

COULN



addinnovations

Our Umbrellas
Tell You when it's
Going to Rain!





Say hello to your customers every time it looks like rain!

- **RainAlertz** delivers a customized text message from your client every time it rains– generating continued brand awareness via mobile advertising
- **RainAlertz** provides a branded microsite with your customer's logo with the five day forecast
- **RainAlertz** works anywhere in the world...EVERY time there is a 60% chance of rain



The alert is customized with the customers personal message



The forecast is based on the location of your smartphone

Adds \$2.00(p) to any AAA umbrella.
Contact us for a free demo. www.aaainnovations.com

Patent Pending



aaainnovations
www.aaainnovations.com

COUNSELOR

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

MAY 2016

**SPECIAL
REPORT**

MARKETING

How To Generate Leads Via Facebook

SALES

Four Hot Sectors To Target Now

OPERATIONS

Protect Your Data From Breaches

Q&A

Why Your Company Needs To Be WAY MORE Transparent

THE PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN TRAIL

WHY TRUMP, BERNIE & HILLARY
DEPEND ON PROMO ITEMS TO
WIN AMERICA'S VOTE

ASI 34194

PPAI 260234

UPIC ALIGHT

SAGE 67465

ALIGHT PROMOS

THE LIGHT-UP COMPANY™



EMAIL US TO GET A

FREE SPEC SAMPLE

*Offer valid on qualified orders only.

Email counselor@alightpromos.com to order your FREE Alight Promos sample today!

- REASON 1** iClick is a QCA Certified Supplier to you. We have undergone two years of intense quality safety and social compliance testing.  **Quality Certification Alliance**
Quality and Safety. Delivered.
- REASON 2** **100%**  Highest quality flash drives offered in the industry, accompanied by a 100% Lifetime Warranty.
- REASON 3**  We've got you covered - from USB Drives, Mobile Accessories, Power Packs, Pens, OtterBox Cases & more.
- REASON 4**  Complimentary eco-friendly, security-sealed packaging and black neck lanyard* on all USB flash drives. *Lanyard applicable on most models.
- REASON 5** Award winning customer service and sales. Counselor Supplier of the Year for 2014 and Gold Winner in USB category and Computer Technology for six years in a row. 
- REASON 6**  Large selection of Next Day ReadyShip USB Flash Drives, Mobile Accessories, Power Packs and Pens.
- REASON 7** Industry-leading 100 piece minimum order quantity of over 26 pen styles. **LOWEST MINIMUMS**
- REASON 8** 1 hour turnaround on Standard Quotes and Virtual Mockups. 
- REASON 9** New for 2016, FREE GROUND SHIPPING on all orders. FOB Seattle, WA. No 3rd party billing. **FREE GROUND**
- REASON 10**  Receive an instant \$2,000 in credit when submitting a purchase order with iClick's ReadyCredit.

FREE Shipping and QCA Certified, it doesn't get any better than this!

- Free Ground Shipping on all products** 
**No third party accounts on free shipping offer, UPS only.*
- iClick is now a QCA Certified Supplier**  **Quality Certification Alliance**
Social compliance, product safety and employee safety, all delivered to you, **FREE!** Quality and Safety. Delivered.
- 3-Day Select shipping at Ground Rates, if expedited shipping is required**
**No third party accounts on 3-Day Select shipping offer, UPS only.*

Continuing to offer the Remarkable!

Be Remarkable.[®]


Call today for a 30-minute quote and 1-hour Free virtual mockup.

800-456-9177
sales@iclick.com



Be Remarkable.[®]


- REASON 1** iClick is a QCA Certified Supplier to you. We have undergone two years of intense quality safety and social compliance testing.  **Quality Certification Alliance**
Quality and Safety. Delivered.
- REASON 2** **100%**  Highest quality flash drives offered in the industry, accompanied by a 100% Lifetime Warranty.
- REASON 3**  We've got you covered - from USB Drives, Mobile Accessories, Power Packs, Pens, OtterBox Cases & more.
- REASON 4**  Complimentary eco-friendly, security-sealed packaging and black neck lanyard* on all USB flash drives. *Lanyard applicable on most models.
- REASON 5** Award winning customer service and sales. Counselor Supplier of the Year for 2014 and Gold Winner in USB category and Computer Technology for six years in a row. 
- REASON 6**  Large selection of Next Day ReadyShip USB Flash Drives, Mobile Accessories, Power Packs and Pens.
- REASON 7** Industry-leading 100 piece minimum order quantity of over 26 pen styles. **LOWEST MINIMUMS**
- REASON 8** 1 hour turnaround on Standard Quotes and Virtual Mockups. 
- REASON 9** New for 2016, FREE GROUND SHIPPING on all orders. FOB Seattle, WA. No 3rd party billing. **FREE GROUND**
- REASON 10**  Receive an instant \$2,000 in credit when submitting a purchase order with iClick's ReadyCredit.

FREE Shipping and QCA Certified, it doesn't get any better than this!

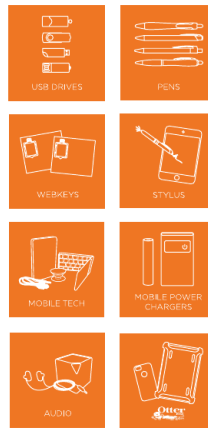
- Free Ground Shipping on all products** 
**No third party accounts on free shipping offer, UPS only.*
- iClick is now a QCA Certified Supplier**  **Quality Certification Alliance**
Social compliance, product safety and employee safety, all delivered to you, **FREE!** Quality and Safety. Delivered.
- 3-Day Select shipping at Ground Rates, if expedited shipping is required**
**No third party accounts on 3-Day Select shipping offer, UPS only.*

Continuing to offer the Remarkable!

Be Remarkable.[®]


Call today for a 30-minute quote and 1-hour Free virtual mockup.

800-456-9177
sales@iclick.com



Be Remarkable.[®]


BUSINESS UNIFORMING IDEAS & INSPIRATION

HELP TODAY'S DIVERSE PROFESSIONALS DRESS FOR SUCCESS



CORPORATE



CASUAL



COOL



PORT AUTHORITY **Sport-Tek** OGIO RED HOUSE :: NIKE GOLF  EDDIE BAUER 

FAMILY OWNED • CUSTOMER FOCUSED • SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE • AWARD-WINNING PRODUCTS • DEEP ON-HAND INVENTORY • SALES-BOOSTING MARKETING TOOLS



CATALOGS • ONLINE

800.426.6399 • SANMAR.COM

SANMAR 45^{years}

Cool Items for Warm Days



tritan NEW!
From westman

#5981 - 28 OZ. TRITAN™ WATER BOTTLE WITH INFUSER...

- Durable Tritan™ Material • Impact And Shatter Resistant
- Flavor Your Beverage With Your Choice Of Fresh Fruits or Herbs
- Screw On, Spill Resistant Lid
- Useable With Or Without Infusion Chamber
- Ounce Markings • Meets FDA Requirements • BPA Free
- Hand Wash Recommended

As Low As **\$5.99c**



NEW!

RUSH SERVICE
At Standard Price

ColorBrite
Multi-Color Imaging Process

Built-In Slot For Ear Buds



#3465 INSULATED DRAWSTRING SPORTS PACK...

- Made Of 210D Polyester • Insulated Main Compartment
- Large Front Zippered Pocket • Built-In Slot For Ear Buds
- Drawstring Closure • PEVA Lining • Spot Clean/Air Dry

As Low As **\$3.25c**



NEW!

#9237 - 1 OZ. SPF 30 SUNSCREEN POUCH...

- Broad Spectrum Formula Protects Against Both UVA And UVB Rays, Reducing The Risk of Sunburn, Skin Cancer And Premature Skin Aging • Meets FDA Requirements

As Low As **\$1.49c**



#9901 FUN IN THE SUN KIT...

KIT ITEMS:

- Kit Includes: #303 Waterproof Pouch, #9068 Lip Balm and Sunstick, and #34 Kan-Tastic in your choice of color.
- Pricing Includes a 1 Color Imprint in 1 Location on Each Item (4-Color Process Label On Item 9068).

As Low As **\$3.59c**

Hit
PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS
www.hitpromo.net

ASI-61125 PPAI #113910



Delivering Design on a Budget



NEW!

#6202 SILVER MIRRORED MALIBU SUNGLASSES...

- Made of Polycarbonate Material
- UV400 Lenses Provide 100% UVA and UVB Protection
- Mirrored Lenses

As Low As **\$2.25c**



Admints has more good reasons to stick around...

MAGNETS & BUMPER STICKERS

#MAGNET-STAR STAR MAGNET

• Make your brand stick with this colorful and appealing star-shaped magnet!

As Low As **\$.19_r**

#MAGNET-20 Custom Magnet 20

• Make your brand stick with this unique custom magnet!
Up to 20 sq. in. - Not to Exceed 3.3125"W x 6"H

As Low As **\$.51_r**

#MAGNET-CAL CALENDAR MAGNET

• Make your brand stick with this colorful and creative calendar magnet!

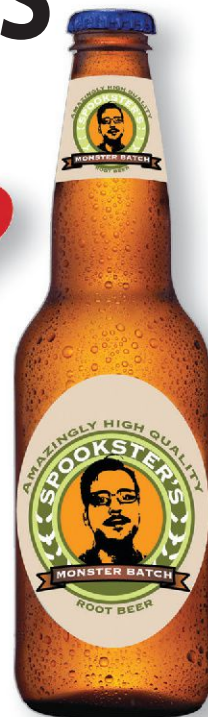
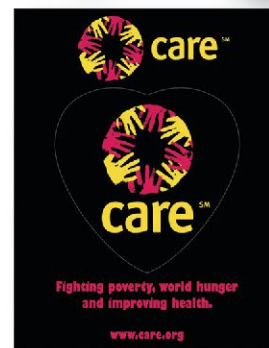
As Low As **\$.31_r**

#MAGNET-PHOTO-H HEART PHOTO MAGNET

• Make your brand stick with this colorful and creative heart photo magnet!

As Low As **\$.33_r**

Magnets Include Full Color Printing



#STICKER-RIB35 RIBBON STICKER - WINDOW OR BUMPER

As Low As **\$.65_r**

#STICKER-24 CUSTOM STICKER 24 - WINDOW OR BUMPER

As Low As **\$.87_r**

#STICKER-REC153 RECTANGLE STICKER 153 - WINDOW OR BUMPER

As Low As **\$.85_r**

#STICKER-RND35 ROUND STICKER - WINDOW OR BUMPER

As Low As **\$.60_r**

• Our bumper stickers contain no vinyl, or PVC, and are over-laminated for extra protection.
• For use both inside and out!

Powered by
Hit
PROMOTIONAL
PRODUCTS

ADMINTS
— ZAGABOR —
SO MUCH MORE THAN MINTS

www.admints.com





GET YOUR FREE COPY NOW!

We have the Best Catalog in the industry according to the people who use it every day! 91% of K&B's top Dealers worked with competitors or were independent distributors before joining the K&B team and they know the difference.

Want to decide for yourself? We will send you a 180 page 2016 K&B Best Buys catalog just for the asking. See why industry pros are using the K&B Best Buys today more than ever before.

Partner with Kaeser & Blair and start using the best tools and technology in the industry to grow your business and build equity that **you** own!



In print • Online • 5.4 million copies • Best pricing
Exclusively for K&B Authorized Dealers

For a **FREE COPY** of the 2016 Best Buys catalog, send your name
and mailing address to: freebestbuys@kaeser-blair.com

This is about your livelihood – **Don't Make a Mistake!**

- ✓ *Make more money*
- ✓ *Have more fun*
- ✓ *Get paid faster*
- ✓ *Have more time for life*



Enjoy

life more, leave the stressful administrative and financial work to K&B and get more time for family, friends and business growth. You will love the freedom knowing K&B is behind you. Never worry about credit risk, product liability or cash flow again.

- K&B is the original. The first promotional distributor.
- K&B is the largest organization of independent business owners.
- K&B is the most financially stable distributor.
- K&B is family owned and family run.
- K&B is right for you.



You don't have to choose between great lifestyle and top earnings – with K&B you get both.

Questions: Contact us in complete confidence. Our experienced executives welcome the opportunity to speak with you. Personal private meetings are available at all major industry shows. Complete confidentiality is always maintained.

1-888-698-1684 or visit **www.comparekaeser.com**

Visit:

www.comparekaeser.com

Let our Earnings Calculator show you how much more you can be making with Kaeser & Blair.

KAESER
& BLAIR INCORPORATED
Promotional Advertising Specialists

Ariel

Taking Care of **You!**

WONDER BEADS *Experience The Newest Technology In Heat Pack Therapy and Comfort!*



This totally new concept uses natural clay beads and moisture to provide warm, effective soothing pain relief. The beads naturally absorb and retain moisture from the air for an extended period of time. The wonder beads use natural lavender scent, that provides soothing aroma therapy which enhances the overall experience of providing total comfort.

- Simply microwave for warm therapy
- Contains natural clay and non-toxic oils
- Easily conforms to body

Natural Scented Wonder Beads Neck & Shoulder

WHF-WN16

As Low As
\$7.75(R)



Natural Scented Wonder Beads Heart

WHF-WH16

As Low As
\$2.34(R)



Natural Scented Wonder Beads Round

WHF-WO16

As Low As
\$2.34(R)



**NEW
ITEMS**

Natural Scented Wonder Beads Eye Mask

WHF-WE16

As Low As
\$3.85(R)



Natural Scented Wonder Beads Rectangle

WHF-WR16

As Low As
\$2.52(R)



Natural Scented Wonder Beads Multi-Purpose

WHF-WP16

As Low As
\$7.10(R)



LARGEST SCREEN PEDOMETERS IN THE INDUSTRY

Easy See Pedometer With Clock

WHF-ES16

- Tracks up to 99,999 steps, distance and calories burned
- Includes clock
- Replaceable button cell battery inserted
- Energy saving auto shut-off & idle feature
- Spring clip
- Easy to use buttons
- Large LCD Display
- Imperial and metric measuring settings

As Low As
\$5.14^(R)



Widescreen Walker Pedometer

WHF-WW09

- Tracks up to 99,999 steps, distance and calories burned
- Replaceable button cell battery inserted
- Energy saving auto shut-off & idle feature
- Spring clip
- Large LCD Display
- Imperial and metric measuring settings

As Low As
\$4.19^(R)



Grand View Trek Pedometer

WHF-GV13

- Tracks up to 99,999 steps, distance and calories burned
- Button cell battery inserted
- Energy saving auto shut-off & idle feature
- Spring clip
- Easy to use buttons
- Imperial and metric measuring settings

As Low As
\$4.40^(R)



Easy Read Large Screen Pedometer

WHF-ER11

- Tracks up to 99,999 steps
- Includes clock
- Oversized LCD display
- Replaceable button cell battery inserted
- Energy saving auto shut-off & idle mode
- Spring Clip
- Single button operation

As Low As
\$3.89^(R)



Quick Read Pedometer

WHF-QR13

- Tracks up to 99,999 steps, distance and calories burned
- Button cell battery inserted
- Energy saving auto shut-off & idle feature
- Secure clip
- Great color selection
- Imperial and metric measuring settings

As Low As
\$4.50^(R)



Ariel

Taking Care of **You!**

BE A PART OF THE GAME!

Baseball

LSP-BA01

Size: 2 ½" dia.

Imprint: 1 ¾" dia. front/back

As Low As

\$0.87^(R)

NEW
COLORS



Golf Ball

LSP-GF04

Size: 2 ½" dia.

Imprint: 1 ¼" dia. front/back

As Low As

\$0.87^(R)

NEW
COLORS



Soccer Ball

LSP-SC06

Size: 2 ½" dia.

Imprint: 1 ¼" dia. front, 1" x ¾" back

As Low As

\$0.87^(R)

NEW
COLORS



PPAI

Supplier Star™

2016 AWARD WINNER



Thanks For Voting Ariel
For Supplier Awards

**COUNSELOR
DISTRIBUTOR
CHOICE AWARDS
2015**

SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

SCORE **BIG** WITH OUR VARIETY



3 SIZES AVAILABLE!

Small Football

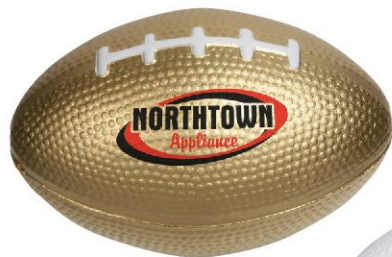
LSP-FB03

Size: 3" x 2" dia.

Imprint: 1 ¾" x 1" panels

As Low As

\$0.87^(R)



Medium Football

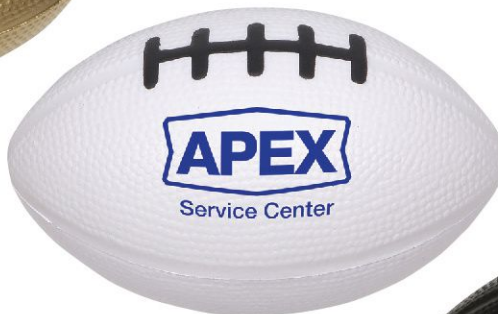
LSP-FB15

Size: 4" x 2 ½" dia.

Imprint: 2" x 1 ¾" panels

As Low As

\$1.42^(R)



Large Football

LSP-FB05

Size: 5" x 3" dia.

Imprint: 2" x 1" panels

As Low As

\$1.97^(R)



All Colors Available in All Three Sizes!

Colors (all sizes): Black, Blue, Brown, Burgundy,
Forest Green, Gold, Gray, Lime Green, Orange,
Purple, Red, Teal, White, Yellow

THE MOST RECOGNIZED MICROFIBER ON THE -PLANET-™

 The Original
opper fiber®
Not all Microfiber Cloths are created equal®

**COUNSELOR
DISTRIBUTOR
CHOICE AWARDS
2016**
FINALIST



C P P clothpromotions plus®



ASI/45513
SAGE/68249



PPAI/359202
UPIC/CPP

888.776.2675
www.clothpromotions.com

Features

TRENDS 50

The Election Connection

Investing millions in promotional products helped fuel the unexpected rise of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders – and reinforced promo's essential role in the race for our nation's highest office.

NEW MARKETS 58

In the Market

Four hot sectors provide ample sales opportunities for distributors.

OPERATIONS 64

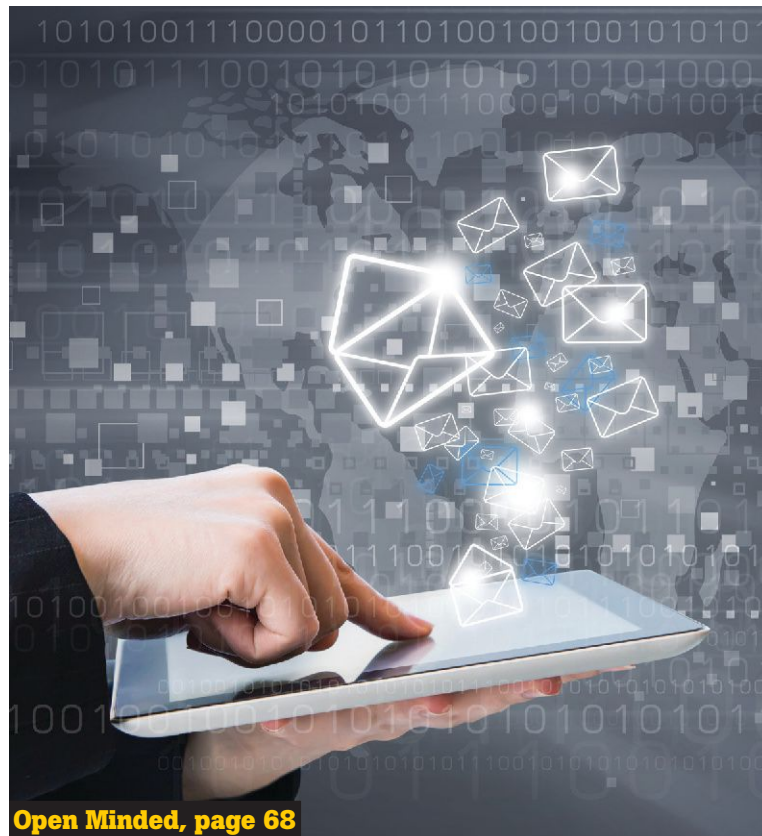
Breach Bound

Many companies intuitively know about the importance of data security, but aren't aware of the many ways hackers can get into their systems. Here are some strategies for protecting your business from becoming a data breach victim.

MARKETING 68

Open Minded

Data shows that people open only 18% of emails from marketers. Here are eight concrete strategies to help your company beat the odds and stand out in customer inboxes.



Open Minded, page 68

Q&A 72

The See-Through Organization

Author and organizational expert Aaron Dignan argues that companies today need to change their approach so they become way more transparent to their employees and customers.

News

THE LEAD 22

Should distributors impose an email curfew on nights and weekends to reduce stress?

CHATTER 24

Excerpt of a post on LinkedIn by Alice Jackson, consultant at Designhill.

SALES 27

Uniform company plans major promo product entry.

INTERNATIONAL 30

Worker strikes escalate in China.

M & A 32

Samsonite agrees to acquire Tumi.

ASICENTRAL.COM 34

NFL creates new niche for promo products.

BY THE NUMBERS 37

Research reveals trends for

how headwear is searched for in ESP.

PRODUCT PICKS 38

10 items in the spotlight.

Best Practices

MARKETING 41

Grow your business through Facebook.

SALES 42

Tips for RFP success.

Apparel

CASE STUDY 45

Nonprofit turns to tees for growth.

DECORATION 48

Sublimation and embroidery.

SHOWCASE 49

A unique selection of caps & hats.

Social

PROFILE 75

Commemorative coins pay off for this distributor rep.

BEST PLACES TO WORK 80

A collaborative culture equals success for an Illinois distributor.

AAA Innovations (asi/30023)

The Sales Forecast Is Sunny With Rainalertz

When it comes to umbrellas, AAA Innovations is ‘raining’ creativity. Here’s how its exclusive new Rainalertz app keeps users from getting wet – literally!

Have you ever forgotten your umbrella only to be caught in the rain? It’s a situation everyone encounters at one time or another. Now there’s a solution from AAA Innovations – Rainalertz, a clever breakthrough for the promotional products umbrella category that leaves competitors soaked.

