

Promotional Products:

THE SECRET INGREDIENT TO A FULLY INTEGRATED MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Most marketing organizations today are focused on integrating their communications mediums - advertising, public relations, electronic marketing and direct marketing. But what can take a campaign from "just okay" to making a lasting impression? Promotional products.

Promotional products are often the missing –but very important – ingredients to a successful integrated marketing program. In order to determine how and why promotional products fit into a marketing program, we must first look at the key word: Integrated.

Today's marketers have various definitions of what it means to have an Integrated Marketing Communications program or IMC. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines IMC as "the concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan. Such a plan evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum impact through seamless integration of discrete messages."

Effective IMC requires coordination of strategy. Collaboration at the planning stage is essential. To be effective, this requires an understanding of the different roles that each medium plays in the communications process. For example, print advertising might increase awareness, public relations influences the opinion and promotional products increases recall effectiveness. Coordinated together, all of these elements support and elevate the overall brand image.

This approach requires planning communications messages that are horizontal. In other words, the message must be interesting and simple, yet coordinated and adaptable across multiple mediums. For promotional products, this means choosing a product for which the message can be easily imprinted and delivered.

Coordinating the entire, integrated campaign requires flexibility. As a marketer you must be able to modify an image to most effectively communicate your message for various mediums. In other words, a pair of jeans might look great on a print ad, but most likely, you aren't going to mail a pair to recipients. However, there are many clever promotional products that could deliver a similar message.

With these elements in mind, it's a natural and effective step to incorporate promotional products into the IMC model. The following six easy steps are guidelines for integrating promotional products:

1. **First, it requires a mind shift** from thinking of a promotional product as a "complement" to your current campaign to an integral, strategic component of your integrated marketing communications program.
2. **Don't treat the product as an afterthought in the campaign**—incorporate into the budget-planning process. Determine the percentage of your budget that you are willing to spend on your product and how your product will be distributed. Remember, promotional products have long-lasting reach and recall so the cost per impression is often lower than traditional advertising.
3. **Make sure the products you choose represent the qualities of your organization**. If you are promoting a high-tech product, for example, you want to use a product that is innovative and modern. Also, incorporating promotional products often opens the doors to cross-marketing opportunities. Many name brand retailers today are entering the promotional products market.
4. **Determine your key message** and make sure your product clearly and simply delivers this message. With today's imprinting technologies, just about any product can be used in some way. The message must be consistent with the overall objectives of the entire marketing communications program.
5. **Determine what type of reaction or call-to-action** you want from the recipient. Do you want them to use the product on a daily basis? Do you expect the recipient to pass along the product to another user? Perhaps you want the recipient to request the product. If so, that message can be incorporated into the print advertising or other medium.
6. **Remember, timing is everything**. Will you send or give away your products at the beginning, middle or end of the campaign? Will the product be delivered concurrently with a running ad campaign? This is often determined by budget, as well as the number of products you wish to send.

While advertising and other marketing mediums open the doors, promotional products provide a lasting impression. Be a strategic marketer and make promotional products a key component in your next marketing campaign. For more information on promotional products, contact your local promotional product consultant or go to www.buildapromotion.com, created by Promotional Products Association International.

PROMOTIONAL FACT:

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