

Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: Drill Bits, Holes and Meetings

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WELCOME

This issue was written in collaboration with Joan Beck of Forrester-Smith Promotional Products. Joan and I have worked on several projects where she has elevated the use of a promotional product to a strategic element of the meeting. Joan's thoughtful approach to using promotional products creates innovative and memorable meetings. Her insight is included throughout the newsletter; feel free to contact her at joanb@forrestersmith.com or 847.564.2322 or through her website at promos4biz.com

Remember the old adage: *No one wants drill bits.*

Each year millions of drill bits are sold regardless of the fact that no one really wants them. What they want are **Holes**.

In this issue of T.I.M.E., Joan offers her insights on how to correctly use promotional products, like drill bits, to achieve a desired outcome.

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1. PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS DEFINED

Promotional Products come in 3 forms:

Ad specialties: Subtle billboards that promote branding and education. They:

- Carry an advertising or promotional message
- Are useful items with a printed message
- Given with no strings attached

Premiums: Promotional Products offered as an incentive for a specific action. A paid conference attendee may receive a sponsor's branded tote for signing up early.

Business Gifts: Given by companies to customers, prospective customers, employees and influencers. They are given to thank customers, develop business and recognize employee performance and longevity. They are:

- Usually not extravagant
- Do not buy business
- Intended to influence by making an impression

Promotional products are great tools that can be used at meetings to facilitate:

- Recognition
- Communication
- Motivation
- Promotions

2. SHOW ME MORE THAN THE \$\$\$\$

According to business consultant Donna Deprose in [How to Recognize & Reward Employees](#) money's success as a motivator of employees is erratic at best. Money in the form of bonuses, salary or rewards has three strikes against it:

1. Impact is short lived
2. Reward becomes an entitlement
3. It supplants or doesn't address intrinsic motivation

Employees are motivated to maintain and improve performance through a sense of how their personal needs are being satisfied. On the job these needs typically center on:

- Security
- Socialization
- Esteem
- Achievement
- Power

– OR –

- Some combination of the above

The desire for recognition and ego satisfaction is related to one or more of these basic needs.

3. KEEPING THE EDGE

Promotional products cannot replace good management and good communication. They support good management and good communications by motivating individuals to achieve the company objectives.

In deciding how to allocate your budget for a meeting or event, promotional products offer the following advantages:

Targeting:

Whether the message relates to selling, safety, productivity or appreciation for support, the first step in influencing these important groups is targeting them effectively.

Lasting ability:

Promotional products tend to stay around. A calendar with the organization's name and important information may be in view 356 days of the year. This is an inexpensive way to keep your message "top of mind" when considering the cost of impressions.

Creative impact:

Promotional products reach all senses, which equates to a more memorable and involving experience. The impact is strong when the promotional product is joined with effective targeting, good timing, integration into overall marketing objectives, creative copy and creative imprint design. For example, a scented pen which smells like the promoted product, such as fine leather or citrus, is very memorable, a conversation piece and involves the recipient.

Goodwill:

Promotional products are the only advertising medium with ingratiation built in. Baylor University research indicates that an ad specialty item enclosed with a thank-you letter can outperform a thank-you letter alone by as much as 34% in improving customers' attitudes toward a company's sales reps and a 52% improvement in the general feelings about a company.

Image Building:

The tangible nature of promotional products makes them very strong in helping build and support a deserved image. The quality of the item should be considered an extension of the image-building process.

Provide Motivation Toward Behavioral Change:

Promotional items can be offered in return for a specific behavior. For example, sales contests are created on premiums and recognition awards. The Red Cross uses recognition pins to tangibly thank volunteers. Quality programs reward successful teamwork with tangible prizes. It is important to orchestrate a change in behavior through the interaction of effective targeting, appropriate communication, AND a visible, tangible symbol (the promotional product).

Examples:

Meetings that recognize and honor long-time service and stress the importance of the organization as a team tend to add to the feelings of security in the workplace. Wearable promotion items (t-shirts, jackets, shirts), for example, that identify group members and incentives that encourage working together can add greatly to the employees' sense of belonging.

Awards ceremonies create pride, recognition, and often a desire to achieve more. Achievement, recognition and esteem are closely tied. People feel a sense of power when their individual productivity is recognized. People not achieving up to the level often "don't want to left out" next time.

For more ideas on how to recognize and reward people through the use of promotional products, good communication and good management, I recommend the following books:

[C.A.R.E. Packages for the Workplace](#)
[1001 Ways to Reward Employees](#)
[Getting Employees to Fall in Love With Your Company](#)

4. ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

The most recent issue of Corporate Meetings & Incentives (February 2002) addressed the need to carefully target the right incentive for the audience. As people are motivated differently it is important to have a partner in selecting your promotional products. A promotional product with a positive ROI requires that you consult and partner with a distributor and not just deal with an order taker. The right distributor can help you create a theme, an imprint, artwork, offer distribution methods and select appropriate promotional items, all within your budget.