“AAA innovations has created a line of umbrellas that will tell you when it’s going to rain!” says Jeffrey Nanus, President of AAA Innovations. “We have a patent-pending app called Rainalertz that can be added to any of our umbrellas. It ties in with the GPS of your mobile phone and the national weather service. When a client orders an umbrella with Rainalertz, we include a custom hang tag that directs the end-user to download the free app. The app is customized so the end-user will receive a branded ‘alert’ whenever there is a 60% chance of rain. In addition, the 5-day rain forecast will have the customer’s logo at the top of the page.

In addition to Rainalertz, AAA Innovations has numerous types and styles of umbrellas to sell to your clients. “We offer the world’s strongest golf umbrellas with patented technology; the first ever folding umbrellas with fiberglass shafts so that golfers can actually use them as they are less conductive,” Nanus says, adding, “and a line of auto open/auto close folding umbrellas with an exclusive safety shaft frame.” Rainalertz can be added to any AAA Innovations’ umbrella so that the promotional gift will tell recipients when it’s going to rain.

What an effective way to see and be seen! It’s an advertiser’s dream to provide gifts that are useful, improve safety and save the recipient from an unexpected downpour. Every time he or she receives a weather alert on their smartphone or pops open the umbrella, the advertiser’s logo and/or message will be seen. The person will experience a lasting, positive brand association. Not only that, frequency matters when comparing advertising dollars. With Rainalertz, the exposure is high and the cost per impression is low.

In addition to offering free virtuals and demos on Rainalertz, AAA Innovations has sales personnel around the United States to help you educate your clients. Whether you live on the East Coast, West Coast or somewhere in between, timely assistance is available.

Rainalertz practically sells itself, however. With Rainalertz, umbrellas become a high-tech item that is a totally fresh idea. Nanus explains the appeal: “Mobile advertising is the fastest growing segment of the advertising industry, and Rainalertz helps end-users generate continued brand awareness throughout the



entire year... Whenever there is a 60% chance of rain.” In addition, AAA Innovations offers all distributors and their salespeople a “marketing center” on its website that provides sales flyers, catalogs and opportunities to upload artwork and customize sales materials.

Success is in the sales numbers. AAA Innovations was founded in 1909, and 2015 was its biggest year in history. You can visit www.aaainnovations.com to see a short, easy-to-understand video of how Rainalertz works. Your clients might be familiar with it already. Umbrellas with Rainalertz have been featured on *The Today Show* and have sold out on the Home Shopping Network. Before you know it, it will be raining sales for your business!

“Mobile advertising is the fastest growing segment of the advertising industry, and Rainalertz helps end-users generate continued brand awareness 20 to 100 times per year...”

Jeffrey Nanus, AAA Innovations

Say hello to your customers every time it looks like rain!



Adds \$2.00(p) to any AAA umbrella. Contact us for a free demo.

aaainnovations.com

Wildman Corporate Apparel Wins Online With WebJaguar

Creating and maintaining clients' Web stores requires an eCommerce platform that is streamlined and simple. Here's how one distributor has successfully harnessed the Web for its clients.

For seven years, Wildman Corporate Apparel has been grappling with eCommerce. Not only does the successful distributor have its own website, it also creates and maintains sites for its clients. "We build custom Web stores for many of our customers to facilitate the ordering process," says Casey Pepper, vice president of Wildman Corporate Apparel. "We feel we're an extension of their brand, and if we can help enhance that for them in any way, then it's a win-win."

Creating that win-win, however, requires an agile eCommerce solution. After trying several platforms, Wildman contacted the experts at AdvancedEMedia for an out-of-the-box option that also allows for easy customization when necessary. AdvancedEMedia, the developer of the WebJaguar eCommerce platform, provides small-to mid-size promotional products companies the ability to easily automate and manage business with a fully featured website, e-catalog/content management, shopping cart, CRM and lead generation technologies. "We've provided a front-end and back-end solution to sell products online," says Bachir Kassir, president and founder of AdvancedEMedia. "We worked closely with ASI to develop data feed based on the ASI database. This gives distributors access to hundreds of thousands of products as a complete turnkey eCommerce solution."

Six months into Wildman's relationship with AdvancedEMedia, and Pepper is happy with the solution. "We feel WebJaguar was able to offer a platform with a solid base that we could use without having to totally customize everything," he says. "We've never had the level of service support from a Web store company like we've had with WebJaguar. They are very responsive to our service needs. They assigned an inside representative to our account and we've been working hand-in-hand to develop our program. Their owner has also actually sat in on many of our calls."

From an administrative standpoint, Pepper expects continued benefits, such as streamlined order management. "Only time will tell, but we've tracked our order entry time over the last month without the WebJaguar platform, and we're looking forward to seeing the reduction in order entry time after we officially launch the WebJaguar sites."



That reduction will translate into more sales. Pepper explains: "About 50% of our orders currently come in through one of our Web stores. We hope to get this percentage up much higher, as WebJaguar really cuts down on order entry time and allows our internal support team to spend more time telling our customers about what specials we're currently offering."

Pepper is eager to complete the transition. "We're currently operating our websites on four different platforms," he says. "I believe WebJaguar has given us the ability to streamline these platforms into one Web platform that will give our customers the best bells and whistles in the business."

All that's needed for other distributors to get started on their own eCommerce solution is a Web browser. No special hardware is required nor does any software have to be installed. WebJaguar is a cloud-based, turnkey solution. For more information, visit www.webjaguar.com/asi or call (888) 718-5051 for a free consultation and demo.

"We've never had the level of service support from a Web store company like we've had with WebJaguar."

Casey Pepper, Wildman Corporate Apparel

Distributor & Supplier Online Solutions

Run your entire *business*
with **ONE** platform!



From the folks who introduced
Virtual Samples to the **PROMO** industry

**FULLY
INTEGRATED
WITH
SMART LINK
FEED**

- ✓ Best in Industry eCommerce Solution
- ✓ The Industry's Most Advanced 4-Step Order Process
 - Select Product Color(s)
 - Select Decoration Method
 - Enter Quantities (by Size for Apparel)
 - Select Decoration Location(s) & Select Decoration Color(s)
- ✓ Sophisticated API Integration
- ✓ Revolutionary User Order Process
- ✓ Order Manager/CRM/Email Marketing/SEO/Inventory Manager
- ✓ Sales Rep Manager/Budget Manager/PlanAhead Buying
- ✓ Customer Dashboards/Logo Libraries/Presentations/Quotes
- ✓ Customer Assigned Products/Pricing/Shipping/Payment Methods
- ✓ Product data selections from VIP Suppliers, ASI and DistributorCentral



Contact us for a **FREE** consultation/demo!
(888) 718-5051, x232
www.IMPRINTstores.com

**IMPRINT
STORES**
Powered by WebJaguar Enterprise Solutions

COUNSELOR

WWW.ASICENTRAL.COM

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Andy Cohen, BASI, acohen@asicentral.com, @ASI_AndyCohen

DIRECTOR, EDITORIAL OPERATIONS

Michele Bell, MASI, mbell@asicentral.com, @ASI_MBell

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

C. J. Mittica, BASI, cmittica@asicentral.com, @CJ_Counselor

MANAGING EDITOR

Joan Chaykin, MASI, jchaykin@asicentral.com, @asi_joanchaykin

SENIOR EDITOR

Theresa Hegel, MASI, thegel@asicentral.com

SENIOR WRITER

Christopher Ruvo, MASI, cruvo@asicentral.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Sara Lavenduski, MASI, slavenduski@asicentral.com

STAFF WRITER

John Corrigan, jcorrigan@asicentral.com

PRODUCT EDITOR

Joe Haley, MASI, jhaley@asicentral.com, @asi_joehaley

DIRECTOR OF AWARDS

Karen Akers, MASI, kakers@asicentral.com, @ASI_Awards

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Betsy Cummings, Shane Dale, Christine Stoddard

ONLINE EDITOR

Vincent Driscoll, BASI, vdriscoll@asicentral.com

COPY EDITOR

Lindsey Stewart, MASI

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Carole Seymour, MASI, cseymour@asicentral.com

DIRECTOR, MARKET RESEARCH

Nathaniel Kucsma, BASI, nkucsma@asicentral.com

ART DIRECTOR

Hillary Glen, BASI, @HaughtArt

SENIOR DESIGNER

Glen Karpowich, BASI, @KarpoDesigner

DESIGNER

Monica Fisher, BASI

PHOTOGRAPHER

Mark Pricskett, MASI, @marcOphotO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CIRCULATION

Bernadette Mahlmann

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Rebecca Eiler, BASI

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION & ADVERTISING OPERATIONS

Alice Kraus, BASI

ADVERTISING

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SUPPLIER SERVICES

Gene Rahill, BASI, grahill@asicentral.com

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SUPPLIER SALES

Christine Lovell, MASI, clovell@asicentral.com

VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLISHING & MEDIA SERVICES

Matthew Barnes, mbarnes@asicentral.com

VICE PRESIDENT, SUPPLIER SALES

Mary Sells, MASI, msells@asicentral.com

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIGITAL ADVERTISING

Suzanne Izzo, MASI, sizzo@asicentral.com

SALES MANAGERS, SUPPLIER SERVICES

Matthew Canamucio, BASI, mcanamucio@asicentral.com

Krista Taylor, BASI, ktaylor@asicentral.com

SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Sean McGuigan, BASI, smcguigan@asicentral.com

Barry Melito, BASI, bmelito@asicentral.com

Phyllis Mutnick, BASI, pmutnick@asicentral.com

James Padilla, BASI, jpadilla@asicentral.com

Pamela Vicik-Smith, MASI, pvicik-smith@asicentral.com

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Nick Cavanaugh, BASI, ncavanaugh@asicentral.com

Diana Mangos, BASI, dmangos@asicentral.com

Kelly Pupkiewicz, BASI, kpupkiewicz@asicentral.com

Brian White, BASI, bwhite@asicentral.com

CANADIAN OFFICE

Ryan David, rdavid@asicentral.com

ADVERTISING SPECIALTY INSTITUTE CHAIRMAN

Norman Cohn, MASI

VICE CHAIRMAN

Matthew Cohn, MASI

PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Timothy M. Andrews, MASI

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL COUNSEL

Steve Bright

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Vincent Bucolo Jr., BASI

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

Armughan Rafat, BASI

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SENIOR COUNSEL

Charles Machion, BASI

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

Carol Albright, BASI



Environmental impact estimate was made using the Environmental Defense Calculator. For more information visit www.papercalculator.org

*Please recycle this magazine.

©2016, Advertising Specialty Institute®. All Rights Reserved

Epic Win



**Balloons • Table Covers • Banner Displays
Event Tents • Flags • Balls**

Visit pioneerline.com today for complete ordering information.



SPONSORED BY IN YOUR FACE APPAREL

Three Reasons To Go Custom

What your customers see at retail mirrors many of the blanks from wholesale vendors. How do you match demand for trends while setting yourself apart to make the sale? Go custom.

Today's promotional market has more options for apparel than ever before. Industry distributors and their customers see market blanks in retail almost on a daily basis. Ten years ago, the gap between retail fashion and promotional blanks was very large. Today, however, many blank suppliers have crossed over into the promotional market and supply many styles that also are popular at retail.

Your solution is to stand apart. You can go completely custom. Understandably, some distributors are reluctant – a bit overwhelmed by the options, concerned about price and turn time, etc. “As with anything good, there are some downfalls,” says Doug Stayman, president of In Your Face Apparel (IYFA, asi/62493). “The large offering of market blanks has also created a challenge to wow your customer with truly one-of-a-kind apparel.”

Should you choose to go custom, look for a supplier-partner with capabilities to design and produce a garment that cannot be found anywhere else. Here are three considerations:

1. Custom apparel offers you the opportunity to give a customer something unique and exactly what they want. Their garment will stand out from all the off-the-shelf blanks with basic imprints. Does your vendor offer design assistance and custom cut and sewn solutions?
2. When you custom-build a garment, you eliminate the chance that your recommendation will be taken by the buyer and shopped around as a commodity. Once a garment brand has been decided, a customer can dictate the desired brand and the decoration method and put it out to bid, which results in a lower margin sale. Skip the easily copied and go with a vendor that can mix and match decorative methods to produce one-of-a-kind, multi-decorative designs. For example, IYFA offers a multitude of decorative options from rhinestones and glitter to nailheads and rhinestuds, sublimation and foil to screen print and specialty inks.
3. Create a partnership. By giving customers options that are not available to your competition, you are now a higher perceived supply partner. Repeat orders are more likely.

It does take experience, however. When you enter the market for custom apparel, you need an expert like IYFA on your side. In 2003, the small custom apparel company began by providing quality service to its customers. Since then, IYFA has evolved into a dynamic apparel manufacturing and custom decorating facility. “Our goal is provide our customers with fun, creative, and innovative high-quality apparel products based on current fashion trends and knowledge of industry leading processes,” Stayman says.

Based in Dallas, TX, with manufacturing facilities in New York, Los Angeles and Mexico, IYFA is able to ship coast to coast with fast turn times. Its experienced, in-house creative team provides customers with unique, one-of-a-kind designs. And with global manufacturing and sourcing capabilities, IYFA has the flexibility to meet all your customers' custom apparel and decorating needs. To learn more, visit www.inyourfaceapparel.com.



This hoodie is a custom cut-and-sew piece for the band Twenty One Pilots. It began as separate fabric panels that were printed and then sewn together to achieve a pattern with a seamless look. The black panels were screen printed with plastisol ink for the red pattern. The white panel was screen printed with water-base ink.

Photo courtesy In Your Face Apparel



PMS Match



Custom Fleece



Made-To-Order Polos



Custom Wash

CUSTOM APPAREL

Craft, Cut, Create

WE MAKE IT SIMPLE
Because you don't
have time to waste.

Creative & Development Services

Quick Sample Lead Time

Fast Production Turn Time

Domestic Product in less than 30 Days

Imported Product in 60 Days

Quantities as low as 576 pcs.

Rush Services Available

CALL US TODAY!

866-583-2800

custom@inyourfaceapparel.com

www.inyourfaceapparel.com

in your face
apparel

One Company. One Source.

© Copyright 2016 In Your Face Apparel. All rights reserved.

ASI 62494 PPAI 254968 SAGE 67235

Editor's Letter

The Cost to Sway Voters

A deep dive into campaign finance filings shows the remarkable power of promotional products.

By Andy Cohen

The 2016 presidential candidates are going to great lengths to get votes. They're at rallies every day, doing media interviews practically hourly, and hosting fundraising dinners in just about every city in the country. Know what else they're doing? They're buying promotional products. Lots of them.

Our executive editor, C.J. Mittica, spent a good part of March sifting through campaign finance reports – yes, they're public, they're extensive and they're incredibly revealing – to see exactly how the top candidates are spending money on promotional items ranging from caps and signs to mugs, T-shirts, pens and bumper stickers.

The big reveal? This year's most surprisingly successful candidates on both sides of the aisle – Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders – also happen to be the biggest spenders on promotional products. After speaking to many election experts, Mittica certainly found out that it's most definitely far from a coincidence.

"If you use [them] wisely, [promotional products] can help you win an election," said Steve Grubbs, co-founder of Victory-store.com (asi/352041) and a longtime political strategist who most recently served a chief role on Rand Paul's presidential campaign, in this month's cover story that begins on page 50. "And I

think Trump and Sanders have made that case."

Each candidate invested heavily in promotional products from the earliest stages of their campaigns. Trump spent more on hats and branded items from July through September last year (a total of \$910,000) than any other part of his campaign – a tidbit that gained national headlines. But so did Sanders, who in the same period of time spent over \$3 million on "campaign paraphernalia." Since

extensively to convince voters to pull a lever for a certain candidate. What the people running these presidential campaigns this year know is the same thing that millions of businesses already recognize: Putting a hat or T-shirt or pen in somebody's hands will make them remember the message imprinted on the item (hello, Make America Great Again) and also think more highly of the company or person who gave it to them.

cap or a Trump T-shirt, you're telling people that."

Which is precisely what the campaigns want. They're on a constant, desperate search for people to spread their gospel, to connect their marketing messages to more and more constituents. What's the best vehicle for getting that done today? Promotional products are proving to be the medium that political candidates are increasingly turning to in an effort to impact audiences.

And, they're the perfect



"This year's most surprisingly successful candidates – Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders – are also the biggest spenders on promotional products."

then, Sanders has continued to pay well for promo items, but has also poured staggering amounts of money into digital and television advertising. Meanwhile, Trump continues to run a unique campaign, perpetuating his significant reliance on promo while skimping on fields like polling, TV advertising and even campaign staffing – categories that candidates historically have lavished millions on.

Frankly, it's yet another indication of the power of promo items – this time being used

And, in this election specifically, voters have become walking billboards for not only the candidates themselves, but also for the messages that those candidates are espousing daily on television. "[Trump supporters] don't want to be part of the Washington establishment," says Dave McNeer, owner of Maxim Advertising, a Newton, IA-based distributor that has produced knit hats and other promotional items for Trump during the election race. "And boy, if you're wearing a Trump

medium for exactly that. Candidates can run all the television ads they want – and many do – but those won't make a marketing message stick as much as a hat with a clear slogan on it will. That has been clearly borne out in the 2016 presidential campaign – and it's a lesson that many companies, organizations, associations, and even schools could learn from. Promotional products have a stickiness that no other media can compare to. Just ask Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders.



They've Got Deadlines. You've Got SureShip.®

Customers count on you to deliver. And you can count on us to help with SureShip.® When you're on deadline, SureShip.® provides next-day turn on the widest range of products and decoration methods for 24-hour turnaround – at no extra cost.

Shop now at pcna.com



EVERYTHING **YOU** NEED. ALL IN ONE PLACE.

asi/42424 asi/66887 asi/92121



News

SHOULD DISTRIBUTORS IMPOSE AN EMAIL CURFEW ON NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS TO REDUCE STRESS?



Ruth Verver
Paperclip Promotions
(asi/290142)
“I would make an exception on a day that I have a very important order shipping. But most of the time, you bet! It also helps to train your customers to not expect to hear from you at 8 at night or on the weekends.”



Mark Ziskind
CSE (asi/155807)
“While it is possible, I think it’s more important for folks to have self-discipline. You don’t need to check email at all hours of the night. To take that option away from commissioned salespeople is not fair to them, and not fair to our clients.”



Seth Weiner
Sonic Promos
(asi/329865)
“You could probably implement a curfew on client-related correspondence, but suppliers have made it so you need to check on rush orders, because you know the vendor’s process will not push it through unless you immediately respond.”



Kathy Whitburn
American Solutions for Business (asi/120075)
“I am more stressed out if I can’t check on the go and have this huge implosion of emails all at once. My anxiety level would sky rocket if I couldn’t get caught up on the fly over the weekend or early evenings.”

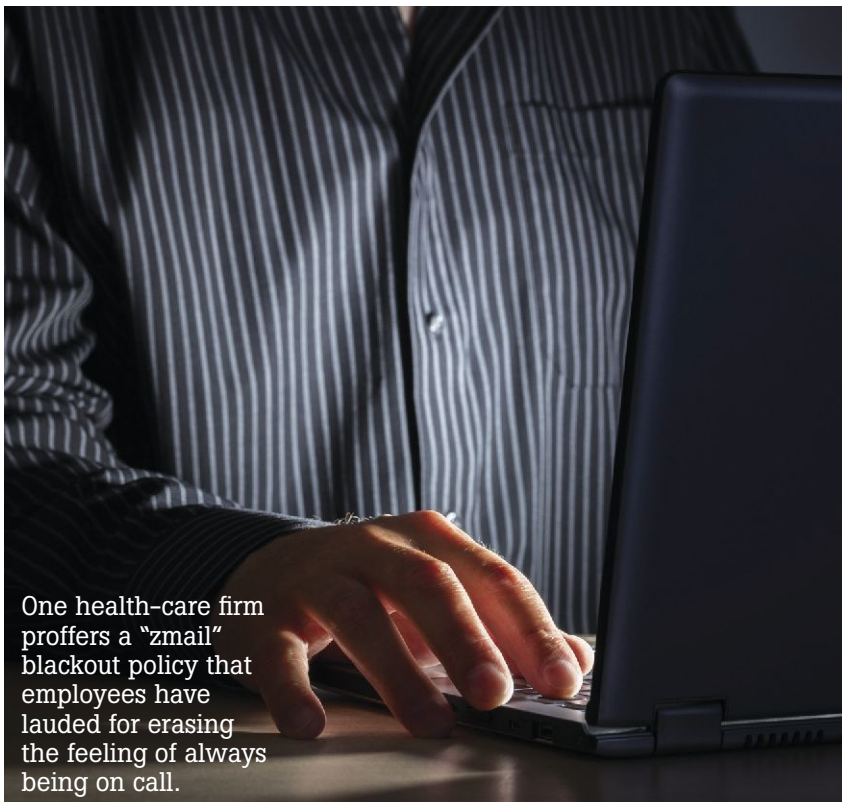


Brittany Blanco
Axis Promotions
(asi/128263)
“That would be difficult given how we’re constantly connected through electronics. But everyone needs to ‘turn off’ every now and then, and I can see how adopting a company culture would remove some of the stress attached to being accessible 24/7.”



Conrad Franey
Brand Addition
“I think it is possible, but I personally believe we need to treat our colleagues as adults and allow them to control when they will turn off their email. Does this mean that some of them never will turn off email? You bet.”

Breaking Up The After-Hours Email Party



One health-care firm proffers a “zmail” blackout policy that employees have lauded for erasing the feeling of always being on call.

► Employees spend more than a quarter of their workday reading and answering emails.

► Nearly 95% of small-business employees can’t keep up when they receive more than 50 emails a day, and by 2019 the average business user will receive 96 emails per day.

► According to an Adobe survey, Americans outside of work most commonly check their email while watching TV (70%), from bed (52%), on vacation (50%), while on the phone (43%), from the bathroom (42%) and driving (18%).

► In the same survey, over 40% of workers have taken a self-imposed break from emails for a few days.



The Original **CVC**

Don't settle
for imitations,
you deserve the
best quality in
all your favorite
heathered colors.

NEW FIT FOR GIRLS & BOYS

- 3352 Youth 3/4 Raglan
(style shown)

CUTE GIRLS' STYLES

- 3712 Princess Crew
- 3742 Adorable V

NEW BOYS' STYLE

- 3312 S/S Crew

PLACE YOUR
ORDER
TODAY!

For a list of our wholesale distributors' contact information, visit:
www.nextlevelapparel.com/48/distributors.htm

Sell the shirt you love to wear.

www.nextlevelapparel.com | asi/73867



NEXT LEVEL™
A P P A R E L

Chatter

Now Trending



The best way to “sell” the pen is to ask as many questions as it takes to uncover whether there is or isn’t a genuine need for the pen.

