboard, and a mousemat that acts like a picture frame that you can slide a photograph inside and view it permanently through the clear surface.

You will also need to be aware of the ways to add a logo or brand, as this is a key part of a winning design.

Here are just some ways to add branding:

- Screen printing
- Pad Printing
- Foil Block
- Engraving
- Embroidery
- In the plastic moulding

Suitable for production

The bpma and 3M are keen that the winning design is actually prototyped and offered to companies who use promotional products. Your promotional item must be suitable for cost-effective mass production. Production costs must not be higher than £2.50 +VAT, based on 10,000 units, and this can exclude moulds and set up costs. The product must have a reasonable life cycle, as a product that can only be used once or a few times will be less cost effective. Because promotional gifts must be able to be posted without the risk of damage in transit, no fragile materials may be used. Furthermore, the design must not contain food, drink or perfume. Finally, you have to pay attention to the materials used, the production processes and environmental and safety aspects: the design must be as environment-friendly as possible. And of course the product must be safe to use, and must not endanger the user's health.

Think of your audience

You should put the recipient of your promotional gift in the spotlight – not the giver. So ask yourself: for whom is my promotional gift intended? On what occasion will it be presented to him or her, and for what reason? Be aware of cultural differences that may be involved. The occasion, on which gifts are given, the importance attached to presentation and the reasons behind a promotional gift can vary from one country to the next. A European executive might feel uncomfortable receiving an expensive gift from an Asian business partner, whereas a Japanese businessman could be offended by the lack of attention paid to the wrapping and presentation. Take such differences into consideration, and give the jury a clear idea for whom your promotional product is intended.

Submitting your design

There is only one accepted way to submit your design: as a detailed concept with images or visualized sketches on a maximum of 3 panels (A3 format, which is 11.7 x 16.5 inches or 29.7 x 41.9 cm), including the description and reasoning behind the design.

Entry designs should arrive by May 31st 2011, and be sent to the following:

3M/bpma Design Competition,
BPMA
52-53 Russell Square,
London WC1B 4HP

Prizes

Cash prizes worth £2500

There will be three prizes for individual entries, and three for joint/group entries.

The first prize in each category is £600. The second is £300, and the third is £100.

There will also be 10 Runner-up prizes of £50 each from across both individual and group categories.

All finalists (or a representative from groups) will be invited to a personal tour of the 3M Innovation Centre in Bracknell, and a chance to see how ideas are developed and brought to market in a commercial context.

Finalists will also briefly present their design panels to the judges who will make their final choices.

Individual finalists and groups will receive an award certificate and a 3M goody bag.

The 1st prize winners and designs will be profiled in promotional and or design media.

The winners of 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes will be offered a half day workshop with in a top design agency.

(maximum 4 persons in 1st prize group, 3 persons in 2nd prize group, and 2 persons in 3rd prize group).

If possible, the two winning designs may be made into a prototype.

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