Even when selecting the promotional product for a large group, Joan Beck shares with us some of the matters you should weigh:

Her first piece of advice: Never Think of Promotional Products as Give-A-Ways or Freebees. These products should work for you, before, during and even after the event. Define Specific Objectives: Objectives should be clear and measurable. Every event has specific goals. Is this meeting designed to build morale? Roll out a new product or service? Honor top achievers? Encourage team building?

Audience: Who is attending this event? Employees, dealers, customers, company executives, spouses? What percentage is male vs. female? What is the socio/economic status of the group? Age average? Where there is a product that fits the audience there will be a lasting impression.

Theme: How do you package this meeting to meet the objectives?

Site: Where is the event being held? Can you connect the venue into the theme? Are the meetings being held indoors or outdoors? Will everyone stay in the same place? Is there an opportunity to leave something on their pillows instead of chocolate mints?

Are there opportunities to tie travel into product selection? Where is the meeting being held? Via what mode of transportation? How will the attendees travel from one event to another? A bus ride is a great time to distribute the promotional products thus creating a memorable experience.

Budget: Remember these items will communicate the quality of the company and the value of the recipient.

Timeframe: When do I have to order product? How long is normal production? Build in shipping time, prep work, art approval time and distribution.

Delivery/Transportation: How will you deliver the product to the recipient? In a gift box? With an enclosed note? A bag? How will the recipient take the product home? Can they pack it in their suitcase? Or, will they leave that beautiful basket for housekeeping? Will there be an extra expense to ship the larger items to each person's residences?

Joan advises to create a workable distribution plan. Research shows that a carefully executed distribution plan significantly increases the effectiveness of promotional products

5. WHEN and WHERE SHOULD I PROMOTE

Thinking strategically about promotional products opens new avenues to use these tools to highlight your message, remind participants of the message, and achieve your goals. These types of meetings and events would benefit from a well-thought out promotional product:

Sales/Marketing --- Encourage quota breaking

Teamwork --- Encourage teamwork in breaking records (sales volume, profitability, customer care, safety)

Finance and Accounting --- Collection programs to increase profits; inventory control, error reduction programs

Customer --- Encourage customer buying and thank customer loyalty

New Business Incentive Programs --- Motivate sales force to open new accounts

Personnel --- Promotional products recognize and motivate. Use promotional products during these types of internal meetings to boost the value of the meeting:

recruitment/referral program, years of service programs, suggestions award programs, employee motivation program, retirement, employee birthdays, fitness, picnics, etc.

Morale Building --- Maintain a focused and enthusiastic workforce

Co-op Meetings --- Extending dealer support (team with vendors to share the costs)

Production/Engineering --- Reinforce the messages associated with safety programs, quality control, on-time incentive, waste/scrap minimization program, and preventive maintenance

New Product Introduction --- Gaining market momentum and education

Open House Meetings --- Encourage customers to visit and build stronger relationships

Corporate Communication/Public Relations --- The tangible nature of a promotional product make them the natural choice to reinforce your company's marketing and branding efforts. Incorporate promotional products into VIP gift programs, company achievement programs, founder's day or anniversary, plant and education tours. Use promotional products during community events to create a visible way of showing the company's presence in the community. Support good rapport with the media by providing them with a branded gift (especially if it ties into your business).

Your use of promotional products sends a Message to Everyone (internal and external to the company)!!

Internal (Employees/Board of Directors) -- Build company pride and a sense of tradition and success. Each time someone wears or displays a promotional product with your logo, it is an opportunity for them to be an ambassador for your organization.

External -- Plant goodwill, build awareness, motivate and build loyalty.

6. FREEBIES

The recipe for a results-oriented promotional products campaign calls for one indispensable ingredient – a consultative distributor, not just an order taker. The right distributor can help you create a theme, an imprint, artwork, offer distribution methods and select appropriate promotional items, all within your budget.

Here are some of the ways Joan Beck advises that a Promotional Products Partner can work with you:

PLANNING AHEAD: This will give you the opportunity to check out quarterly specials and either save money or possibly afford something that would not have made the budget. It also gives your supplier the opportunity to thoroughly research product.

Be aware that the last quarter of the year is when the factories are at their busiest. Therefore, the production time takes longer than normal.

SUPPORTING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE EVENT: Your promotional products supplier is your partner. Talk to them. Tell them how you visualize this meeting. Communicate. How do you hope to measure the results, even if subjectively?