DAN SASSO, CONSULTANT AT SCORE, VIA LINKEDIN

For designers, elegance = empathy; for engineers, elegance = efficiency; for business, elegance = evergreen. Need all three.
#DesignInTech

JOHN MAEDA, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN, VIA @JOHNMAEDA



By combining the power of an online platform with on-the-ground engagement, we can build a true grassroots effort to reach jobseekers.

ZOE BAIRD, CEO AND PRESIDENT OF THE MARKLE FOUNDATION, VIA LINKEDIN

While business students enter grad school thinking like consumers, MBAs exit thinking more like profit-maximizers. The tools for how to fix a problem fail to sync up with the best leverage points for systemic change.

JUDITH SAMUELSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BUSINESS AND SOCIETY PROGRAM AT ASPEN INSTITUTE, VIA LINKEDIN



As every industry goes digital, the market for tech is expanding by 10X. It’s a great time to build for previously unaddressed areas.

AARON LEVIE, CEO OF BOX.NET, VIA @LEVIE

LinkedIn
Connections

Excerpt of a post on LinkedIn by Alice Jackson, consultant at Designhill.

At Designhill, we always encourage designers to make a good profile page that will help them achieve more one-to-one projects. Here’s a few do’s and don’ts.

Do: You can simply use your personal photograph as the avatar image, as it will connect faster with the clients or businesses. Make sure that your image looks serious, professional and trustworthy. You can hire a professional photographer for the same.

Don’t: You don’t have to look sexy in your profile picture. Refrain from getting sensuous photos clicked for your avatar image. Remember, it only reflects upon your casual attitude toward work. Also, don’t ever make the mistake of uploading someone else’s photo as your avatar, as it may eventually damage your credibility.

Do: Clearly write your hobbies, education and special skills. Try to write something unique. Just writing “I am a graphic designer” is nothing new that people will love to read. Write a short description of yourself and your work that stands out.

Don’t: Writing a famous quote is a big NO. A quote won’t tell your clients anything about your work. Remember, write in a language that your clients would understand easily.

A selection of tweets with the #disruption hashtag.

@davidjmaireles
#Disruption is a choice. It either happens to you or because of you.
#DigitalTransformation

@H_Agent_002 Not every startup is about tech. We need a more diverse view of business, innovation and entrepreneurship. #startup #disruption

@nomorepastrami #disruption is over-used. #agility is what is required now and in the future.

@hazesyah #disruption – not just something you do with one idea or at work 9-5, it is a way of thinking, it is an ethos.
#SXSW2016

@terencemauri You can be an innovator, a follower or out of business. #leadership #entrepreneur #startup #disruption #Managers

@_FaceSA #philanthropy #entrepreneurship and #creativity in #eHealth = #disruption to the status quo.

@michellleromano Advice for those managing millennial talent: create the framework for people to disagree with you, encourage #disruption #sxsw

@koqoo No single company is immune to #disruption.

Twitter
Feed

TRI-MOUNTAIN

2016 SPRING

NEW

K210 SPRINTER KL210 LADY SPRINTER

5 OZ. POLY HEATHER JERSEY QUARTER-ZIP WITH
MOISTURE-WICKING TECHNOLOGY.

AVAILABLE IN 4 COLORS:

BLUE SHOCK/BLUE

GRAY/DARK GRAY

CHARCOAL/BLACK

DEEP RAZZ/DARK GRAY

BLANK
AS LOW AS

\$33.50(P)

DECORATED
AS LOW AS

\$37.50(P)

NEW BORDERLESS HEAT TRANSFERS

DIGITALLY PRINTED IN FULL COLOR
WITH A CLEAN, BORDERLESS EDGE



**FREE
FREIGHT**
ON \$200 NET ORDERS*



*Free Freight on orders totaling at least \$200 in net merchandise value of sale or regularly priced items. Not valid on discontinued items or orders shipping to Hawaii, Puerto Rico or Alaska. Applies to a bulk one-time shipment to single location. Does not include extra services (i.e. Lift Gate, Residential, Inside Delivery, etc.). Minimum order of 24 units for decoration promotion. Above decorated price is based on 1000 units of the Borderless Heat Transfer (BHT). Other fees may apply. Subject to change without notice. See Price List for full Terms & Conditions, Pricing and Fees. Visit www.trimountain.com/decoration or speak with your Sales Rep for more information. © 2016 Tri-Mountain. All rights reserved. ASI 92125. PPAI 134335. UPIC TRIM0003.



BANAKA

Promotional Bags Sources



LB-9116

Vivid Foldable Insulated Cooler Lunch Bag
8.5"W x 10"H x 5"D
Color: Black, Royal Blue,
Forest Green, Khaki, Pink

\$2.49 (D) Min 100



GREAT ITEMS FOR PROMOTIONAL GIVEAWAY!



www.banaka.net

info@banaka.net

TEL: (888) 386-8686

FAX : (626) 363-8860

Price include 1 color 1 location imprint. Screen setup charge \$50.00(F)

“Our customers have been forthright in telling us we should carry Alternative.”

Jeremy Lott, SanMar (page 30)

Uniform Company Plans Major Promo Product Entry

Superior Uniform Group Inc. (asi/90266) has purchased Los Angeles-based distributor BAMKO Inc. (asi/131431). The publicly-traded supplier and uniform manufacturer paid \$15.8 million in cash, the company announced.

In addition, Superior Uniform Group will issue \$5.5 million in shares of its common stock that will vest over five years and will carry a potential future payment of \$5.5 million through 2021 for additional contingent considerations.

“We bought BAMKO to be the dominant player in their industry,” says Michael Benstock, CEO of Superior Uniform Group, in an exclusive interview with Counselor. “We don’t just want to be on the Top 40, we want to be at the top of that list. And with Superior’s capital and our ability to manage alongside the folks at BAMKO, I have no doubts we’ll be able to accomplish that.”

Benstock says Superior had been searching the last two years for a partner to grow into the promotional products market. The company, which generated \$210.3 million in net sales last year (including its subsidiaries), previously sold promotional products to its uniform customers. All promotional product business will now be handled through BAMKO.

BAMKO generated approx-

imately \$31.5 million in revenue last year. The distributor has subsidiaries in Hong Kong, China, Brazil and England, as well as an affiliate in India, all of which are included in the transaction. BAMKO will operate as a subsidiary of Superior Uniform Group, and the principals will remain with the company.

Phil Koosed, CEO and co-founder of BAMKO, tells Counselor that the distributor was not looking for a buyer, but the opportunity to work with Superior was too good to refuse. “It was one of those things that was pretty much a no-brainer once we got to understand who their organization was from the top down and what they stand for,” says Koosed, who started the distributorship in college 15 years ago with President Brett Marz. “We had such similar core values that it really did seem like a match made in heaven.”

Benstock and Koosed say that BAMKO’s creative design capabilities and sourcing presence in China is the foundation for a scalable model with the potential to grow. By partnering with Superior, Koosed says the move will allow BAMKO to expand its distribution and warehousing, enhance its customer experience and allow the distributor to accept some of the growth opportunities it had turned down in the past.

What You Don’t Know About Superior Uniform Group

► Ranked **23rd** on the most recent Apparel magazine’s **Top 50 list**, which ranks publicly traded U.S. companies by their profitability

► In 2015, net sales increased **7.2% to a total of \$210.3 million.**

► In two years, its NASDAQ stock price has more than doubled from under **\$8 to over \$17.**





Benstock says the natural crossover between promotional products and uniforms offer growth possibilities for both businesses.

“I’m a strong believer that you don’t buy businesses to fix them,” Benstock says. “We’ve done that over the years and it’s been OK. It’s hard work. I’d rather buy a business that’s healthy and has strong leadership, and give them the support they need to grow their business faster. We see BAMKO as a catalyst for a great deal of

growth with our existing customer base, and even customers we haven’t even touched in the past who are strong promotional product users.”

Superior Uniform Group operates through two segments: uniforms and related products, and also remote staffing solutions. In its earnings release prior to the acquisition, the company projected over 6% organic growth for its uniform segment this year and average organic growth of 8% over the next three to five years.

Earnings Round-Up

COMPANY	2015 REVENUE	YEARLY GROWTH	PROMO REVENUE	QUOTE
 4imprint (asi/197045)	\$497 MILLION	20%	\$477 million in North American revenue	<i>"The results represent another year of delivering results in keeping with our strategic objectives."</i> – CEO Kevin Lyons-Tarr
 Gildan Activewear (asi/56842)	\$2.5 BILLION	11.7%	\$634 million with 12.1% growth	<i>"Point of sales from U.S. distributors to screen printers remained strong in the quarter, particularly in the T-shirt category."</i> – EVP, CFO and Chief Administrative Officer Rod Harries
 Staples Promotional Products (asi/120601)	\$21 BILLION	-6%	Double-digit growth in Q4	<i>"In 2015, our top priority was to stabilize total company sales and earnings after a few years of heavy investment to transform Staples."</i> – CEO Ron Sargent
 InnerWorkings (asi/168860)	\$1.09 BILLION	9.3%	15% growth in Q4	<i>"2015 marked the best year in our company's history in terms of both profitability and new client wins."</i> – CEO Eric D. Belcher

Staples Rebrands B-to-B Division

Staples Inc., parent company of Top 40 distributor Staples Promotional Products (asi/120601), has renamed its business-to-business division from Staples Advantage to Staples Business Advantage. As part of the rebranding effort, the company has launched the Staples Easy System, giving customers the flexibility to order products and services on any device at any time.

Currently in testing, the Staples Easy System allows

STAPLES Business Advantage®

any office employee to place an order – using an updated version of the well-known Staples Easy Button – through email, text messaging or voice command when a product needs to be replenished. Staples says the system consolidates orders

from multiple employees and devices into one shopping cart, making it easy to change quantities, replace brands, delete items and approve the final order. The system also remembers past orders and anticipates customer needs.

'Easy'
Does it

"With Staples Easy System, ordering will transcend the limitations of apps and browsers, giving customers access to nearly 500,000 products ranging from office and breakroom supplies to furniture and technology products and services, anytime, anywhere and on any device, using the interface that is most convenient to them," said Neil Ringel, executive vice president of Staples Business Advantage, the division that contains Staples' promotional products business.

Metallic Print Forces Mug Recall

The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued an official recall for ceramic mugs sold exclusively at Target stores, due to a threat of fire when microwaved. The Valentine's Day-themed mugs, distributed by Illume, were labeled as microwave-safe; however, the metallic print on the mug can spark, posing a fire hazard. Target has received three reports of mugs sparking during microwaving, though no injuries have been reported.

"Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled mugs and return them to Target for a full refund," said the CPSC in an official recall statement. "Consumers can also contact Illume for return instructions and a full refund." Illume is not an ASI-listed supplier.



The 14-ounce white ceramic mugs feature the words "Love Today" printed in gold metallic on the outside, with "Microwave Safe" and "Illume" printed on a removable label on the bottom.

Twitter to Keep 140-Character Limit

Amid rumors that Twitter would expand to 10,000 characters for tweets, CEO Jack Dorsey confirmed that the social media platform will maintain its 140-character limit. "It's staying. It's a good constraint for us and it allows for of-the-moment brevity," Dorsey said on NBC's *Today Show*.

In January, a report from tech news website <re/code> said that Twitter was building a new feature to allow longer tweets with a targeted launch date of the end of Q1. Citing sources inside the company, the article said that Twitter was considering a limit of 10,000 characters, the current limit for Direct Messages between Twitter

users. Tweets would reportedly appear as normal, but could be clicked on to expand or link to longer posts.

Responding to those initial reports, Dorsey responded in a lengthy post on Twitter (through a posted screen shot, a common practice to skirt around Twitter's character limit) that the company was "not going to be shy about building more utility and power into Twitter for people," citing text that could be searched and highlighted instead of posted as screen shots. But Dorsey also said that the 140-character restriction "inspires creativity and brevity. And a sense of speed. We will never lose that feeling."

ASI
5-STAR SUPPLIER
★★★★★

New!

LOWER PRICES

SAME GREAT QUALITY

Put more money in your pocket with Navitor! We're now offering the quality products your customers love with new lower online pricing on more than **70%** of our stationery products.

How much will YOU save?

Navitor®
the power of us™

866.628.6868 | Navitor.com | ASI #81500

Worker Strikes Escalate in China

Thousands of Chinese miners staged strikes and protests over a week's time in March, the latest and most high-profile instance of increasing worker unrest in the country. One labor publication reported more than 2,700 strikes last year in China, double the previous year's total and not including an additional 700 strikes in the first two months of 2016.

Workers for Longmay Mining Group, a state-owned coal company that is the largest in Northeastern China, protested for wages that have not been fully paid since November. The mining company announced in September that it planned to lay off 100,000 workers – about 40% of its workforce.

According to the Chinese Labour Bulletin, strikes and protests quickly increased in the second half of 2015 as China's economy continued to struggle and the country devalued its currency. The publication says that two-thirds of all reported

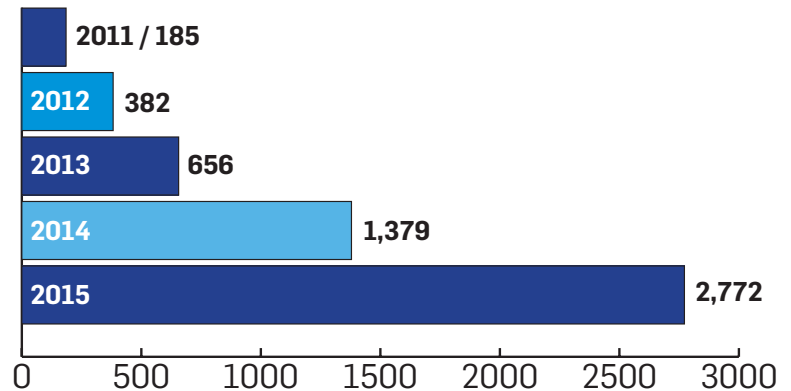
disputes were caused by unpaid wages as factories withheld pay or even closed without compensating workers. Over 35% of worker demonstrations last year occurred in the construction sector, while another third took place in manufacturing facilities. Guangdong, a manufacturing hub in Southern China, accounted last year for over 30% of incidents in the manufacturing sector.

Industrial sectors such as coal and steel that are controlled by the Chinese government are expected to downgrade capacity by 30% and lay off at least 1.8 million workers in the next two years. Bloomberg reported that a survey last year found that manufacturing companies in Guangdong reduced workforces by an average of 3.5% between 2013 to 2014, and laid off 5% of low-skilled workers. Meanwhile, worker wages in China have been rising by 12% annually since 2004.

"Companies have been delaying wages and cutting the

Striking a Chord

Strikes from Chinese workers have been increasing rapidly the past five years, according to the Chinese Labor Bulletin.



workweek. They have tried these different measures to keep people employed. But now we expect greater outright layoffs," Beijing-based Andrew Polk, senior economist at the Conference Board's China Center for Economics and Business, told Bloomberg.

The Chinese government's response to strikes and protecting workers' rights varies, according to one sourcing expert in the country. Strikes against

foreign-owned companies are tolerated by the government and receive media coverage inside the country because it portrays the government as "the champion of the people, seeking to protect them from the abuses of uncaring foreigners," says the expert, who wished to remain anonymous given the sensitivity of the issue. Strikes against privately and state-owned Chinese companies are far less tolerated and receive little to no media coverage.

SanMar Partners With Alternative Apparel

SanMar (asi/84863) announced it is selling products from Alternative Apparel (asi/34850). The supplier will carry 41 items in total from Alternative, including 11 exclusive styles that were jointly developed between the two companies.

"Our customers have been forthright in telling us we should carry Alternative," said Jeremy Lott, president of SanMar. "They are a highly respected retail brand that's blazing a trail in upscale fashion basics. It's a great addition



to our product portfolio."

SanMar began offering the collection on April 15. The

collection will feature a mix of Alternative's best sellers (including its newly introduced

Vintage 50/50 fabrications) in T-shirts, tank tops, hoodies, sweatshirts and fleece pants.

"For decades, SanMar has been widely considered as one of the leading customer service organizations in the industry and over that time, has built a merchandise assortment that is uniquely theirs," said Evan Toporek, Alternative Apparel CEO. "We're excited to have the opportunity to elevate their fashion offering and bring our unique point of view to their legions of loyal customers."

Incentive Organization Forecasts Major Trends

A report from the Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) has found that businesses will focus on unique, upscale and individualized experiences in its employee motivation efforts this year. Here are some of its findings:



Employees more often choose a reward that aligns closely with personal preferences over cash.



ISLAND LIFE

For the first time, the Caribbean ranked tops as the leading incentive travel destination, tying with the U.S.

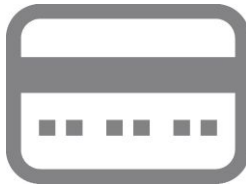
TOP MERCHANDISE REWARDS

65%

Percentage of companies that plan to increase their reward and recognition programs this year



ELECTRONICS
31%



GIFT CARDS
28%



LUGGAGE
24%



JEWELRY/WATCHES
23%

Do you want to sell your distributorship?

We can help you sell your distributorship quickly and easily.

"This type of business transaction was completely foreign to me so it was invaluable to have The Distributor Exchange take us through the process step by step. They went above and beyond in all regards. I couldn't be happier with their efforts to make this a win win for all parties involved." – Cindy Gibbs - Big Fish Branding



www.TheDistributorExchange.com • 844-251-8544 (toll free)

All inquiries are strictly confidential.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

Samsonite Agrees to Acquire Tumi

Two luggage makers that also supply bags in the promotional products and incentive markets are coming together, as Samsonite agreed to a deal to acquire Tumi. The transaction is reported to be for approximately \$1.8 billion, and it is expected to close in the second half of 2016, pending shareholder approval. In its largest deal since becoming a public company in 2011, Samsonite will pay \$26.75 per share for Tumi in an all-cash transaction, which represents a 33% premium to Tumi's closing price the day before the deal.

"This is a transformational acquisition for Samsonite," said Ramesh Tainwala, Samsonite's CEO, in a statement. "It will meaningfully expand our presence in the highly attractive premium segment of the global business bags, travel luggage and accessories market."

In the promotional products and corporate gifts market, Samsonite and Tumi are carried by multiple suppliers. In ASI's ESP Web product search program, Indigo (asi/62560) is listed as one supplier that carries products from both companies. Dean Resnekov, president of Indigo, told Counselor that he believes it will be business as usual for how both brands operate within the promotional and incentive sectors (also often referred to as corporate markets).

"The first thing to understand is that what we call 'corporate markets' is a tiny part of what two rather large retail brands do," Resnekov said. "They will decide how to position all of the other segments of their

businesses first, so I think it is premature to make too many predictions about any impact within our marketplace. I would just say that both are viable brands and do a considerable business, and I would imagine that is not going to change."

IN BRIEF

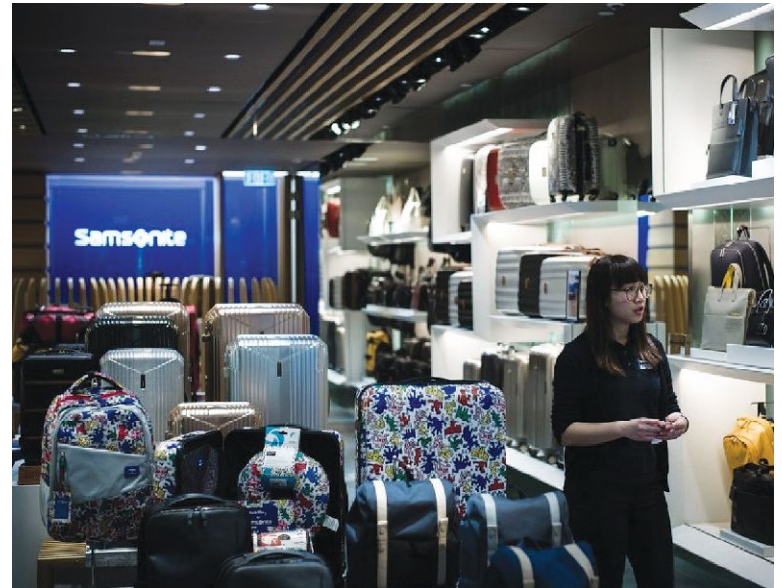
Ennis Acquires Assets of Major Business Systems

Ennis Inc. (asi/52493) announced that one of its wholly owned subsidiaries has acquired the assets of forms manufacturer Major Business Systems, based in Hillsborough, NC. The subsidiary will now operate under the Major Business Systems name, and current Major Business Systems owner Jeff Russell will continue in his position.

"We are very pleased to add Major Business Systems to the Ennis family," said Keith Walters, chairman, CEO and president of Ennis in an official statement. "Major provides some additional capabilities to our product line, and their focus on value-added products in the health-care industry is consistent with our desire to expand this product line throughout the Ennis network. We think this will enhance our current product mix and allow us to pursue more expansive product lines in the integrated document market."

Kansas City Distributors Merge

Kansas City-area promotional product firms Custom Specialties (asi/173252) and Ad Trends Advertising merged as of March 1. Financial details



of the agreement were not disclosed, though Custom Specialties President Pat Hughes told the Kansas City Business Journal the merger will likely bring his firm about \$2 million more in revenues. Combined, the companies are expected to earn more than \$10 million in revenue this year.

Ad Trends will now operate under Custom Specialties' name, but will maintain its own office and showroom. Ad Trends President Mark Cromwell will become vice president of sales. Hughes said Custom Specialties is providing Ad Trends with more advanced technology and services, including access to Custom Specialties' in-house apparel decoration and a Web-based business management platform from the Facilis Group, of which Custom Specialties is a member.

The Image Group Acquires E-Commerce Platforms

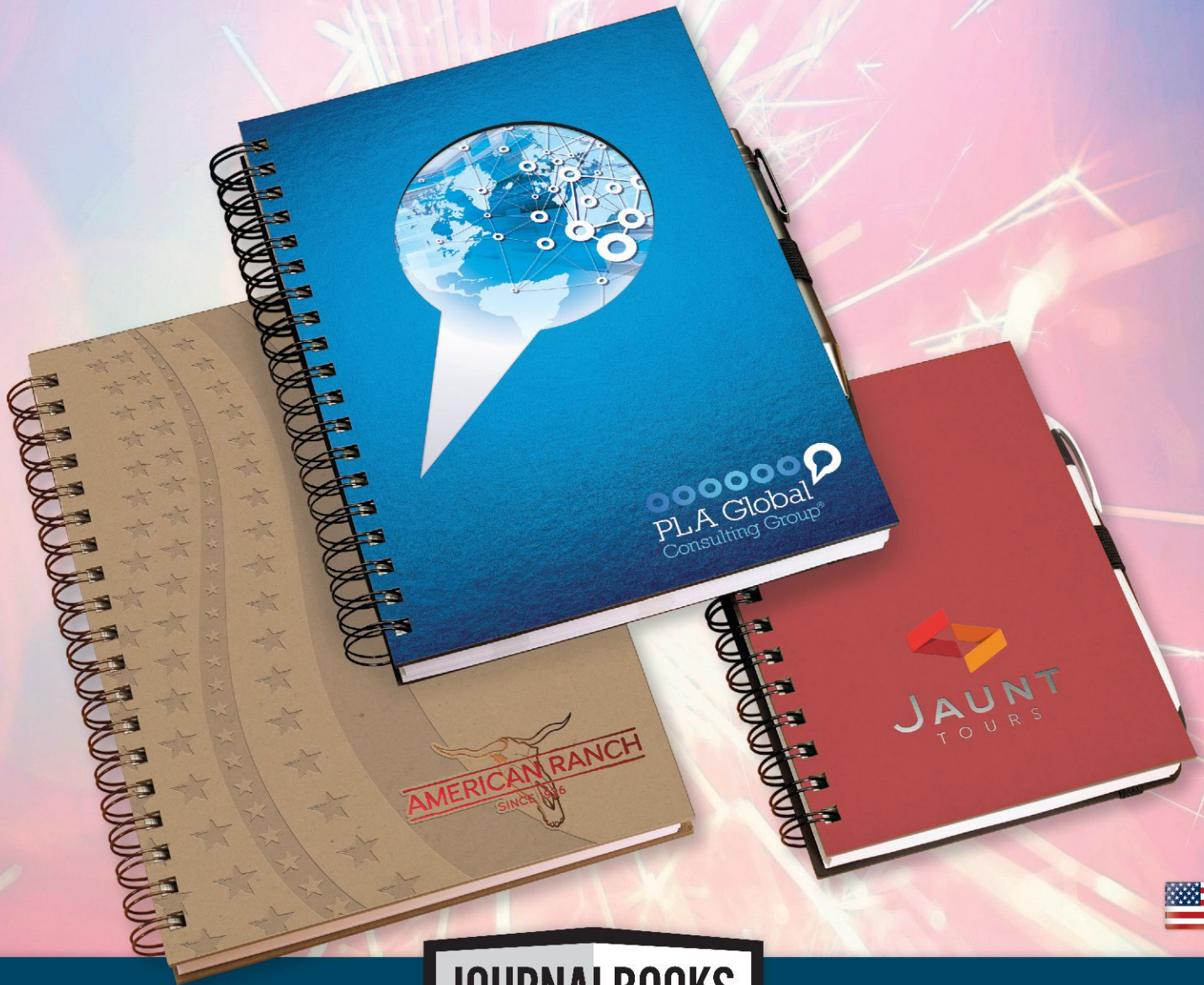
The Image Group (asi/230069)

announced it has acquired Bag Warehouse and Thirsty Promo from Mark-It Smart of Santa Ana, CA. The terms of the deal were not disclosed. Bag Warehouse and Thirsty Promo both offer e-commerce sites from which businesses can buy directly. "Our customers are increasingly interested in researching and procuring promotional products online," said Jon Levine, president of The Image Group. "We believe the shift to online purchasing reflects the growing influence that millennial-aged employees are having in company buying decisions. This acquisition helps us remain ahead of that shift."

Levine says that The Image Group will expand beyond bags and drinkware on e-commerce to offer a wider selection of promotional products and marketing services, and that Mark-It Smart's owners are pursuing new businesses in other areas outside of e-commerce and promo products.

Proudly Made in the USA for 45 Years

JOURNALS | NOTEBOOKS | PLANNERS | CALENDARS | HYBRIDS



JOURNALBOOKS®

WHEN THE MESSAGE MATTERS



a polyconcept company

ASI 91340

PPAI 110769

UPIC journals

www.journalbooks.com

made in the usa

follow us.



ASICentral.com

Trends and insights from our website

Commentary



▲ SLIDESHOW: Political Promos

From what has become the iconic promo item of the 2016 presidential election (yes, it's the Donald Trump Make America Great Again hat) to everyday items like bumper stickers, T-shirts, pens, coffee mugs and yard signs, this year's election for the White House has been a banner one for promotional products. While our cover story this month is an in-depth look at how the candidates have defined their campaign success by using promotional products, online right now we have a pictorial look at the items most in-demand. Go to www.asicentral.com now and search for "political promos" to view the showcase.

Is Cold-Calling Dead?

With the ability to find out as much information as possible about a prospect today, could cold-calling be going away? A recent Great Debate video between Advantages Editor Dave Vagnoni and ASI Editorial Director Andy Cohen had each taking sides. "It's a smarter approach to use your time valuably," Vagnoni said. "Instead of making a cold-call, take the time to research potential prospects." Go to <http://bit.ly/1UVUDQV> to view the video.



Male-Wear

57%

The percentage of men that own promotional outerwear, compared to the 43% of women who say they own those items.

LinkedIn Links

"People join companies and leave their boss. Why? Loyalty is a two-way street. We cannot command the fidelity of our people if we are not loyal to them, [and] part of being loyal is being honest about individual performance."

— Craig Smith, president of Marriott International's Asia Pacific division, on leadership

NFL Creates New Niche for Promo Products

Promotional product opportunities could come direct from SportsCenter thanks to a new marketing strategy by the National Football League (NFL). Extending its deal with e-commerce partner Fanatics, the NFL plans to capitalize on the instant merchandise market with "Micro Moments." These special events such as Peyton Manning's retirement and Odell Beckham Jr.'s one-handed touchdown grab can be designed on shirts available for purchase within minutes.

"The excitement in every record or amazing play is there, but the half-life of each moment is so short, you have to do what you can to capture it," said Chris Halpin, senior vice president of consumer products for the NFL.

Fanatics plans on adding employees and committing to \$80 million in technological investment for the initiative. The "Micro Moments" assembly line will begin with brainstorming upcoming anniversaries or potential game-changing plays, sketching designs for T-shirts and then marketing the apparel online. Fanatics can produce shirts as they're sold thanks to a new digital printing center in Jacksonville, FL, said Fanatics CEO Doug Mack. "We live in an on-demand world," Mack said.



POST UP STAND

Your clients can showcase their message anytime, anywhere!

Our innovative banner stand displays and large format printing services are perfect for:

- Point-Of-Sale Displays • Retail Stores
- Trade Shows • Special Events

Retractable Banner Stands

Post-Up Stand's retractable banners feature durable construction and slim-line styling that make them visually appealing and easy to set up.

ORDER TRADE SHOW AND MARKETING DISPLAYS FROM POST-UP STAND. USE PROMO CODE ASI20

- SUPER-LOW PRICES, PLUS ADDITIONAL ASI VOLUME DISCOUNTS
- NO SETUP FEES OR RUSH CHARGES
- NO MINIMUM ORDERS
- GRAPHIC DESIGN SERVICES AVAILABLE
- 48 HOUR TURNAROUND ON ALL CUSTOM ORDERS



**BANNER STANDS
FULL-COLOR BANNERS
RETAIL SIGNS
TRADE SHOW DISPLAYS
OUTDOOR BANNERS
ALL PRODUCTS- 48 HOURS**



**Large Adjustable
Banner Stands
Starting at \$272**



**Trade Show Booths
Starting at \$784**



**Quick Fabric Displays
Starting at \$180**

**Retractable Banner
Stands
Starting at \$132**



**Vinyl Banners
Starting at \$2.40 per
Square Ft.**



**Table Top Displays
Starting at \$28**



**Table Throws
Starting at \$76.95**



**Teardrop Banners
Starting at \$232**



**X-Frame
Banner Stands
Starting at \$28**

CALL NOW FOR SPECIAL ASI PRICING AND QUOTES
1-800-935-3534 • WWW.POSTUPSTAND.COM/ASI asi/79052

Visit us online to see our complete line of products.





Need something new?

bold

go beyond the
black and white

- Always Factory Direct
- In-House Design
- 30-Day Product Guarantee
- Quotes Within 24 Hours
- Complete Project Management
- Product Safety Compliance
- Global Logistics

Seattle | Philadelphia | San Diego | Shanghai



The Ultimate Manufacturing Experience.™

888.424.6847 | GREATERCHINA-USA.COM | ASI #58135 | PPAI #191353

By The Numbers: Headwear

Men in rural America are tops for logoed headwear.

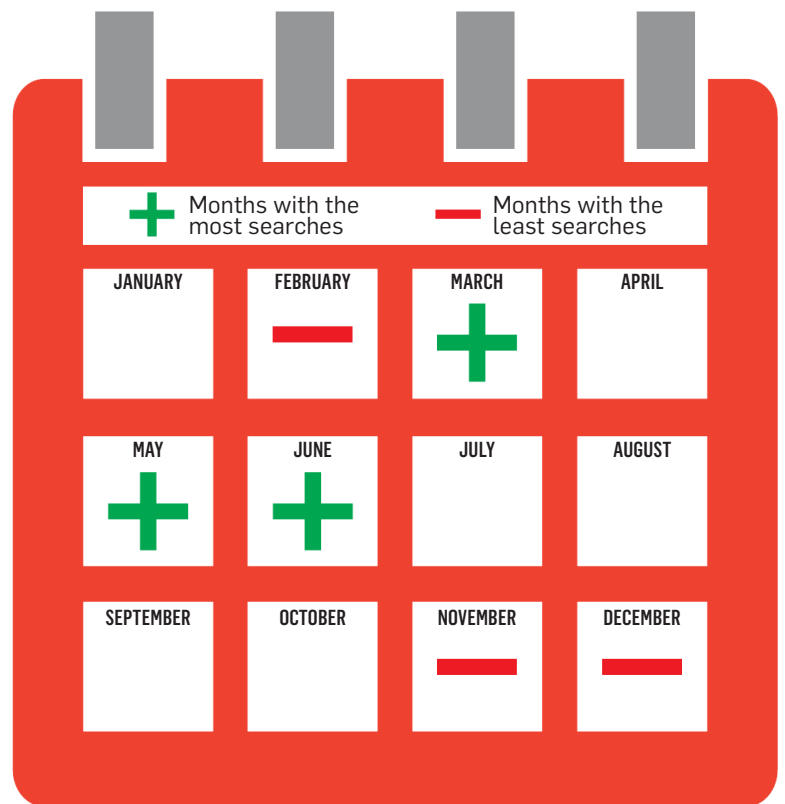


IT'S SUNNY IN FLORIDA

AMONG OWNERS OF PROMOTIONAL HEADWEAR IN TAMPA, THREE-QUARTERS REPORT WEARING THEM ONCE A WEEK OR MORE.

#9

HEADWEAR'S RANKING IN MAY FOR TOTAL SEARCHES, THE HIGHEST OF THE YEAR. IN OTHER MONTHS IT RANKS 10TH OR 11TH.



TOP 10 SEARCH TERMS



1. BASEBALL CAP



2. HEADBAND



3. VISOR



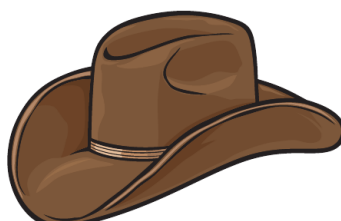
4. HARD HAT



5. BUCKET HAT



6. TRUCKER HAT



7. COWBOY HAT



8. SANTA HAT



9. BANDANNA

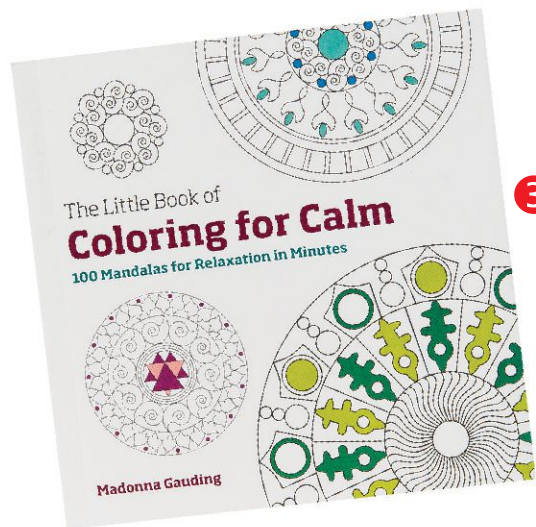


10. STRAW HAT

Product Picks

A collection of unique products

By Joe Haley



1. BULLSEYE PROMO

British-style cork dartboard (10-DBCORK) includes a four-color imprint as well as six tournament-quality darts. **Target Markets:** Perfect for beverage companies and promotions geared to 18-24 year olds. In addition, it's well-suited as an award for dart tournaments and leagues. Available from Profiled Ink (asi/79710); www.profiledink.com

2. BOAT TOTE

This striped tote (15810) has classic design details, zippered top and front pocket. **Target Markets:** Promote spas, pools, gyms and more with this versatile tote. Also spot on for beach promotions and boat sales. Available from BIC Graphic USA (asi/40480); www.norwoodbic.com

3. STAY WITHIN THE LINES

De-stress and tap into childhood memories with this adult coloring book (9781781573143). **Target Markets:** Adult coloring books work well in hospital and health-care promotions and they're also good for college campaigns to help students and their parents transition to a new beginning. Available from The Book Company (asi/41010); www.thebookco.com

1



4. GO FISH

Fishing kit (1094894) includes rod, reel and small tackle box.

Target Markets: Angle for prospects at fishing tournaments, tackle and bait shops, outdoor adventure retail outlets, camp sites and boat rental companies. Available from Pure Fishing Inc. (asi/80190); www.purefishing.com

5. PATCHED UP

Embroidered patch can be heat-sealed to virtually any item with no itchy backing. Patch can also be dye-sublimated. **Target Markets:** The applications are wide and varied; embroider everything from athletic socks and sneakers to bags and more. Available from Windswept Marketing (asi/97248); www.windsweptmarketing.com



4





10



9

6. JUST CHILLIN'

Chill Yo 2 Go cup (CY2GO) has gel beads that freeze within an hour, a top domed compartment and a spoon. Fill the bottom with cottage cheese or yogurt and the top with fruit or granola and you have a healthy treat on the go. **Target Markets:** Ideal for healthy eating promotions and for campaigns geared to school-aged children. Available from Ad-N-Art (asi/31518); www.adnart.com

7. NOW HEAR THIS

Tek Beat headphones (BT100) are collapsible for easy storage and include a long cord for comfortable use. Optional box with full-color sleeve. **Target Markets:** A natural for the music industry, especially bands, festivals and radio stations. Available from Tekweld (asi/90807); www.tekweld.com

8. SITTING PRETTY

Stadium seat (All-Star) has an ergonomic design that provides comfort when sitting on hard stadium bleachers. **Target Markets:** High school sports booster clubs can sell the seat for a fundraiser. Also works well for bands and any school club or organization. Available from All Star Stadium Seat (asi/47913); www.allstarstadiumseat.com

9. PHOTO READY

Picture Catcher Bat is the end of a bat reimagined as a picture holder. **Target Markets:** Uses include a keepsake for baseball and softball team photos, but it works equally well for menu holders for a sports bar/restaurant, and as a giveaway for minor league or professional teams. Available from Picture Catcher Bat (asi/78069); www.picturecatcherbat.com

10. SAFE & SECURE

Grip-A-Zip luggage tag serves as a luggage spotter and hides personal information underneath the top flap. Also includes a TSA-friendly combination lock. **Target Markets:** Spot on for any company in the travel industry, incentive trip winners, and for employees who travel often for their company. Available from Gizmo Widget (asi/56900); www.gripazip.com

6

8

7



FROM THE BOARDROOM TO THE LOCKER ROOM



WHAT ARE YOUR COLORS?

WWW.PEPCOPROMOTIONAL.COM | 1-800-527-1150 | SALES@PEPCOPROMOTIONAL.COM



ASI 77280 • PPAI 112684 • SAGE 53125 • UPIC: PEPCO

Best Practices

Marketing • Sales

Marketing

Lead Generation the Facebook Way

How to grow your business and build your pipeline through the popular social network.

By Christopher Ruvo

A&P Master Images' (asi/102019) Facebook page receives heavy traffic and has more than 6,100 "likes." Facebook is an important component of the distributorship's marketing strategy, which helped drive 25% sales growth for the company in 2015.

"We ask new customers how they heard about us and a lot say they saw our stuff on Facebook," says Howard Potter, CEO at A&P.

Here are a few of Potter's tips for propelling business through Facebook:

Tactfully Promote Your Customers. Potter regularly posts images of branded merchandise that his in-house decoration department creates for clients, which promotes the businesses and his company to A&P's online audience. He often tags the businesses – or people connected with them – in the posts.

Other times Potter congratulates customers on accomplishments, such as posting a praise-ful message to a mixed martial

arts client in response to a fight victory. A significant upshot of all this activity is that the clients often "like"

Potter's posts, which can lead to a multiplying effect: People in the client's network like or at least view the post. When things go

especially well, Potter's posts pop into a variety of Facebook feeds they never would have been in otherwise, gaining A&P more exposure.

Spotlight Your Strengths.

Nowadays, prospects are going to research you online, whether you're making a big push into online marketing or not. Having a frequently updated Facebook page that showcases the results you produce and your core values can build credibility, giving you an edge over competitors.

In addition to photos of the branded merchandise A&P produces, the company's page includes posts that give behind-the-scene glimpses of the distributorship – images of a slick showroom, modern offices and clean, organized work areas.

"Our big differentiator," Potter says "is that we provide top-notch quality and service, and when you see a very professional facility, you get the impression that's what we deliver."

Boost Select Posts.

Paying Facebook to promote certain posts has helped Potter obtain fresh business. In some paid posts, he featured photos of apparel imprinting processes his in-house department executes. In other posts, he ran contests that



led to gains in likes and page views, creating a larger audience whose social web A&P can penetrate.

"What I love about the ads is you can target who you want to reach by location, age, interests and more," says Potter, who spent about \$1,200 last year on Facebook advertising.

Share on Your Personal Facebook Page. People in your personal network don't necessarily know what you do for a living. So, sprinkling in posts that highlight excellent solutions you've provided clients can potentially lead to new opportunities with people in

your off-the-clock sphere.

"I share certain posts I'm proud of from our company page," says Potter. "You don't want to annoy people by doing it too much, but occasionally sharing something can lead to good things."

Facebook as a Reconnaissance Outlet. Facebook can and should be used for both competitive and client intelligence. Distributors should research prospects and clients regularly – a tactic that can help open the door to sales possibilities.

"You want to check out your competitors' pages too," says Potter. "You can learn things that give you an edge."

VIEW the A&P Master Images (asi/102019) Facebook page at www.facebook.com/MasterYourImage.

Sales Rx for RFPs

11 ways to succeed at the request-for-proposal process.

By Shane Dale

The desire to win every order, every time is a fundamental trait of every great salesperson. But, as Kelly Stone has learned, some clients are worth pursuing, while some just aren't – and that goes for RFPs, too.

"Everybody wants to hit a home run, and people always try to when they see the RFPs. But you really need to dig through," says Stone, owner of The Idea Box powered by Proforma (asi/300094).

It's critical to grasp what specifically is involved in an RFP-related project, so you can determine if it's worth your effort. "Find out if you've got the bandwidth to handle what they need, and make sure it's going to be profitable for you," Stone says. "You've got to be able to make a living at it, too."

With that advice in mind, here are 11 tips to help you figure out what RFPs to tackle and – if you go all-in – how you can gain a winning edge on other bidders.

1. Read RFPs Thoroughly

It sounds simple, but Danon Middleton, vice president of merchandising and program accounts at distributor Summit Group (asi/339116), is amazed at the number of people who respond to RFPs that they probably shouldn't spend their time on. What's their big mistake? Glancing at RFPs instead of studying them.

"In the event that you've never worked with this client before, you want to read

through the RFP and do some research on the client, because if you make the decision to move forward on the RFP, you're going to invest a minimum of 40 hours, and that's a lot of time and resources," she says.

If you could better spend those hours winning sales elsewhere, take pause. "We all know that, in this industry, time is money," says Middleton. "So many people have that reaction that they think, 'Oh my gosh, I have to respond to this.' Well, you don't have to respond to it. Make sure it's a good fit before you invest that time."

2. Don't Be Afraid To Pass

If you don't have the right resources for an RFP project or if you're unsure you can make a reasonable profit, Stone thinks you should move on. "I've definitely passed on RFPs where the requirements were just absolutely ridiculous, at least in my eyes," she says. "What's it going to take to make it work and make it profitable? At the end of the day, we all have to make money."

3. Ask Yourself Tough Questions

Besides measuring profitability, Scott Gingold, owner of Gingold Greater Business Solutions, believes distributors should consider other factors, too, in deciding on RFPs. Here are some questions Gingold suggests you ask yourself: "Are you



a small company competing with mostly large competitors? Are you on the same level? Can you provide all of the services required in the RFP without straining your company or over-promising?"

After that, there's one final crucial question Gingold recommends asking to ensure the wellbeing of your company going forward: "Will securing the business from the RFP really help your business?"

4. Build Relationships

Mike Michalowicz, author of *Profit First* and founder of Profit First Professionals, says who you know is just important to a successful RFP as the numbers behind it.

"Build a relationship with the key influencer. All things equal, people work with people

they like – and when things aren't equal, in many cases they still find a way to work with the people they like," he says.

Stone suggests using every networking tool at your disposal to open the RFP dialogue. "Look at LinkedIn and see who some of the salespeople are. Look at industry publications. Get in touch with a few people within the company," she says. "If you have the additional resources within your organization, definitely tap into their insights and their expertise. They always say it takes a village. That's very true."

5. Dig Deeper

Through his experiences, Michalowicz has seen times when RFPs offer up conflicting information. Never ignore inconsistencies. "Dig into questions that



go beyond the RFP parameters. Ask details about some of the specifics. Make sure there's clarity on all the elements," he says.

Ken Thoreson, president of Acumen Management Group, says prying for specifics won't just help you get a better idea of what the client is looking for – it'll be a relationship builder. Clients will quickly see you're working hard on their behalf.

"The purpose of the questions is to give the sales organization an opportunity to build a relationship with the client, and to show the client that you're working diligently on the document," he says.

6. Go Beyond Yes & No

Middleton believes answering questions beyond the minimum requirements will benefit both

you and the potential client.