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS: Know your PMS (Pantone Matching System) Colors or know whom to ask. Most factories have a standard color chart, which is available to the supplier and at no extra expense. There is always an extra charge for a PMS match. Some factories may not match PMS colors, but will try to come as close as possible.

PREPARING CAMERA READY ART: What are you planning to imprint? Etch? Embroider? Show it to your consultative distributor. How many colors? Is the color registration tight? Who is in charge of the company logo? How is it available? Hardcopy? Electronic file transfer? Is it vector art or dots per inch? What program is it created in? Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, CorelDraw are a few of the options. In what format? EPS, TIF or another? It is PC or MAC based? And ...while JPGs are easy to open, they do not produce clean, well-defined lines. A distributor who is your partner will make this stage easy.

UNDERSTANDING SPACE LIMITATION: Know the item's imprint area. Many promotional products are conducive to large degrees of copy, others are not. Using symbols instead of words can help.

BUDGET: Use a price range. Include the price of the item, the art charges, sample charges, freight for the samples and freight for the finished project.

FEEDBACK LOOP: Let your supplier know what worked and what did not. You are partners. Your promotional products consultant only succeeds when you do.

Although tempting, do not choose on price alone. Service and quality should be the deciding reasons. People say they want price, but studies indicate that service and product quality are the first noted. Anyone can bring product, but not everyone can deliver on service. Know the strength of the Promotional Products Company. How long have they been in the industry? No one wants it to happen, but ask yourself if this company has the power to "save a project"? Ask for references.

Joan Beck has offered to share the results from strategically utilized promotional products with readers of T.I.M.E. If you are interested in reading some of her case studies, email Joan with the words CASE STUDY in the subject line and she will share her experience with you. You can contact Joan at joanb@forrestersmith.com or 847.564.2322 or through her website at promos4biz.com

7. T.I.M.E. GONE BY

Past issues of T.I.M.E. can be downloaded as a MS Word document. Here is an index of topics and “freebies” offered in the past:

- May 2000: Teambuilding and (freebie) New York Times reprint and summary on why teambuilding programs miss the mark. [May](#)
- June 2000: Green Meetings and (freebie) list of books that have 20-30 minute exercises for meetings and events. [June](#)
- July 2000: American (Values) and (freebie) Meeting Analysis, a 1-page document that will outline the scope and needs analysis for your next meeting. [July](#)
- August 2000: Minimum/Minimal Meetings and (freebie) Web Winners (web resources to make you and your meetings more productive). [August](#)
- October 2000: Evaluations and (freebie) sample evaluation questions. [October](#)
- November 2000: Politics and (freebie) on-line experiences. [November](#)
- December 2000: Toys and (freebie) brainstorming ideas. [December](#)
- January 2001: Sales, Award Presentations and (freebie) sales tips. [January](#)
- February 2001: Change, Change Management and Communicating change and (freebie) Change Bombs (reasons change management fails). [February](#)
- March 2001: Open Space Technology. [March](#)
- April 2001: Adult Learning Styles and (freebie) Learning Style Questionnaire [April 2001](#)
- May 2001: Trade Shows and (freebie) Trade Show timeline [May 2001](#)
- June 2001: Emotional Intelligence and (freebie) EI quiz [June 2001](#)
- July 2001: Presentation Skills and (freebie) Speaker Introductions [July 2001](#)
- August 2001: Ice Breakers and (freebie) Resource List [August 2001](#)

September 2001: Facilitation and (freebie) Problem Personalities in a Meeting [September 2001](#)

October 2001: Humor and (freebie) The Benefits of Laughter [October 2001](#)

November 2001: Customer Care and (freebie) Complaints [November 2001](#)

December 2001: Slack and (freebie) Quiet Time [December 2001](#)

January 2002: The many faces of teambuilding and (freebie) [January 2002](#)

8. FUTURE T.I.M.E.

You are Invited!

UPCOMING OUTDOOR TEAMBUILDING EVENT: The last issue of T.I.M.E. on teambuilding resulted in a flurry of emails. Teambuilding is clearly high on many people's agenda. We will be offering a Preview of outdoor teambuilding on a low ropes course in June. Please mark your calendar for Wednesday, June 3 in Northbrook, Illinois, when we will offer people an opportunity to experience first hand the teambuilding fun of a low ropes course.

UPCOMING ISSUES: The March issue of T.I.M.E. will address multi-cultural communication. I welcome any experience or comments from our readers to allow me to provide an issue with various insights – especially from our readers outside the United States.

The April issue of T.I.M.E. will discuss outdoor teambuilding activities.

Watch for these issues and if you know of someone who might enjoy the newsletter, I would really appreciate it if you would forward T.I.M.E. onto your colleagues, associates, and clients. Just press the forward button.

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