"If the question is written in a way that could be answered with just a yes or a no, don't just say yes or no," she says. "There may be some situations where all you can do is say yes or no – but if you're responding via a Word document, you want to just provide a couple of sentences."

7. Use the Client's Language

If you want to win an RFP, you need to show clients you can relate to them. Using the right terms can only help. "Speak their language by using the language specified in the RFP," Michalowicz says. "An RFP, particularly a technical one, will have unique and specific language."

For example, you may

typically use the term "rotating coupler," but your client may prefer the term "modulating coupler." So, in your response, "make sure that you refer to it as a modulating coupler, and then specify the details," Michalowicz says. "If you exclude their language, they won't realize you are offering what they need."

8. Make Your Response Pop

Michalowicz thinks distributors have to find a way to make their RFP responses pop off the page. Appearing ordinary or average is a losing formula. "An RFP doesn't need to be a dry, mechanical document. Make it engaging. Use graphics and images. Make people want to read it," he says.

If you're proposing services, for example, Michalowicz suggests including pictures of the team that will be providing them. You should also include high-res photos of the promo products you're sourcing. "Also, produce graphics around things such as performance parameters, improvements and rollout projections," Michalowicz says.

Thoreson believes adding stylish touches through cover materials, a colorful first page and even a screen shot of the client's website will help your RFP response stand out. "A lot of RFPs are sent out in a form with five pages and 25 questions that need to be answered," he says. "All the documents look identical. Your job is to see how you can dress it up by showing some extra work, some extra pictures – that kind of stuff."

9. Reference Previous Successes

Stone says referencing "champions" within your response – especially those connected with the prospective client – will

help boost your chances of winning the order.

"You can speak to successes that you've had within the company, and when you've got somebody to attach that to, it just quantifies your statement," she says. "You want to find as many coaches and champions within the account as possible. They know and trust you. You really want to tap into as many of those people as you can."

10. Don't Compromise on Costs

Gingold recommends that distributors avoid the temptation of offering discounted goods and services in order to win an RFP. "When you compromise from the start, it becomes an expectation throughout the relationship," he says. "The only acceptable compromise might be something like a shift in hours of operation or point of contact."

The bottom line: While a discount for pre-payment is one thing, "a discount to try and beat a competitor is another, and a bad thing," Gingold says. Your main goal in an RFP should be to differentiate your business based on customer experience, quality, products and services.

11. Perform an End-of-Year Analysis

Gingold believes evaluating your RFP success, or lack thereof, at the end of each calendar year is a must in order to budget your time more effectively heading into the next 12 months.

"Every December, look back at the year and see how many RFPs you responded to, and how many you won," he says. "If it is not at least 50%, think twice as to how many RFPs you will respond to in the new year."

Be in the spotlight. Wear adidas.

Nothing gets noticed quite like adidas, so grab the spotlight with
imprintable apparel, hats and bags from S&S Activewear.

Your brand will thank you for the attention.

With fully stocked distribution centers in Robbinsville, NJ,
Santa Fe Springs, CA, Bolingbrook, IL and our newest warehouse in
Olathe, KS, we're ready to ship on a moment's notice, coast-to-coast.



S&S

ACTIVEWEAR

ssactivewear.com

asi/84358

Apparel

Case Study • Market Spotlight • Decoration • Showcase

Case Study

Nonprofit Turns to Tees for Growth

This disaster relief organization partnered with Southwest Airlines to create co-branded apparel.

By Andraya Vantrease

All Hands Volunteers has made waves in the humanitarian sector, responding to some of the world's most devastating natural disasters in the 10 years since its inception. The nonprofit organization helps clear rubble, secure damaged infrastructure, rebuild homes, schools, municipal buildings and uplift communities in every corner of the world. It has completed over 60 projects in the U.S., the Philippines, Haiti, Japan, Thailand and other countries.

Recently, the corporate team has put an emphasis on branding to grow the organization and raise money for its domestic and international projects. "We have a four-pronged approach when it comes to using branded merchandise," says Sara Hannafin, director of engagement at Mat-tapoisett, MA-based All Hands. "We use it to attract corporate sponsors, incentivize volunteers to fundraise, promote the organization internationally and produce branded media like pictures and videos for even more exposure."

As part of a three-year partnership with Southwest Airlines, All Hands Volunteers prints the airline's logo on the sleeve of every

shirt given to U.S. volunteers – more than 20,000 last year. The airline's logo and information is also included on the nonprofit's website, in newsletters, on Twitter and Facebook, and at all of the nonprofit's events.

"A large part of the agreement was related to branding and helping to promote Southwest among our thousands of volunteers across the country," Hannafin says. "Southwest does a big corporate volunteer day where many of its employees come work with us, and it's nice to be able to give them a co-branded shirt to promote All Hands and Southwest. It's a win-win for both organizations."

On each project, volunteers raise money by reaching out to their networks through an online fundraising portal, describing their experience and how the money will help. Hooded sweatshirts and long-sleeve shirts are given to volunteers who pass the \$1,000 fundraising threshold. "The higher-end apparel is a big motivator for people because it's different than the shirts they wear in the field, and everyone on the project knows that person is a big contributor," Hannafin



A volunteer stays germ-free on the work site in South Carolina, where All Hands Volunteers has helped gut and renovate houses after record flooding in October 2015.

says. "It's a great way to recognize the volunteers and a small price to pay for people going above and beyond for us."

When it comes to international projects, travelers make up the majority of the volunteer community, which provides countless opportunities for global promotion. Staff members give printed T-shirts to departing volunteers, encouraging them to wear them proudly as they continue their journeys, influencing other travelers

along the way to volunteer.

"We also have all our volunteers wear branded shirts and tanks while working, so it gives us a united look in the community, and our media team is able to produce Facebook pictures and videos that I can use to attract corporate partnerships and sponsorships," Hannafin says. "We started most of this heavy branding about a year and a half ago, and it has completely changed the way we present ourselves."

Market Spotlight

Let's Get Physical

How one distributor used apparel to expand its sales with a fitness client.

By Sara Lavenduski

When Puurnafit, a fitness education and yoga equipment company, needed professional help developing its website and e-commerce store, the staff looked to City Apparel in Findlay, OH.

“We had long discussions with them, and, in addition to helping them with e-commerce, we also became their warehousing and fulfillment source,” says Kara Ward, corporate image consultant for City Apparel. “We decided to go from one

core product to a full line of apparel and promotional products to promote the brand. We went through a lengthy sample period, testing all kinds of fitness and wellness pieces before making decisions.”

Ward and her team undertook extensive legwork to seek out specific suppliers at trade shows and events to make sure the client received exactly what they wanted at affordable prices, and with quality embellishment. “We worked directly with our

suppliers on virtual samples and spec samples to make sure that each piece was shipped exactly as we expected,” Ward says.

The branded T-shirts sold at the company’s e-commerce store are screen printed with PMS-matched colors that meet the client’s strict graphic standards. “We really had to work to get them right, since the colors would be competing with the dark gray garment,” Ward adds.

So far, Puurnafit has sold hundreds of its custom-labeled,

USA-made T-shirts and more than 500 Body Beams, yoga mats, water bottles and workout towels. City Apparel is currently working with Puurnafit to develop a full fitness line that will include moisture-wicking workout tops, yoga pants and leggings, all custom-branded with the client’s logo.

“When designing fitness apparel and accessories, it’s important that they be something you would work out in and use yourself,” Ward says.



City Apparel designed an e-commerce store and branded merchandise, including a custom-labeled USA-made T-shirt and yoga mat, for Puurnafit, which offers health and wellness education and an e-commerce store offering fitness gear.



by **BIC** graphic



SUMMER FUN HAS BEGUN!

#41025 | SPF-15 Lip Balm
with Leash

As Low As
\$1.49 (C)

NEW



#45791
Poly-Clean
Bottle® - 27 oz.

As Low As
\$1.83 (C)



#45413 | Front Runner Cap

As Low As
\$3.47 (C)

NEW



#26051 | Cool Vibes Dark
Lenses Sunglasses - Full Color

As Low As
\$4.25 (C)

NEW



#15786
Adventure
Dry Sack 5L

As Low As
\$7.79 (C)



#45009
Captain's Chair

As Low As
\$17.86 (C)



Visit bicgraphic.com

BIC®, the BIC Graphic logo, bicgraphic.com, Good Value® (logo) and all related trademarks, logos, and trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of BIC Graphic and/or its affiliates or licensors in the United States and other countries and may not be used without written permission. ©2016 BIC Graphic USA, Clearwater, FL 33760.

 **Good Value** BEST FOR LESS

Decoration

Add Value With a Custom-Built Hoodie

Sublimation and embroidery both have a high perceived value, so combining the two into one garment can increase the value of an item.

By Theresa Hegel

Wondering how unique decoration techniques can help to enhance the perception of a promotional apparel item? We asked Norman Bishop, president of Bishop Garment Co. (asi/40585) about this distinctive custom hoodie the company created for Google.

Q: Who created the design?

Norman Bishop: We created a similar design for one of the Harry Potter movies. A distributor showed the Harry Potter hoodie to Google, who liked the components in that hoodie. So we created a Google-specific hoodie incorporating those elements based on their feedback. It was a collaborative effort between the distributor, the client and our design team.

Sublimation and embroidery work well together because they're complementary techniques.

Q: What techniques were used?

NB: The stripes on the sleeves were selected to match two of the client's Pantone colors. We then used a large embroidery across the front chest for the client's logo and incorporated Google's icon through sublimation into the hood lining.

Q: Why do these techniques work well together?

NB: Sublimation and embroidery work well together because they're complementary techniques. They are both perceived as having a high value. The juxtaposition is also interesting, in that embroidery is a traditional technique and sublimation is a newer, more technologically advanced technique. The fact that the sublimated lining can't be accomplished on a finished, inventoried item adds to that higher perceived value, because the recipient knows that this particular item was created and customized specifically to incorporate that engineered logo technique.

Q: Who would buy this?

NB: Any clients who want their branded merchandise to stand out from the competition would choose a customized item like this. It screams to the recipient that the garment is not cookie-cutter, but instead designed from scratch, customized and built to



Bishop Garment Co. created this custom hoodie for Google.

order. Any company that considers itself a market leader or a supplier of premium products could incorporate this wearable into its branded merchandise program.

Q: What equipment and supplies were used?

NB: We worked with a traditional cotton-poly blend for the main body fabric of the garment and used a 100% polyester lining that could be sublimated for the hood. We used the latest roll-to-roll sublimation equipment that can achieve a 720 DPI resolution for the hood lining and standard embroidery equipment, along with Madeira thread for the embroidery.

Q: What are some takeaway tips?

NB: When you're selling a cus-

tomized decoration technique that can't be accomplished on an off-the-shelf inventoried item, you need to stress the importance of differentiating the client from competitors and truly elevating the client's brand through customization. Consider employing the following two sales tools:

1. Put together a virtual mockup showing how the client's specific logo can be incorporated through various decoration techniques, like sublimation directly onto garment panels prior to sewing. We tried to show techniques that cannot be achieved on inventoried items off the shelf.

2. A sample of a similar random piece, or a customized piece specifically made for the client is the most powerful sales tool.

ACHIEVE THE UNTHINKABLE

You can do it. We can help.

With iPROMOTEu, you'll achieve
more than you ever thought possible.

DON'T HOLD BACK. GO FOR IT.

To learn more call 800.850.3370 or visit www.iPROMOTEu.com



ipromoteu[™]
the smart choice.

YOU'RE IN CHARGE, WE WORK FOR YOU.

Below are just some of the ways iPROMOTEu can benefit you and your business so you can achieve more than you ever thought possible:

ORDER FINANCING

Credit limits and cash flow issues won't stop you from bringing in new business. Financial backing from iPROMOTEu removes the limitations that prevent you from servicing and maintaining larger accounts. Make your business unstoppable.

BACK OFFICE SUPPORT

We believe the number one reason preventing distributors from making more money is the time-draining work related to invoicing, following up on orders, and getting invoices paid. Now that iPROMOTEu is handling these back office tasks, how will you spend your extra time? Selling? Playing? Sleeping? Ah, the choices.

SALES AND MARKETING

From custom email newsletters and personalized catalogs to one-on-one consulting with a professional industry expert, you can take your marketing efforts to new heights. Tilt the playing field in your favor with new marketing knowledge and the help you need to present your brand prominently and professionally. Get ready to be noticed.

TECHNOLOGY

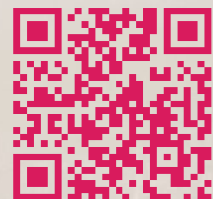
Get connected and stay connected to your business, your customers and your peers with iPROMOTEu's websites and order management system. Expand your web presence and plug into our easy-to-use software to manage your business effectively.

PRINT AND PACKAGING

Diversify and expand your services by offering custom print and packaging solutions to your clients. Receive outstanding coaching and guidance from iPROMOTEu's print and packaging expert. By using our expansive network of print vendors, you'll reap the rewards from this practical and profitable complement to your current areas of expertise.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Need production-ready artwork in a hurry? No problem. We offer high quality graphic design services and quick turnaround times so you won't miss your in-hands date.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO
WATCH A SHORT VIDEO
ABOUT iPROMOTEu



TALK THAT PROVES WE WALK THE WALK.

"With iPROMOTEu, I'm writing more business than I ever have before. My only regret is that I didn't find iPROMOTEu sooner."

- ART (NEW JERSEY)

"Check out iPROMOTEu. It will change your life like it did for me."

- ANDREW (TENNESSEE)

"Affiliating with iPROMOTEu is the best decision I've ever made. My life is easier, my business is more profitable, and I'm having a great time."

- KEVIN (CALIFORNIA)

"I can never thank iPROMOTEu enough for everything they've done to help me be successful."

- JOHN (NEW YORK)

"We love iPROMOTEu. They make everything easy."

- SHAWNA (OHIO)

"iPROMOTEu has been the single best business decision I've ever made. I can now focus on my sales, be more creative, and have more time for myself as well."

- CHRISTIANE (UTAH)



NO OTHER COMPANY HAS AS MUCH ENERGY, ENTHUSIASM AND CAMARADERIE AS iPROMOTEu. CHECK US OUT TODAY!



At iPROMOTEu we have extensive, impressive and effective resources to help you grow your business and stay ahead of the competition, including: discounted pricing and other benefits from preferred vendors; order financing; order follow-up and back-office support; invoicing and accounts payable/receivable services; sales and marketing support; advanced and constantly evolving technology; virtual assistant program; payment advance program; professional development and networking opportunities to keep you learning and connected; and so much more.

Unlike other industry organizations, with iPROMOTEu there are no non-compete provisions or other restrictive provisions that prevent you from doing business how you want, when you want, and with whom you want. We're here to support you, not control you. You're in charge, we work for you.

iPROMOTEu is one of the largest, fastest growing and most dynamic distributor organizations in the promotional products industry. Approximately 1,000 experienced independent promotional products distributors and their salespeople are affiliated with iPROMOTEu. Find out the many reasons why iPROMOTEu is the industry's best economic and lifestyle arrangement, and why iPROMOTEu and its affiliates enjoy an excellent reputation for professionalism and success.



Discover the many ways iPROMOTEu can benefit you and your business at

www.iPROMOTEu.com

Showcase Caps for Sale

A collection of distinctive caps and hats for your next promotional program.



1. **Apollo Group** (asi/73392), www.apolloemb.com; 2. **Outdoor Cap Co.** (asi/75420), www.outdoorcap.com/promoproducts; 3. **Sunday Afternoons** (asi/90134), www.sundayafternoons.com; 4. **FITS Accessories** (asi/71107), www.pedigree.ca; 5. **Philadelphia Rapid Transit** (asi/77945), www.phillyrapid.com; 6. **SanMar** (asi/84863), www.sanmar.com; 7. **Fersten Worldwide** (asi/53974), www.fersten.com; 8. **Assertive Creativity LLC** (asi/37166), www.assertivecreativity.com

THE ELECTION CONNECTION

Investing millions in promotional products helped fuel the unexpected rise of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders – and reinforced promo's essential role in the race for our nation's highest office.



Two political outsiders – **one a successful businessman**, the other **a long-time independent** – run for office. The former’s presence in the race is regarded as an open act of ego stroking and instant fodder for the media circus. The latter is a virtual unknown among large blocks of voters, and someone so lightly regarded that his main opponent won’t even mention his name. And yet, through concerted **marketing efforts** that include savvy messaging and a heavy investment in **promotional products**, both wildly surpass expectations. The businessman is the unexpected **party front runner**. The now-former independent has become a **surprisingly formidable opponent**.

So how much credit do promotional products deserve for the astonishing election success of **Donald Trump** and **Bernie Sanders**? More than you might think.

In this funhouse mirror of a presidential election, candidate promotional items were warped into one of the notable curiosities. Most prominently, media outlets took note last fall of Trump's substantial spending on hats, a pervasive branding blitz that turned the business mogul's "Make America Great Again" ball caps into a cultural conversation piece.

Yet even as the conversation shifted to election results and delegate counts, candidates like Trump and Sanders have continued their rampant spending on "collateral" (the term used by campaigns and political insiders). Through February's primaries, Trump has spent \$3.3 million, accounting for 9.8% of his total campaign spending. Sanders spent a blazing \$7.5 million on promotional products, which makes up 6% of his total spending.

Other top candidates haven't exactly penny-pinched on promo items: Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton has spent \$1.3 million through February, and top Republican challenger Ted Cruz spent \$1.1 million. But as financial figures from the campaign show (see chart), the proportion of their investment pales greatly compared to Trump and Sanders.

Even if neither candidate wins their party's nomination, Trump and Sanders will still be regarded as the surprise successes of this election – accomplishments that champions of promotional products can confidently point to.

"A lot of political consultants will discourage candidates from buying collateral and say it's a waste of money," says Steve Grubbs, co-founder of Victorystore.com (asi/352041) and a longtime political strategist who most recently served as Iowa chief strategist for Rand Paul's presidential campaign. "I say to them that yes, there are higher priorities, but if you use it wisely, collateral can help you win an election. And I think Trump and Sanders have made that case."

Each candidate invested heavily in collateral from the earliest stages of their campaigns. Trump spent more on hats and branded items from July through September last year (a total of \$910,000) than any other part of his campaign – a tidbit that gained national headlines. But so did Sanders, who in the same period of time spent over \$3 million on "campaign paraphernalia." Since then, Sanders has continued to pay well for promo items, but has also poured in staggering amounts of money into digital and television advertising. Meanwhile, Trump continues to run a unique campaign, perpetuating his significant reliance on promo while skimping on fields like polling, TV advertising and even campaign staffing – categories that candidates historically have lavished millions on.

How have those strategies paid off? In Sanders' case, the Democrat has built a fundraising behemoth (\$20 million in January, \$43 million in February and another \$44 million in March), fueled by millions of small donations from supporters. The

Vermont Senator actively initiated this large-scale political Kickstarter; after all, the reminder on his website says that the campaign is "Paid For By Bernie 2016 (not the billionaires)." Sanders' digital engagement receives a lion's share of the credit, but his campaign's promotional outreach is not only intertwined with that approach, but offers a tangible reward that would otherwise be lost on Super PACs and mega-donors.

Trump, on the other hand, has received very little donor money while funding the majority of his campaign from his vast coffers. His spending is a mere shadow of what other candidates have dropped; Trump's \$33.6 million is between a fifth and a quarter of what Hillary and Sanders have spent each. It's a remarkable break from tradition, where the candidate with the most campaign money wins nine out of 10 times, and radical enough that many political experts still wonder whether Trump's lean campaign will still lead to his demise.

Trump certainly has the financial means to spend his opponents into oblivion, but he's refrained from doing so. So how is he leading? For starters, his celebrity aura and instant name recognition gave him an immediate advantage that he's exploited mercilessly. His controversial statements and endlessly quotable tweets have cast a siren's spell on the media. While Trump has spent just \$10 million on paid advertising through February (outspent by five other Republican candidates), he has earned \$1.9 billion worth of "free advertising" through media coverage – more than two and a half times what Clinton has earned.

"Whatever you think of Trump, it's hard not to consider him a master marketer," says Chris Russell, a New Jersey political consultant and strategist that has worked on a large number of congressional and state legislature campaigns. "He understands how to get himself front and center in the media. He understands how to control media cycles."

And he has certainly put that marketing acumen to use. What item did he wear in a battery of appearances as hundreds of media camera eyes were trained on him? A red ballcap, produced by LA-based distributor Ace Specialties (asi/103533) that reads "Make America Great Again." By August, searches for the Trump slogan ramped up and periodically spiked throughout the fall. "The hat became an iconic thing representing him because he had it on all the time," says Meaghan Burdick, the director of marketing and merchandise for President Barack Obama's presidential campaigns. And even though Trump retired the hat

POWERFULLY

GRIPPING

PROMOTIONS

5" Circle EZ Vinyl Gripper

As low as \$. 45(C)

Item# V5C



5" Shaped EZ Vinyl Gripper

As low as \$. 47(C)

Item# V5ST

4" NO-SLIP Vinyl Coasters

As low as \$. 29(C)

Item# VC4C



5" Circle Classic Rubber Jar Opener

As low as \$. 53(C)

Item# 5C

5" Classic Rubber Shaped Jar Opener

As low as \$. 57(C)

Item# 5HY



SAGE
A+ RATED

ASI/35730 - SAGE 50332
PPAI 111257 - UPIC AMER0022










AMERICANNA
PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS

888-747-5550
americanna.com

Money Well Spent

Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders clearly outclass the rest of the presidential field in both promo spend and the percentage of their total campaign spending.

CANDIDATE	REPUBLICANS					DEMOCRATS	
							
	Donald Trump	Ted Cruz	Rand Paul	Marco Rubio	John Kasich	Bernie Sanders	Hillary Clinton
PROMO SPENDING	\$3.3 MILLION	\$1.1 MILLION	\$483,500	\$367,000	\$160,000	\$7.5 MILLION	\$1.3 MILLION
CAMPAIGN SPENDING	\$33.6 MILLION	\$110.5 MILLION	\$22 MILLION	\$127 MILLION	\$31.9 MILLION	\$124.9 MILLION	\$176.2 MILLION
PROMO %	9.8%	1.0%	2.2%	0.3%	0.5%	6%	0.7%

from public appearances from November to January and has worn it sparingly since, the message has stuck; searches for the slogan peaked by late February as Trump began winning primaries.

In the case of both candidates, their actions and impressive commitment to promotional products have helped to strike a nerve. Each has captured a fervent base of supporters that feel maligned, overlooked and previously unspoken for. Devotees of all candidates won't hesitate to show their support through apparel and yard signs, but owners of Trump and Sanders gear appear to carry a special badge of pride – an open acknowledgement of their outsider leanings. Promotional products have emboldened them to express their feelings. “[Trump supporters] don't want to be part of the Washington establishment,” says Dave McNeer, owner of Maxim Advertising, a Newton, IA-based distributor that has produced knit hats and other promotional items for Trump during the election. “And boy, if you're wearing a Trump cap or a Trump T-shirt, you're telling people that.”

Barack Obama became president under the banner of “Hope and Change,” and at least one thing proved indisputably true about those promises – the president's victorious efforts in 2008 and 2012 completely rede-

fined modern campaigning.

Many of the elements were plainly visible. The visual accoutrements of the Obama campaign – the now-iconic poster by street artist Shepard Fairey, the all-encapsulating “O” logo – exponentially raised the bar on how presidential candidates incorporated graphic design and creative branding. (Unsurprisingly, a cavalcade of logos was unleashed at the beginning of this election.) Also, the president's complete embrace of digital and social media (just one example from 2008: Obama had 25 times more Twitter followers than John McCain) heralded a fundamental shift in the way that candidates

and elected officials could win over voters.

Other strategies were less discernible but equally instrumental. The Obama campaign's curation and use of databases (first started years before Obama's presidential run) was light years ahead of other candidates. Four years later, the campaign shepherded a massive big data effort to segment voters into targeted groups and find their hidden motivators. The results were transformative. Political campaigns had always been marketing campaigns under a different guise, but now they were customized and personalized – “not mass marketing like all political campaigns had been in the past,” says Dr. Lisa Spiller, a professor of marketing at Christopher Newport University and the author of *Branding the Candidate: Marketing Strategies to Win Your Vote*. Summing up Obama's strategies in total, Spiller says, “Never before in American political history has any candidate used so many of the modern marketing techniques that we have.”

These crucial strategies were also applied to his official promotional products. Traditionally in past elections, purchased merchandise (not including free giveaways at campaign stops) was simply a transactional exchange – the buyers a mystery to the campaign even as they ardently waved signs and wore shirts at the candidate's rally. Obama for America, by contrast, devised a trackable system that registered every person who

“There are higher priorities, but if you use it wisely, collateral can help you win an election.”

Steve Grubbs, Victorystore.com

purchased an Obama item.

The information was invaluable. It allowed the campaign to mobilize supporters by persistently following up with encouragements to volunteer and donate. It offered crucial access to data to help create increasingly specific marketing messages. And it allowed the money from the purchases to be funneled directly to the campaign as direct contributions. (If the Obama campaign wasn't the first to do this, it was certainly the first on such a immense scale). "We knew it was radically different from what had been done previously," says Burdick, who has spent 15 years as a successful political fundraiser and marketer. All told, sales of promotional merchandise raised nearly \$77 million for the Obama campaign — \$37 million in 2008 and nearly \$40 million four years later.

The campaign also constructed a robust loyalty program that utilized promotional products to motivate volunteers. Housed under my.barackobama.com (and often called MyBO for short), the network would award points for a variety of efforts (posting yard signs, writing blogs, etc.), and reward members with merchandise as they reached certain tiers. According to Spiller, MyBO members would also be entered into special drawings like front-row seats at an Obama rally. As Spiller and her co-author

HOW TO SELL TO CAMPAIGNS

How much is a vote worth to your business? Find out by selling political promotional products with these endorsed tips:

Consider Your Campaign Contact: Presidential candidates might have an in-house design team, but that's rarely the case otherwise. "There is a point person, but it's usually a chief of staff or somebody else that has multiple jobs and this is not the primary focus of their efforts," says Randy LeFaivre, president of D.C.-based MetroLogo (asi/268938), which has worked on campaigns for Congressman John Delaney and the Republican National Committee. In those situations, distributors become trusted partners by coordinating design, sourcing and logistics.

Follow the Money: "The higher the level of the campaign, the more access they have to funding, so they tend to buy more items," says Danielle Lum, a marketing consultant for American Solutions for Business (asi/120075) who has extensive experience working with state and federal candidates in Hawaii. Campaign managers are conditioned to avoid significant spending on collateral until they raise enough money to fund other key areas first.

American-Made Is Essential: No candidate should be caught with promo items from elsewhere if American alternatives are available. "USA-made is an American jobs issue, against outsourcing, and is true across all party lines," says Joe Fuld, founder of The Campaign Workshop, which primarily serves Democratic candidates. Beyond USA-made, Democrats prefer the union bug label to show their support of organized labor.

Make Rare Exceptions: Branded phone cases have been extremely popular this election, but "I challenge anyone to find a phone case that's made in the USA," says Steve Grubbs, co-founder of Victorystore.com (asi/352041). As the national store manager for Rand Paul's presidential run, Grubbs and the campaign team decided that sourcing outside the U.S. was unavoidable to stock the candidate's wide-ranging store.

Don't Wait Too Late to Collect: Lori Ferber Collectibles, a political memorabilia company, delivered product for a senate campaign eight years ago — but then the candidate pulled out and never paid. "Now," says co-owner Steve Ferber, "we either get paid in full or a significant portion paid up front."

Do you want to sell your distributorship?

We can help you sell your distributorship quickly and easily.

"You have exceeded my expectations regarding this process. Thanks for being so efficient, attentive and supportive. What else can I say . . . a dream come true!" — Barb Feyka - Capstone Promotions



www.TheDistributorExchange.com • 844-251-8544 (toll free)

All inquiries are strictly confidential.

Jeff Bergner write in their book, members were ranked against each other “and a spirit of friendly competition ignited to see which members were making the greatest difference for Obama’s campaign.” All told, 70,000 MyBO fundraising pages generated more than \$35 million for the campaign.

The design of the promotional products themselves began to change as well. Departing from the typical array of boxy cuts and static design, Obama’s apparel offerings featured a contemporary look and feel with specific tailored cuts for women and children. And the campaign wasn’t afraid to take creative gambles, such as fashion pieces designed by high-end designers that were priced well above typical political merch. “We pushed the limits of what we could do because he had more of a celebrity-like following,” Burdick says.

Not surprisingly, the Obama for America campaign spent freely on promotional products to execute these strategies. In 2012, it paid more than \$6.7 million on campaign store merchandise, four times as much as Republican opponent Mitt Romney.

This wholehearted embrace of promotional products was very different from the complicated feelings many campaigns have about the medium. While rally giveaways and merchandise offerings are viewed as essen-

“Never before in American political history has any candidate like Barack Obama used so many of the modern marketing techniques that we have.”

Dr. Lisa Spiller,
Christopher Newport University

tial, strategists are typically skeptical over their effectiveness at reaching new voters. A study last year about yard signs helped to shed light. The authors found that candidate yard signs increased voter share by 1.7% on average – not a massive influence, but cer-

tainly enough to swing a close election. “We were surprised by these findings,” Alex Coppock, one of the co-authors of the study, told Politico, “because the conventional wisdom is that lawn signs don’t do much – they’re supposed to be a waste of money and time. Many campaign consultants think that signs ‘preach to the choir’ and not much else.”

Judging by this year’s offerings, many candidates are singing a different tune. Hillary Clinton’s store features a healthy variety of fashionable and customized apparel, including segmented offerings (Granite Staters for Hillary, Latinos for Hillary) and a “Made for History” collection of T-shirts from big-name designers. (One such shirt reads “Love Trumps Hate.”) Rainbow-hued pride offerings are available on both Clinton and Sanders’ stores. Rand Paul’s store, run by Grubbs and Victory Store, not only features a startling amount of variety (beer steins, bag toss games, headphones, autographed Constitutions), but also edgy fare (a T-shirt to protest sex trafficking) and humorous items (a shirt that reads “Don’t Drone Me, Bro!”).

This rash of creativity isn’t just a result of greater belief in promotional products. Just as important, the arrival of digital printing and on-demand fulfillment removed the barriers that stunted creativity. According to Grubbs, campaigns previously would

A satisfied customer is the best business strategy of all. –Michael LeBoeuf

“As a result of my retirement I recently sold our Distributorship after 23 years in the business. With the professional guidance of John Schimmoller from the business valuation to the final closing everything was handled with the highest level of integrity. I can simply say *Certified Marketing Consultants* did an outstanding job helping me get on with my retirement while at the same time finding a qualified buyer.”

–Paul Haggerty, Former owner of STAKKERS, Inc.



22-1100578765-009 0516

Jeff Meyer | John Schimmoller | Jamie Watson

CERTIFIED MARKETING CONSULTANTS, LTD

260.637.6643 | info@certifiedmarketing.com

Licensed Merger & Acquisition Specialist of the Advertising Specialty Institute®

asi/44526 www.certifiedmarketing.com
www.facebook.com/certifiedmarketing



BRINGING BACK MADE-IN-USA

In a January meeting with The New York Times Editorial Board, Donald Trump promised a 45% tax on all products imported from China as a way to grow American jobs. Trump backed off slightly from that figure in a March debate but still assured tariffs and punitive actions would be placed on China, as the Republican frontrunner continues to make domestic job growth a central part of his campaign. But will a tax work? And what needs to be done to grow U.S. manufacturing jobs?

Trump's posturing does hint at the fragile state of American manufacturing, which lost 5 million jobs from 2000-2014. The specter of reshoring – bringing manufacturing jobs back that were shipped overseas – gained momentum a few years ago, but the actual results have been mixed. Studies show that U.S. manufacturing imports have increased beyond their pre-recession peak, and while 217,000 manufacturing jobs were added in 2014, only 27,000 were added last year.

Proponents of American manufacturing appreciate Trump's intentions but don't agree with the methods. "I think there is a space between giving China a blank check, which is pretty close to our existing policy, and the 45% tariff," says Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing. Paul supports free trade but feels that the United States could exercise leverage and more tightly enforce its trade policy with China.

How can jobs be brought back? Scott sees a number of potential initiatives, including creating a more competitive dollar in foreign markets and building up a training ecosystem to replace the country's aging manufacturing workforce.

As it applies to the promotional products industry, Michael M. Woody, president of International Marketing Advantages Inc., believes industry companies have to drive the change. There are factors in their favor. Demand for customized products with

shorter lead times and a heightened emphasis on supply chain transparency will allow Made-in-USA companies to carve out a successful place. "I believe that supply chains are going to contract geographically in order to deal with the need for speed," says Woody, who has written about the promotional products exodus from the U.S. and potential return back in a book titled *American Dragon: Winning the Global Manufacturing War Using the Universal Principles of Fewer, Faster, and Finer*.

Woody predicts there will be increased reshoring and near shoring in the future but warns it will be a long process. He also cautions that trying to recapture the peak of American manufacturing is far from feasible. "It's not a question of winning everything back from China," he says. "We don't need to do that. We need to win just our share. If we take 10% back from China, that's going to make a huge difference in our manufacturing base."

have to buy 500 shirts at a time and run up inventory; once the election was over, the losing candidates would dump their excess inventory in the landfill. "That was a bad system," Grubbs admits. "It cost the campaigns money and it created a lot of waste."

With digital capabilities, Grubbs says, "It allows us to be a lot more creative and do crazy things that were never possible before." That's exceedingly important in high-profile elections. At the local level, promotional products simply need to drive name recognition; a familiar name may easily be the deciding factor when someone casts a vote for town supervisor.

But as the campaign air gets more rarified – state legislature, congressional, presidential – and simple name identification alone becomes devalued, promotional items must drive a message. Last year during Paul's presidential bid, his campaign conceived and sold "Hillary Hard Drives" that played off of Clinton's email scandal. Victory Store purchased old busted hard drives, printed a funny label and sold them each for a \$100 contribution. And as developments during the election occur, candidates now have the wherewithal to capitalize on instant controversy. Locked in a protracted fight with Trump, Ted Cruz's campaign capitalized on the scrutiny of Trump University with shirts that read "I Applied to Trump University ... And All I Got Was This T-Shirt." Millions of buyers and recipients of campaign gear feel differently.

Presidential branding is as old as the rings of the hickory trees that symbolized the toughness of Andrew Jackson. Inventive promotional products have centuries-long roots too; those same trees were felled, carved and then doled out as brooms, sticks and poles to rouse voter support for "Old Hickory." The need for a message is nothing new.

In the most recent presidential elections, digital technology and social media have completely altered the dynamics. Voter attention has widened but also narrowed, becoming more cognizant of the latest "controversy," but less concerned with the nuts and bolts of policy. The media, too, has picked up on that shift and catered to the demand. Russell recalls working with a candidate who put together a detailed plan for economic growth. "He couldn't get anyone to cover it with any kind of depth, because they didn't have the time," Russell says.

As a result, campaign messaging has become increasingly focused and simplistic. Dr. Jennifer Lees-Marshment says that candidates have honed in on just a couple key policies because any more will cause voters to "switch off." And by carrying them in a single overriding message – "Hope and Change," "Make America Great Again" – it gives voters a digestible idea to easily latch onto. "It's a slogan, but it's more than that – a sense of what the candidate and the product and the policy are all together," says Lees-Marshment, an associate professor of politics at

The University of Auckland in New Zealand and author and editor of 13 books. "The idea is that in this very clustered media environment, if you want to reach people, you got to have something they can understand."

Under that umbrella, promotional products become a Swiss army knife serving a multitude of needs. They garner media coverage in an increasingly desperate scramble to draw free attention. (Grubbs notes how dozens of major media outlets and websites highlighted Paul's offerings when the candidate's store was launched last year.) They align with the swelling emphasis on digital engagement, empowering (and then rewarding) everyday people to vote with their pocket books.

Perhaps most importantly, they carry an overarching message that has become the essential currency of elections. Before, political merchandise would simply feature a name of the candidate and maybe a slogan. The items were essentially a fill-in-the-blank for supporters to make their own statement.

Today, presidential campaigns more completely understand the power of the imprint. They have created in-house teams to help penetrate the furthest reaches of their supporter base. Like a handout at the door of a community meeting, promotional products set the agenda by carrying the message and guiding voters along the thematic path that campaigns have carefully constructed – a trail to lead them all the way to the White House. – Email: cmittica@asicentral.com; Twitter: @CJ_Counselor

IN THE M

Four hot sectors provide ample sales opportunities for distributors.

By John Corrigan

Residential Construction

Residential construction has been climbing since 2012, after the burst housing bubble caused a five-year downward spiral. Census data shows that monthly spending on home construction dropped to \$91 billion in May 2009, but by July 2014 had bounced back to \$187 billion. Residential building construction grew 12.8% just last year, becoming one of the 10 fastest-growing industries in small business. Contractors involved in site preparation, utility lines and mechanical equipment installation have all been growing sales since 2012. Jay Dwivedi, business consultant and president of Xinvest Consultants, expects that steady growth will continue at around 11% over the next two years.

“There is a large number of millennials entering the housing market and interest rates are low in a lot of areas of the country,” says Elizabeth Jenkins, marketing specialist at real estate lender Source Capital Funding. “With the crash of 2008 in the rearview mirror, people are feeling confident again in the idea of buying a home.”

Although the industry is experiencing an upswing, the size of the development

205%

Increase in home construction from 2009 to 2014

companies remains small, with most still being family-owned, says Marc Landis, managing partner of Phillips Nizer LLP and chair of the firm’s real estate practice. “These smaller businesses, local in scope, face lots of competition,” says Landis. “It’s exactly the type of business that needs promotional products.”

Keith Jajko, marketing manager for Closet Factory, recommends model homes as a great place to use promotional products. “New home models, or sales offices, attract a lot of foot traffic and guarantee a steady stream of eyes to see the promotional products,” Jajko says. “Secondly, people visiting are generally in a pretty good mood – they finally have the funds to get into a new home and look forward to moving in. People with a positive frame of mind can be more apt to have a positive impression by the products they see.”

NMS Properties, Inc., a Los Angeles-based real estate management firm, uses branded promotional products such as cups and keychains to “elicit a feeling of belonging.” Says Terra Andersen, director of Internet marketing for NMS Properties: “The goal is to create an all-encompassing living experience for our residents.”

“These smaller businesses, local in scope, face lots of competition. It’s exactly the type of business that needs promotional products.”

Marc Landis, Phillips Nizer LLP

THE JOE SHOW
PRODUCT PITCH

Staging model homes with logoed products is a great idea. Think of what potential home buyers would use in their current home and their possible new home. Kitchen products like jar openers, silicone spoons and spatulas could be left on kitchen counters. In a family room, consider branded blankets draped over recliners or sofas and coaster sets on a coffee table. In the garage, offer up emergency and preparedness kits to erase safety concerns.

ARKET

Cloud-Based Technology

Cloud-based technology has changed the Internet; dominant players like Google, Apple and Amazon offer a robust suite of services and apps that connect users and offer digital storage. Zach Hanlon, director of product marketing at Oracle, says cloud-based technology has all the benefits of an application or infrastructure or platform without any of the management responsibilities. Data is stored on a remote server and can be accessed from a website, which for business owners is cheaper than dealing with the costs of installing the hardware, updating it and performing security fixes.

“Companies should adopt cloud tech because it allows them to innovate and do better business,” Hanlon says. “On the flip side, you want to target those companies because those are the companies that are booming.”

The International Data Corporation (IDC) reported that investments in cloud companies are up 23% year-on-year, with \$7.6 billion worth of revenues being reported by manufacturers of equipment such as servers, storage and switches. Two-thirds of small businesses are making the switch to cloud services, says Suzie Blaszkiewicz, cloud-based software analyst and editor at GetApp, a review site of online business software. “Being able to streamline business processes, along with more accessibility and affordability, is a huge benefit of the cloud for small businesses,” Blaszkiewicz says. “These companies wouldn’t normally be able to afford on-premise solutions. The fact that cloud-based software is becoming more available

23% Increase in investments in cloud companies

“It’s almost the start of a culture – we’re a startup, we need swag with our corporate logo.”

Harry Ein, Perfection Promo

really gives them the tools that, up until about 10 years ago, were only available to the ‘big players’ who could afford expensive systems ranging in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

With the explosion of startups in not just Silicon Valley but around the United States, Harry Ein, owner of Perfection Promo (asi/232119), says his company has benefitted from two verticals: wearables and tech accessories. Those and other tech startups, he says, are often cut from the same casual cloth. “In this craze of more casual workwear, I’m seeing tons of people in American Apparel shirts,” Ein says. “It’s almost the start of a culture – we’re a startup, we need swag with our corporate logo.”

For distributors looking to win over prospective clients, Ein says to be prepared with creative and unique products that will fascinate even the tech experts. “If you’re going in and trying to sell a calendar to a tech startup in San Fran, you’re going to embarrass yourself,” Ein says

THE JOE SHOW

PRODUCT PITCH

Cloud-based firms would be smart in using products that are tech in nature. USB keys can launch company websites or special landing pages that list products and services. Bluetooth speakers and power banks are ideal because they are used with smartphones and tablets. If the companies have mobile capabilities, pens with a stylus tip are practical and useful. Finally, Ferrofluid stress relievers are fun and convey the idea that the receiver needn’t stress out about their technology needs.

Assisted Living

As the baby boomer generation enters its golden years, the assisted living industry is expected to skyrocket as more senior citizens opt for home health-care options and senior living facilities. The National Association for Home Care and Hospice says that 12 million people each year need some form of home health service. With the advancements in medicine and heightened focus on healthy living over the past several decades, the United Nations estimates that number will grow, as the amount of people over age 60 is set to triple to 2 billion by 2050.

You don't have to wait 30 years to cash in – investment bank Harris Williams & Co. says home health is a \$30 billion industry. While there were just 13 home health franchise brands in 2000, the number jumped to 56 in 2014, research firm FRANData reports. And those 56 franchise brands now operate more than 6,000 locations throughout the United States.

Brandi Kurtyka, co-founder of MyCNAJobs.com (which caters to certified nurse's assistants and caregivers), says a distributor would "clean house" in the market. "Instead of going online to find promotional products companies, people would love to go to trade shows and have a real person to talk to," says Kurtyka, whose company has offered branded scrubs and swag bags for caregivers.

Nina Shatz, brand development director at Top 40 distributor Halo Branded Solutions (asi/356000), says that in addition to the home health-care sector, senior living facilities are ripe for promotional products. "It's not a one-shot deal with these places," Shatz says. "They're always re-ordering due to new residents and annual events."

The National Investment Center for Seniors Housing & Care reported that occupancy at senior living facilities rose to 91.3% in the beginning of 2015, continuing an upward trend. There were more than 11,000 units of facilities under construction at the end of 2014, doubling the

“It’s not a one-shot deal with these places. They’re always re-ordering due to new residents and annual events.”

Nina Shatz, HALO Branded Solutions

historical average each quarter between 2008 and 2011.

With so many facilities pitted against each other, Shatz compares it to choosing which college to attend. "These people want to feel that they're sending their loved ones to the best place possible," Shatz says. "So we try to make them feel as welcome and comfortable as possible."

Shatz says putting the phone number and website address of the facility on the promotional product is crucial. Notebooks or white boards to write down appointment times or medicine schedules also help. "You want to provide a wow factor when they move in," Shatz says. "You'll have a basket waiting for them, maybe a pouch to hang from walkers, some towels or robes for more expensive facilities with spas."

In terms of the staff, Shatz says most of the facilities are owned by hotels who want to create camaraderie amongst employees. Branded uniforms to differentiate the dining staff from the nurses or a line of polos for "associate of the month" are common requests that she receives.

56 Home health franchise brands, four times more than in 2000

THE JOE SHOW

PRODUCT PITCH

Transitioning to an assisted living facility can be stressful, so adult coloring books and colored pencils provide an activity that evokes younger days and helps reduce stress. Journals will allow residents to record anything from their personal thoughts to their daily exercise routine to their diet. Socks with logoed treads keep feet warm and help avoid a slipping hazard when walking around sans shoes. Lastly, greeting cards for residents that celebrate birthdays, wedding anniversaries and the anniversary of their residency will cheer most people.

A woman in a black t-shirt and shorts is climbing a wooden wall. A man in a black t-shirt is assisting her from below, and another woman in a black t-shirt is also assisting her. They are all smiling and appear to be enjoying the activity. The background is a blurred green forest.

Geiger[®]
Brandspiration.

Team**Work***

*one of the many benefits your Geiger
Regional Sales Vice Presidents provide.*

Contact:

Peter Zeiger, MAS

401.374.3582

pzeiger@geiger.com

or visit: getwithgeiger.com

**Mud not included*

Food E-Commerce

Food may be a late addition to the e-commerce industry, but it could end up being its biggest player. Food and beverage remains the largest category in retail, with more than \$600 billion a year in sales. While those sales used to exclusively come directly from in-store transactions, that won't be the case much longer. Through 2018, online grocery sales will grow at a compound annual growth rate of 21.1%, reaching nearly \$18 billion, reports BI Intelligence. Conversely, offline grocery sales will rise by 3.1% annually during the same period. And while online sales currently make up 3% of total grocery sales, e-commerce consultant Brick Meets Click predicts that number to jump to 17% by 2024.

Food tech companies (like food delivery and online ordering apps) have been growing quickly as well, with over 300 startups currently and \$5.7 billion worth of funding last year (up 152% from the previous year), according to CB Insights.

The market appeals to customers who want convenience and a variety of options and to business owners who can rely on a cost-effective model that offers massive exposure for new brands. Josh Frey, founder of On Sale Promos, has transitioned his company into the digital age by offering an e-commerce website that lures first-time buyers into long-term relationships. Frey calls it a hybrid model. "They start online, we then take them offline, and then we put them back online," Frey says. Customers go to the site to order a product, giving their contact information to have the product shipped. That information gets tracked through an internal system so a sales rep can reach out via email to let the customer know when to expect the order. After it arrives, the rep gets feedback and follows up a few days later by asking for a referral in exchange for the customer receiving a gift.

Danita M.H. of Rated M Wine Infused Foods has used this hybrid model to considerable success. She and her team go to farmers markets and food festivals throughout Florida to offer people samples of her rasp-

21%

Annual online grocery shopping's projected growth through 2018

berry- and peach-infused wines, cocktail salts and sorbet. After taste testing, she hands out business cards and other promo products with the company's website so people can order from RatedMMM.com.

Rather than opening a storefront, Danita prefers to rely on e-commerce channels such as Amazon and her website. "We have the whole world at our feet, and people from everywhere can look at our products," Danita says. "We're in some local stores, but it's tough because once you go through all the work of getting on the shelf, now comes all the work of getting off the shelf."

Danita says she constantly develops brand awareness through consumer engagement, meeting people at events and partnering with local nonprofits to send out gift bags, physically putting the product into the consumer's hands. "We're always thinking about giveaways that make sense," Danita says, mentioning logoed sunglasses for lounging on the beach with a margarita and logoed stress balls for chefs under pressure in the kitchen.

– Email: jcorrigan@asicentral.com; Twitter: [@Notready4Radio](https://twitter.com/Notready4Radio)

"We're always thinking about giveaways that make sense."

Danita M.H.,
Rated M Wine Infused Foods

THE JOE SHOW

PRODUCT PITCH

Food e-commerce companies, especially those that deal with wine and beer, would do well with using related products in promotions. Wine glass charms, wine bottle stoppers and wine and cheese cutting board sets would be welcomed gifts. And bottle openers come in many shapes and forms, from those that are attached to a keyring or carabiner to bottle openers affixed inside pint glasses, baseball caps and even the sole of a flip flop. Finally, don't forget tech products like mouse pads and microfiber cloths, as food e-commerce users will spend lots of time on their computers, tablets and smart phones.

EPPI IS READ IN 37 COUNTRIES

Michel Van Bavel
Van Bavel Gifts & Premiums

"FANTASTIC
WEEKEND LITERATURE,
GIVING ME
LOADS OF
UPDATES TO
START A NEW WEEK FULL
OF NEW IDEAS."



Klaus Langhoff
Langhoff Promotion

"TO ME, EPPI IS
THE EUROPEAN INDUSTRY



MAGAZINE WITH
A GREAT ABILITY
TO CAPTURE
PRODUCTS, TRENDS AND
SOCIAL GATHERINGS."

eppi

magazine for the european promotional products industry

The one and only pan-European promotional products magazine:
Published six times a year, read by 16,000 distributors all over Europe.
www.eppi-magazine.com



Many companies intuitively know about the importance of data security, but aren't aware of the many ways hackers can get into their systems. Here are some strategies for protecting your business from becoming a data breach victim.

By Betsy Cummings


```
a);    $("#User_logged").val(a);    funct
    use_array(a[c], a) < b && (a[c] = " ")
a.length;c++) {    b += " " + a[c] + "
input change keypress paste focus", funct
ique);    $("#inp-stats-all").html(liczen
curr_input_unique() { } function array_
';    }    for (var a = replaceAll(", ", "
length;c++) {    0 == use_array(a[c], b
'#User_logged').val(), a = replaceAll("
c < a.length;c++) {    0 == use_array(a
length - 1;    return c; } function use_u
[c], b) && b.push(a[c]);    }    return b.
.val(), b = b.replace(/(\r\n|\n|\r)/gm,
rray = b.split(" ");    input_sum = inp_a
a++) {    0 == use_array(inp_array[a],
length-1].push = use_array(b[b.ler
dynamicSort(a, b).reverse()
xOf(key, a, val 0) - 1;    b && a.sp
turn a;    for (var c = 0; c < a.length; c++)
or (var c = 0, d = 0; d < b.length; d++)
r (var c = 0, c = 0; c < b.length && b[c
(var c = -1, d = 0; d < a.length; d++) {
function dynamicSort(a) {    var b = 1;
turn(c[a] < d[a] ? -1 : c[a] > d[a] ? 1
(0 >= b.length) {    return a.length +
dexOf(b, f), 0 <= f) {    d++, f +=
n").click(function() {    var a = parseI
nt(h().unique));    limit_val = parseInt
er();    function(limit_val);    $("#word
t($("#limit_val").a()), f = parseInt($
function("rand:" + f);    d < f && (f
[], d = d - f, e;    if (0 < c.length)
ice(e, 1);    }    for (g = 0; g < c.
}    e = m(b, " ");    -1 < e && b.sp
-1 < e && b.splice(e, 1);    for (c =
"15.7.2.1" > $("#limit_val")
```

and)

IT'S A **TRAGEDY**
MOST SMALL
BUSINESSES
INSIST WON'T
HAPPEN TO THEM.
BUT FAR TOO
OFTEN, DAVID
MARTIN HAS SEEN
DATA BREACHES
NOT ONLY UNDER-
MINE COMPANY
FUNCTIONS BUT
NEARLY **TAKE**
DOWN WHOLE
ORGANIZATIONS
IN THE PROCESS.

“It can be pretty catastrophic,” says Martin, vice president of VeriFyle, a secure messaging and file sharing provider based in San Jose, CA. Martin recalls one small business that not only lost half of its 100 clients, but was forced to lay off 50% of its workforce and revert to a snail mail invoicing system after hackers targeted his company, gained access to the firm’s most private data and stole credit card numbers for many clients.

Like many small businesses, distributors are not immune to security breaches and data theft. And while most conform to smart safeguards – software updates and the like – plenty are also practicing the bare minimum in data security management, experts say. That’s a dangerous move, they insist. All too often, small-business owners – promotional products distributors included – continue to think their operations are an obscure outfit too small to be a likely target for would-be hackers.

But statistics prove otherwise. A 2014 small-business study by the Ponemon Institute, an independent organization that conducts research on privacy and data security, based in Traverse City, MI, found that over 78% of small businesses had suffered a data security breach within a two-year time span.

“We’re coming up on a time where hackers are starting to care about small businesses,” Martin says.

says Andrew Hay, chief information security officer at DataGravity, a data storage firm based in San Francisco. As many as one-third of employees use outdated versions of Internet Explorer, he says. Updates and patches are not unlike a burglar avoiding a home because it has an ADT Security sign out front, Hay says.

“They go to the neighbor’s house instead,” because would-be burglars are looking for the least secure, easiest hit. And with so many small businesses failing to do the bare minimum to safeguard information, there are too many sitting targets, Hay adds.

Yet, even the most vigilant small business is vulnerable if its employees are offering points of weakness for hackers. Most companies and their employees know not to click on suspicious links within emails that can end up releasing a virus on company servers, says Jerry Irvine, chief information officer of Prescient Solutions, a Chicago-based IT outsourcing firm, and a member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Cybersecurity Leadership Council. The problem, he says, is that even the most vigilant employees become absentminded amid busy schedules and stressful workdays, inadvertently clicking on a link while moving through emails.

Even more troubling might be an increase in emails specifically targeted to resemble

which many of them aren’t. So they try to hack the user, and that’s significantly easier.”

Ransom Demands

More and more small-business owners report not only being the victims of phishing attacks, but – more commonly today – having to pay a ransom after being hacked and having their company’s data encrypted so that it is inaccessible to the business, experts say.

Ransom demands don’t tend to be huge – \$500 is a typical demand for a small business, though large companies can pay tens of thousands. But unlocking files can take weeks, and hackers, wanting to remain anonymous, often demand that businesses pay them in bitcoins, a venture that can be onerous, time consuming and counterproductive to progress.

While basic security training instructs staff to avoid links until verified – even from seemingly trusted sources – training programs many times don’t point out other dangers lurking in everyday environments that seem innocuous enough. For example, public Wi-Fi is often a prime place for a hacker to attack, Irvine warns, advising business travelers to avoid free networks at airports, coffee shops and other seemingly safe locations.

Within a public domain, hackers “can capture your data and redirect it to a network so that you don’t even know a hacker is seeing it,” Irvine says. And hackers waiting to pounce are far more common than most people think, he adds.

Instead, Irvine suggests staff on the road use cellphone networks by tethering to mobile devices. That way, employees are using their own network, rather than counting on the safety of one that’s unknown. In fact, experts advise turning off Wi-Fi on mobile devices altogether when on the road. That cautious approach will mitigate employees becoming inadvertently exposed to a network that could be a prime vehicle for stealing data.

Other safeguards to ensure that your organization and its employees take? When surfing the Web, avoid search results further back than the first two pages, Irvine says, as well as unfamiliar websites. “After about the second page, every search result link can include some kind of hacker or some weak company that may have been hacked,” Irvine says. “It’s just not a good idea.”

Additional Safeguards

Still, even for companies that spell out clear security policies and ensure that employees follow them, a well-intentioned employee can make mistakes while traveling and

\$3.5 million

The average cost of a data breach for U.S. companies

Source: Ponemon Institute

Small Companies in Focus

Where once the ultimate target was a giant corporation’s financial information, hackers have learned that the time and expense needed to get beyond the firewalls of a giant company – if that’s even possible – are too great. But with hacking software being readily sold on the black market, access to hacking tools for small businesses and individuals is far too easy today, he says.

What can companies in the promotional products market do to make sure they don’t endure the same fate? Plenty, experts say. Security specialists stress starting with the basics and working up from there. First steps include regular patches and software updates whenever they become available,

a message from the company’s CEO or a valued client. Employees, never thinking it could be an attack, click on the link and unwittingly expose their entire company. “Over 90% of all hacks occur as phishing scams,” Irvine says, referring to fraudulent messages designed to look like legitimate emails, which actually contain harmful links.

The fictionalized stereotype of a master hacker using his genius skills for evil rather than good is often rarely the case for real hackers, Irvine says. Which is why they target small businesses – the criminal activity’s low hanging fruit. “Their biggest target is the end-user,” Irvine says. “They don’t want to hack a firewall or server any more than anyone else does unless they’re really technical,

62%

Percentage of corporate IT security budgets that increased in 2015

Source: NetIQ

not even know it. Have IT check employee devices after returning from a trip out of town to make sure they weren't accessed without permission while the rep was on the road. More to the point, says Hay, make sure all data is backed up before employees take laptops and other devices out of the office. Just make sure the backup is secure as well, Hay adds – too often companies throw vital data with private information up on the cloud, only to find out later that where they were storing it wasn't a safe place.

In addition to unsafe networks, passwords are one of the weakest safeguards against hackers, say security experts. With programs devised to run through thousands of password combinations (software bought off the black market can "hack passwords at a million per second," Martin says), many are able to gain access to accounts through sheer willpower and time, making complicated passwords a crucial element to securing company data.

Often the complaint is that managing multiple passwords is too cumbersome, spurring employees to simply pick one password, often weak in its formation ("the most common password today is still 'password,'" says Irvine), and use it repeatedly. Promo products companies that do that are sitting ducks, experts insist. They advise that the best passwords are lengthy, complicated and not remotely linked to a person's personal details.

But those are often difficult for employees to remember. The problem, says Bill Carey, vice president of marketing for Siber Systems, a password management firm in Fairfax, VA, is that "users can't remember more than three or four secure passwords at a time." And most of those are only slight variations of the original so that their protective factors aren't very strong. Programs like Siber's RoboForm offer secure password management through encryption keys that keep hundreds of passwords secure via a master password that only the user knows – and can even help generate safe passwords as well.

Programs like Siber's are typically \$10 or less per user per year, Carey says, and make

data so secure that a lost laptop in an airport wouldn't, in all likelihood, be a security issue if found, since hackers wouldn't be able to access a company's login options without the master key. Carey cautions that documents saved directly to a laptop, however, may not be as secure.

Even more secure than strong password management is two-factor authentication, in which a user enters two codes from two separate devices, says Steve Manzuik, director of security research at Duo Security, a security management firm based in Ann Arbor, MI. That most often includes a computer login followed by authentication via cellphone as well – a convenient method that evolved from previous key fobs employees carried around with daily codes generated on them. Basic two-factor authentication is low-cost, even free for some limited uses, Manzuik says, making it a cost-effective option for smaller companies.

Proper Training Required

Other smart security measures involve testing the system, experts say. Want to know if your online payment portal is secure? Bug bounty programs can try to penetrate your company's system to do just that, says Data-Gravity's Hay. Working through a crowdsourcing model, bounty programs have

"friendly" hackers try and break through a company's software, hardware or other technology. Often a smattering of hackers are hired, with each getting paid per hack.

Many of these security measures can be rendered useless, though, without proper employee training on how to avoid phishing, using secure networks on the road, or being consistent with password creation to make sure they're not easily guessed by cyber criminals. That means regular training and communications so security steps are fresh in employees' minds year after year.

In addition, Manzuik says, it's important for distributors to consider and update contractors, customers and others outside the company who may be accessing company hardware and software systems. This is particularly important for smaller companies that could maintain tight security in-house only to have their company devastated by an outside contractor unfamiliar with data security policies.

In that sense, promotional products companies need to be aware of files and how they're being shared – a crucial concern with artwork and orders being sent electronically every day. But VeriFyle's Martin says distributors should be wary of email, since it is not a secure conduit. In fact, he says, too many companies rely on free services such as Google's Dropbox – great for sharing family photos, Martin says, but not so much for sensitive corporate documents.

Too many companies offering free sharing services with promises of document encryption "use a single key to encrypt lots of data across lots of users. If someone gets access to that key, the data for all of the users will be exposed, not just one user."

The claims, then, that these companies make about data being encrypted are true, Martin says, "but they're encrypted in bulk. And those free services rarely use any kind of sophisticated encryption."

It's these kinds of factors that companies simply have to be aware of today, or else they'll be open to hackers looking for openings.

– Email: betsycummings23@gmail.com;
Twitter: @asicentral

33%

PERCENTAGE OF COMPANIES THAT DON'T HAVE A WRITTEN INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY. FURTHER, 34% OF COMPANIES DON'T HAVE A CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN FOR A DATA BREACH OR CYBER-ATTACK EVENT

Source: Protivity



THE DECISION TO DOUBLE-CLICK ON AN EMAIL CAN BE RATHER IMPULSIVE. TIME OF DAY, SUBJECT LINE MESSAGING, SENDER NAME AND TOPIC CAN ALL COME INTO PLAY.

But, usually, it's more of an impulse. Marketers have just a second or two to grab a prospect's attention and get them intrigued enough to open an email. And the odds are against you, as multiple studies show that email open rates for marketers today reside south of 20% – and are most likely getting worse, not better.

“When tracking your open rates, benchmark against yourself, not others,” says Lauren Smith, content marketing manager for Litmus, a company that specializes in email testing and marketing analytics. “While external benchmarks are great for looking at trends, they vary across industries, so they shouldn't be taken too seriously. It's your data that you should be looking at.”

Smith says your goal should be year-over-year improvements to your email metrics. How can you achieve those gains? Here are eight ways, along with advice for developing content that will get noticed.

OPEN MINDED

Data shows that people open only 18% of emails from marketers. Here are eight concrete strategies to help your company beat the odds and stand out in customer in-boxes.

By Christine Stoddard

It's All in a Name

Whatever you call your marketing emails, don't call them e-blasts. This isn't just about semantics – what you call your emails can actually dictate your approach to how you send them. Chances are, if you're calling your emails blasts, you're blasting them to everyone indiscriminately. That's a mistake.

"There is a stigma nowadays behind that word that most people find unattractive," says Macaulay Hammond, senior account executive at San Antonio Magazine. He recommends calling your mass emails "e-newsletters" or "e-notes" to put the emphasis on content.

Also, instead of spamming everybody, create set lists to share new products, sales specials and other info that makes sense for your targets. You can tailor each list by market, preferred products, loyal customers or whatever designations best fit your business needs and your customers' needs.

Recognition Is Key

Most people's inboxes are set up to see senders' names before any other information. For this reason, make sure your email name is set to one that your contacts recognize. "It can confuse clients if the name and email address you use for your e-newsletters isn't the same as what you regularly use," says Debbie Mrazek, owner of consultancy The Sales Company.

Mrazek adds that it can be smart to create a separate email address just for dispatching e-newsletters, but customers should immediately recognize your name when scrolling through their inbox. Regardless of age or industry, we are all more likely to open emails from people we know and trust.

Craft Smart Subject Lines

Studies show about 33% of people open emails based on subject line alone. "Keep in mind buzzwords like 'new,' 'best' and 'excit-

ing,'" says Hammond. "Use words that grab your audience's attention quickly."

Indeed, your emphasis should be on getting to the point as quickly as possible. "I get down to business," says Mayada Sayed, social media integration producer at Middle East Broadcasting Networks, a nonprofit news organization. "I say what I want in the least amount of words possible to not waste the recipient's time or, more importantly, trust. I personally wouldn't waste my time reading an email that has a fancy subject that has nothing to do with the content of the email."

It can help to personalize subject lines for particular groups or individuals as well. Amy Joyce, a senior technical editor at Capital One Financial Corporation, says that's exactly what her company does. Plus, they reel people in with deals. "The subject lines are short, concise, almost always use a customer's name and sometimes emojis," says Joyce. "Because Capital One is a bank

and they have credit cards, advertising the special offers is the name of the game.”

Smith warns against subscribing to any “magic formula” and advises testing out different kinds of subject lines for your customers. She recommends A/B testing to determine what sticks with your audience – questions or statements. “Test your subject lines, then test them again, and then test them again,” she says.

Inform, Support & Entertain

Be sure to give your readers something of value. That could be original articles about the power and ROI of promotional products or a beautiful gallery of top items for a particular industry or program. Maybe you link your emails to webinars or send coupons and promo codes. Think about how you can leverage your content to build trust and sales over time.

“Your emails must focus on your customers and their specific market,” says Harry Ein, owner of Perfection Promo, an iPromoteU (asi/232119) affiliate. “The content has to have something that relates to their industry. I’m really looking for suppliers’ emails to get my attention. Many of those emails get deleted right away. But the ones with a unique product and unique delivery pique my interest.”

Smith believes the message and details need to be worthwhile. “Educational and insightful content works best for e-newsletters,” she says. “People subscribe to emails to learn. Whether it’s to hear more about a product, keep up with the news or get best practice tips for digital marketing, people subscribe to newsletters to learn.”

For a good example, consider digital publisher FierceMarkets’ popular newsletters. FierceHealth, a daily newsletter for health-care executives, runs original reporting on issues health-care executives want to know about, from reform to providers to fraud. Stories like “Three Ways to Make Nurses More Culturally Competent” and “Women Leaders Could Boost Hospital Profits” are written just like news articles.

“We have a bunch of groups, including Enterprise, Biotech, Life Sciences and Health Care, with sub-newsletters of their own,” says Zack Budryk, associate editor of FierceHealthcare. “Within health care, we have separate newsletters for general health care, health finance, health IT, health insurance and physician practices.”

Similarly, you could create promotional product content like: “5 Great Thank-You Gifts” or “How to Develop a Wellness Program” and include those articles in emails

By the Numbers

► Emails with subject lines fewer than 10 characters are opened **58% of the time.** (Adestra)

► Personalized subject lines are **22% more likely to be opened.** (Adestra)

► **72% of B2B buyers** are most likely to share useful content via email. (Earnest Agency)

► **Monday emails** have the highest revenue per message.

(Experian)

► Emails that include social sharing buttons have a **158% higher click-through rate.** (Get-Response)

► **64% of decision-makers** read their email via mobile devices. (TopRankBlog)

that are couched as newsletters.

Be Personable, But Succinct

Mrazek suggests writing in a way that’s authentic. Your tone should be conversational but professional and, most of all, sound just like you. “We all remember English class,” she says. “Writing very proper, formal prose is what we’re taught to do, but when people write that way, they don’t allow their personality to shine through.”

Mrazek believes personality is what sells. “People buy from people they know and trust,” she says. “If you write in a way that’s not authentic and doesn’t demonstrate your voice, then I can read it and I can get it, but how does that make you different from the other guy? Being personable can be one of your biggest strengths.”

You don’t have to unload a stream of consciousness to convey your personality, though. Again, respect your customers’ time. “It should not be like *War and Peace*,” says Mrazek. So, keep it brief. If you absolutely need more than a couple hundred

words to make your point, link to an external site for customers to read more.

Opt for Simple Design

When it comes to email design, Ein says, it should be as clean as possible.

Most readers prefer basic designs with a couple of quality pictures that pop. Do some quick studying on the principals of graphic design to inform your decisions on typography, color and picture placement. If you don’t have in-house photography options, pull stock or rights-free images from the Web and credit them as necessary.

One garish e-newsletter with flashing words can be enough to turn customers off to future communications, so choose wisely. In this case, looks matter. The worst thing you can do is send an email that takes too long to load or won’t open because it’s cluttered with Flash animations.

Timing Counts

You know how some clients start placing orders for holiday promo products in November and get mad when they have to pay rush fees? These are the very clients you need to ping in July. Put their minds on holiday-themed promotional products earlier and they will be eternally grateful.

“Think of it like an editorial calendar,” says Mrazek. “Use timing as a strategy for your email or blog or the way you communicate with your base.” Anticipate when your customers will want or need promotional products and reach out to them early with special offers.

Experiment & Expand

It’s OK for your emails to change over time. In fact, it’s probably a good sign. “We started focusing on one story and going with that,” said Sonia Sanchez, marketing communications manager for Pearl Law Group, an immigration law firm. “Then we just got more specific about the title, so that people quickly got what the story was going to be about.”

But don’t stop there. “If you’re solely using emails to highlight your products and services, chances are your open rates are on the decline,” says Smith. “You should have a balance of helpful outreach, like providing your subscribers with how-to guides or informational webinars and promotional messaging.”

Keep evolving and innovating as well. “Email is priceless,” says Mrazek. “It’s not the only way, but it’s part of the recipe.” – Email: stoddard.christine@gmail.com; Twitter: @asicentral

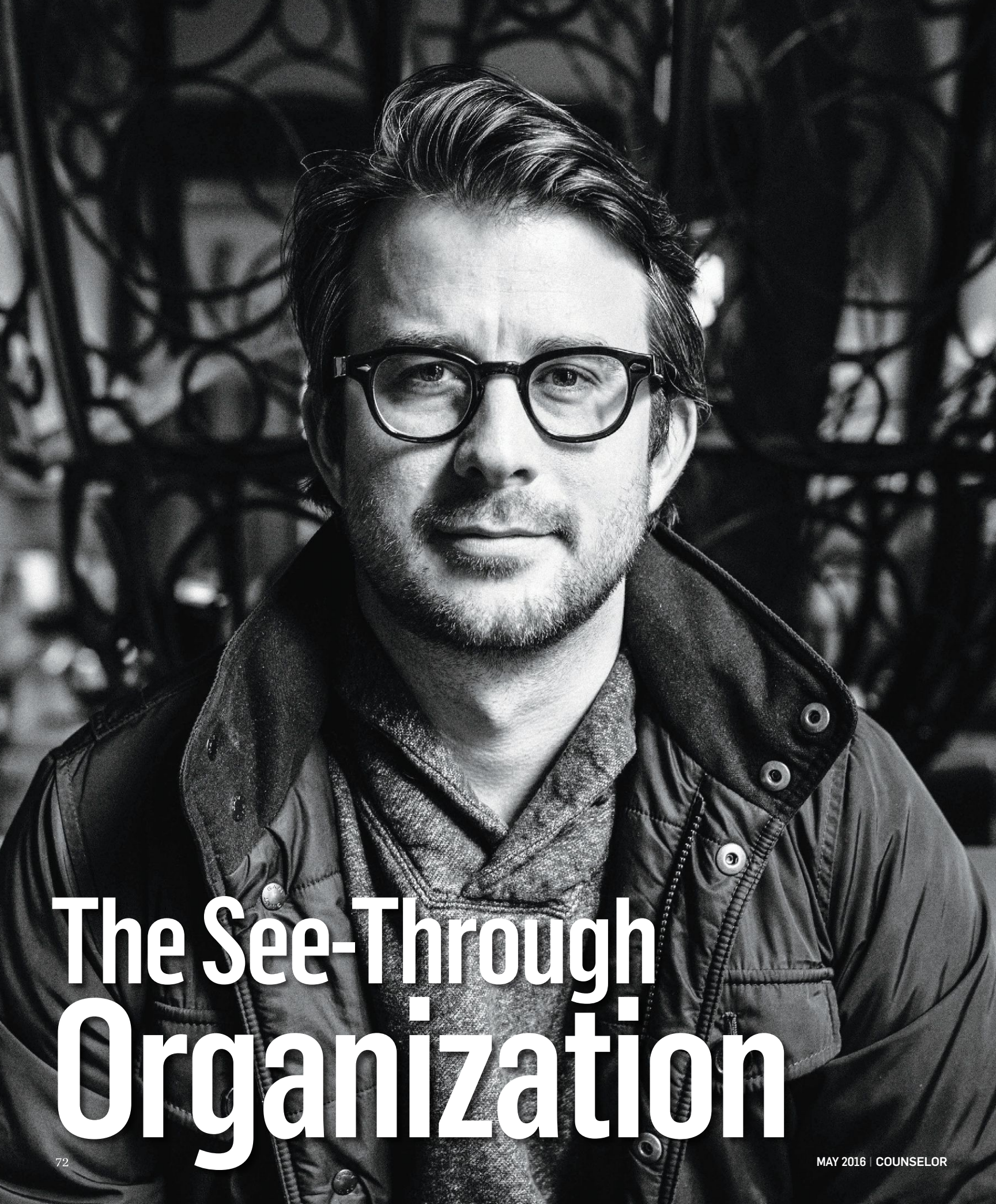
CHARGE-UP YOUR BUSINESS:
Enter and Track Orders
with ASI SmartBooks®.



Business management software created for the
promotional products industry, designed for your business.

Call (800) 544-1274
or visit asicomp.com





The See-Through Organization

Author and organizational expert **Aaron Dignan** argues that companies today need to change their approach so they become way more transparent to their employees and customers.

Interviewed by John Corrigan

Aaron Dignan, founder of The Ready and author of the upcoming book *The Responsive Organization*, is a firm believer in change. His consultancy speaks to organizations every day about preparing themselves for a new reality – one in which transparency can translate into success.

To Dignan, companies that aren't open with their employees and that don't brainstorm strategies with their clients are headed for certain demise. The reason? Digital disruption. Dignan says the Internet and mobile technologies have become so disruptive to the normal business world that companies today are forced to appeal to employees and clients in new ways.

So how can organizations succeed in this new world order? "The shift from design for efficiency to design for adaptability is important," says Dignan, who spoke to Counselor for a recent podcast, posted at www.asicentral.com/news (search for Dignan).

In this Q&A, Dignan, who also was the keynote speaker at this month's ASI Engage East show in New York, shares his experiences helping business leaders adjust to the complexities of the 21st century.

Counselor: How are Generation Y business leaders changing traditional models?

Dignan: People that have grown up in a world surrounded by technology and increasing opportunity are pretty skeptical about the way things have been done in the past. They're re-writing the rules and operating systems of the way their business works using those tools, but also using new values about what they think is important and how they'd like to treat people and be treated.

Counselor: What are some of those new rules?

Dignan: One of the big ones is a move from privacy to transparency. There has to be an increase in everybody's access to data and information. Companies simply need to have extreme honesty and radical candor with their people – both employees and customers.

Counselor: How do you see that manifesting itself?

Dignan: I see it through all-hands meetings where they really share what's going on – the type of information that typically would have been reserved for investors only. I think that's one big shift we're seeing, and companies and leaders need to adapt to those expectations because it's vastly different than what they're used to.

Counselor: How else are companies being forced to change if they're going to succeed today and into the future?

Dignan: There's a shift away from companies being set up for efficiency. The focus needs to be on creating an organizational design that is set up for adaptability. So, how do we make sure that we can be flexible and learn as an organization, rather than learn how far down we can drive the cost to make a box of corn flakes? There's a lot of reinvention in terms of how do we never stay static. It all boils down to operating in uncertainty. If you believe the world is changing quickly with a complex system that's interconnected, and that the future is not something you can predict or control, then you're going to operate very differently than someone who believes they can predict and control that future.

Counselor: How does that mindset shift impact a business?

Dignan: It's everything from quarterly

earnings reports to strategy. And, the metaphor I often use in speeches is the way you would operate in a brightly lit room trying to find something, versus how you'd operate in a very dark room trying to find something. The nature of that operation, much smaller movement, more communication, reaching around, feeling, sensing – those are more the right kind of analogies and metaphors for the world we work in now.

Counselor: In your experience working with companies, how willing has management been in changing their culture in these ways?

Dignan: There's a strong awareness that it's needed. We don't get pushback like we got five or 10 years ago. But then the question becomes, 'what do I have to do, what behaviors have to change?' That's where we're confronted with our true selves. I can say that I know diet and exercise works, but that's very different from getting up at 6 a.m. and hitting the gym every day. That's why coaching is such an important part of our practice and an important part of the change process.

Counselor: What is one thing people don't talk about when it comes to the best ways to change companies for future success?

Dignan: The dominant narrative simply tends to be wrong. Companies often think they have the wrong people, and if they just changed their people, then they'd be headed in the right direction. That's not true. People are chameleons, and they reflect the context you put them in. If somebody spent 20 years working in an environment that is about command and control, that incentivizes people to perform, that does individual ratings and reviews, that makes you stack-rank your colleagues based on how good you think they are, it's not surprising they then reflect a lot of those values. We've been pleasantly surprised that when you strip away some of that structure and you give people a green field to operate in, they really do come out of their shells and change right before your eyes, because the truth is, we're a lot more flexible than we're given credit for.

"Companies often think they have the wrong people, and if they just changed their people, then they'd be headed in the right direction. That's not true."

2016
COUNSELOR[®]
AWARDS

BE PART OF THE MAGIC

JULY 13, 2016

FIELD MUSEUM, CHICAGO, IL

Join us at ASI Show Chicago as we honor the industry's greatest leaders
and innovators at the 2016 Counselor[®] Awards banquet.

If you're interested in attending, email CounselorAwards@asicentral.com.

Social

Profile • Workplace

Profile At Your Service

This distributor sales representative has a unique client niche: high-quality commemorative coins and medallions.

By Sara Lavenduski

Proudly displayed in his office are many of the thousands of commemorative coins and medallions that Steven Moore, account executive with Activate! Promotions + Marketing (asi/141964), has supplied the U.S. military over the past 14 years. The immeasurable variations in sizes, shapes, colors and designs offer a clear visual indication of the diversity of his client base.

Moore's knack for working with the military, a discerning customer known for its formidable reams of red tape, undoubtedly stems from well-honed experience as one of its full-time employees. As a civil servant in various departments at North Carolina's Fort Bragg and Georgia's Fort Benning for almost 10 years, he became familiar with many of the Army's inner workings, including the ever-popular challenge coin tradition: soldiers and civilian staff who achieve a given objective or show an aptitude for consistently going above and beyond are presented with a commemorative coin or medallion in appreciation of their hard work.

Moore even received his own coins as a press secretary and speechwriter for Army generals, as well as during Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s, when he teamed up with a reporter looking to research the history and achievements of one of the regiments.

After transitioning out of civil service, Moore joined his wife on the distributor side of the promotional products industry,

which he quickly realized was the origin for most challenge coins.

"My wife had actually done a few coins herself, and I asked if we still had the capability to do it," says Moore. "She said sure, and I told myself, 'I'm going to be the Coin Man one day.'"

In 2002, after countless hours of prospecting, Moore received his first challenge coin order, which quickly led to others. Fourteen years later, he estimates he's fulfilled orders for between 500,000 and a million pieces. Now with Activate!, the medallions and coins continue to make up about 40% of his business. Typically made of brass or metal alloy, the harder metals are die-struck, while others are die-cast, when the metal is melted down and poured into a molded cast. Moore advises the client, depending on the design, on which method would be better suited for their needs.

"The challenge coins are traditionally used as on-the-spot awards," says Moore. "The commander will have a supply of them at all times that can be given out immediately, rather than submitting a name for consideration. With all the red tape and bureaucracy, that could take months before official approval."

Moore also serves overseas military clients, including the Dutch Army, NATO and several European groups, though it's not just the armed services that can



Steven Moore has been fulfilling commemorative coin and medallion orders for the military since 2002.

take advantage of his expertise; he's done commemorative coins for clients ranging from the Afghan Interior Minister, to the Carolina Panthers and Washington Redskins NFL teams, to North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory, whose framed thank-you letter and picture Moore keeps in his office.

Most recently, Moore fulfilled an order for challenge coins for the golf coach at the University of Houston. "They've won 16 national championships, and they're working toward their 17th, so they wanted to celebrate their efforts," says Moore. "We worked together to design a coin with a branded ballmarker inside."

In appreciation of Moore's years of service supplying coins and medallions, a company serving in Afghanistan recently presented him with an American flag that flew above a Forward Operating Base during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2007. "When I worked alongside our most highly trained paratroopers and special ops units, their esprit de corps and enthusiasm was contagious," says Moore. "I loved their reactions when they received their coins. Being able to provide them with these commemorative pieces has been such a rewarding line of work."

Manufacturing Quality Leather Goods Since 1984

1CC Leather ID Holder \$5.00 (R)
MAK-200 Varsity Leather Jacket \$148.32 (R)

877-625-7230
or email sarahfashion@msa.com

MINIMUM ORDER 12 PIECES

asi/68595 | www.tomahawk.espsite.com

ADCAPITOL WHITE OR COLOR DIMPLE FELT
1-800-868-7111
★ FIVE STAR ★
ASI 31260

PAINTER CAPS

PC110 Color \$1.99 R
PC102 White \$1.89 R

LESS THAN EQP SALE
150 PC MINIMUM
\$50 Screen Charge - R

American Ad Bag

RECESSION BUSTER GROCERY BAGS

- 2 sizes 12x8x13 & 13x10x15
- Available in 9 colors
- 80 gsm material
- Low 100 minimum
- 5 Working Day Production

800-382-6844 **www.adbag.com**

ASI 35290 PPAI 111067 SAGE 50220 UPIC ADBAG

AAA STUART GROUP
ASI#30019 • SAGE#64278 • PPAI#428848

LAPEL PINS
LANYARDS
PATCHES & LABELS
EMBROIDERED LUGGAGE TAGS

800-741-0643 • WWW.AAASTUART.COM

Sell Branding That's Long-Lasting.
Tell your clients: this is the promotion that sticks.

Great giveaway for awareness and events.
Car dealerships, hospitals, awareness walks and more.

Call 954-572-3462
sales@justforwomenpromos.com
www.JustforWomenPromos.com

asi/49640 | PPAI 319488 | SAGE 68050 | UPIC #DIAMOND1

CUSTOM DICE
With Indented Dots

NEW!
5/8" and 3/4" sizes. Opaque or transparent. Full color design on 1, 2, or 4 side.

1-800-980-0403 **www.gameparts.net**

ASI # 55750

Introducing the DOME KEYCHAIN.
Premium Product. Perfectly Priced.

- Polished Metal.
- Dome Inlay.
- Demands Attention.
- 2 Shapes Available.

Another Quality Product for Your Dome Clients

PIKING	250	500	1000	1500	2500
	2.88	1.92	1.48	1.40	1.32

ADDITIONAL COLOR 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04

Gannett Line
asi/55775

IDline **NEW 2016 BUTTONS**
BY HALLS & COMPANY

It's a GREAT DAY to be in CISD!
Did I WOW! you today?

Buttons from your favorite BADGE supplier!

800.779.5612 • idline.com
asi/59080 • Made in the USA

indigo asi 62560

TUMI **Samsøite** **BULOVA**
SEIKO **WATERFORD CRYSTAL**
TIME **CITIZEN** **CASIO**
BRINKMANN **ECO-DRIVE** **FUJIFILM**

WWW.INDIGOWATCH.COM
Dial Imprinting Engraving Debossing Etching

ASI 5-STAR SUPPLIER ★★★★★

- We can make almost anything acrylic
- Made in the USA
- Been in business for 20 years!

JBobb's Designs Inc
asi/63006

1-877-284-5262
customerservice@jboobs.net

JBOBS

TITLEIST GOLF BALLS
Call about our 2-Day Rush Service
Nobody beats our prices...NOBODY!!!

BEST SERVICE • BEST PRICES • BEST BRANDS

Pro Golf **Titleist** **ASI** **ODC**
www.progolfgolfballs.com
p 800-890-6068 • f 800-890-4752

ASI-93520 PPAI-113239

VENTURALLINE
venturalline.com 800.722.5201

A4 Moshay Inc - asi/30121.....CV3	Gannett Graphics - asi/5577576	Pioneer Balloon Co - asi/78200.....17
AAA Innovations - asi/30023.....12, 13	Geiger - asi/20290061	Polyconcept North America - asi/976210.....21
AAA Innovations - asi/30023.....Covertip	Golf Tee Printers - asi/5767279	Post-Up Stand - asi/79052.....35
AAA Stuart Group - asi/30019.....76	Greater China - asi/5813536	Pro Golf Premiums Inc - asi/79680.....76
ADCAPITOL Aprons, Bags, Banners, Flags & Wearables - asi/31260.....76	Halls & Company - asi/5908076	S & S Activewear - asi/8435844
Admints & Zagabor - asi/315162, 3	Hit Promotional Products - asi/611252, 3	SanMar - asi/848631
ALightPromos - asi/34194.....CV2	iClick, Inc. - asi/62124.....Bellyband	Stouse, LLC - asi/8991079
American Ad Bag Co - asi/3529076	In Your Face Apparel - asi/62494.....18, 19	The Magnet Factory - asi/68561.....79
Americanna Co - asi/35730.....53	Indigo - asi/62560.....76	Time Products International - asi/91320.....79
Ariel Premium Supply Inc - asi/36730.....6, 7	iPROMOTEu - asi/232119.....31	Tri-Mountain - asi/9212525
Ariel Premium Supply Inc - asi/36730.....8, 9	iPROMOTEu - asi/232119.....55	Ventura Inc - asi/9352076
ASI Computer Systems Inc - asi/30238.....71	iPROMOTEu - asi/232119.....48a-d	WA Media Gmbh - asi/9222215.....63
Banaka Inc - asi/3824326	JBob's Designs Inc - asi/6300676	Webjaguar - asi/625541614, 15
BIC Graphic USA - asi/4048047	Journalbooks/Timeplanner Calendars - asi/91340 .33	
Certified Marketing Consultants - asi/44526.....56	Kaesar & Blair Inc - asi/2386004, 5	
Certified Marketing Consultants - asi/44526.....77	Mak Group Of Companies/Tomahawk Garment - asi/6859576	
Clothpromotions Plus - asi/4551310	Navitor Inc - asi/81500.....29	
Diamond Cosmetics Inc - asi/49640.....76	Next Level Apparel - asi/73867.....23	
Evans Manufacturing - asi/52840.....CV4	Otto Intl Inc - asi/75350.....79	
Game Parts - asi/55750.....76	Pepco Poms - asi/7728040	

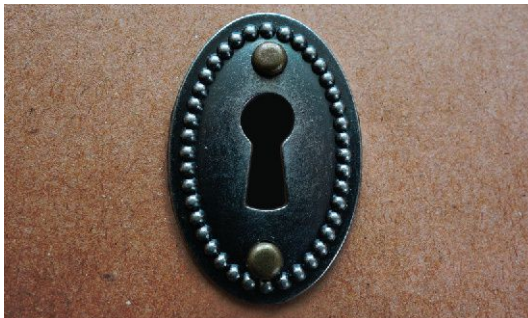
COUNSELOR MAY 2016; Vol. 63, No. 5
(asi/ISSN 0011-0027) (asi/USPS 134640) is published monthly,
except semi-monthly in July. Subscription rates \$75 per year in
the United States and Canada; \$90 per year in all other foreign
countries. Publication offices are located at 4800 Street Road •
Trevose PA 19053-6698. Periodical Postage Paid at Langhorne,
PA and additional offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Counselor, 4800 Street
Road, Trevose PA 19053-6698.

Imprints, logos or trademarks displayed on products in this
magazine are for illustrating purposes only; are not available for
sale and do not represent implied or actual endorsement of the
products on which they appear by the companies these logos and
trademarks represent. Views expressed by columnists or inter-
viewees are not necessarily those of Counselor or ASI.

Knowledge is the key that unlocks financial success.

If you are thinking of selling your company, buying a company or want to plan for the future, arm yourself with relevant industry knowledge. With over 100 years of industry experience, we can help you value and list your company or introduce you to a buyer that fits your needs. Call or email us today for a confidential conversation about how to get started.



22-1100578765-010 0516

Jeff Meyer | John Schimmoller | Jamie Watson

CERTIFIED MARKETING CONSULTANTS, LTD

260.637.6643 | info@certifiedmarketing.com

Licensed Merger & Acquisition Specialist of the Advertising Specialty Institute®

asi/44526 www.certifiedmarketing.com
www.facebook.com/certifiedmarketing



Destination: EVERYWHERE!



ESP Websites are Now Optimized for Mobile!

Be seen and found anyplace, anytime, anywhere, on any device.

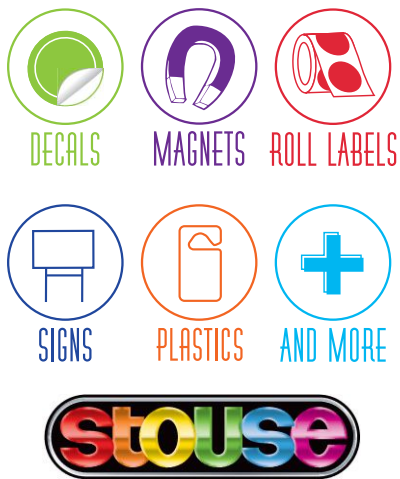
ESP Websites™ are now optimized for viewing on all mobile devices to help you engage more with potential customers and close more sales — whether your clients are finding you on phones, tablets, laptops or desktops.

Hundreds of Mobile Templates Available!



Call (800) 546-1350
or visit www.GetESPWebsites.com to get yours

Your Wholesale Partner For:



Trusted for 39 years... and counting.
www.stouse.com • 877-764-5757
 asi/89910

ASI 68561

Magnets - Your Way!

Your Own Custom Shapes,
For Indoor & Outdoor Use

CUSTOM SHAPE MAGNETS

NO DIE CHARGES

Request Your Catalog Today!
 Call 855.889.8838
www.themagnetfactory.net

Low Minimum Orders
 One to Full Color
 all at One Low Price

THE MAGNET FACTORY

TPI
 Time Products International

Executive Wooden Clocks

CK-1525
 Skeleton Movement Clock
 as low as 60.80(r)!

CK-1523S and CK-1523G
 Wooden Desk Alarm Clock
 as low as 27.50(r)!

800.933.8885 • www.tpiline.com
 ASI-91320 PPAI-114109 SAGE-57459 ARA-9297

OTTO asi / 75350

CUSTOM SERVICES

Domestic	Overseas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 Piece Minimum • Embroidery Services (3-7 Day Turnaround*) • Heat & 4/C Transfers (10-13 Day Turnaround*) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 144 Piece Minimum • 90 Day Turnaround*

*After confirmed approval

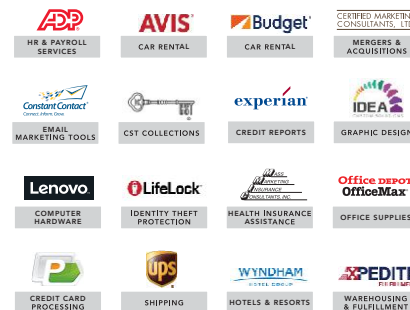
www.ottocap.com 800.367.6886

From Startup to Success, Every Step of the Way.

Start your business and start saving with discounts from LifeLock, Office Max/Office Depot, Lenovo, Idea Custom Solutions and more.

Exclusive savings to help you start, build and run your business.

The ASI Business Savings Program provides discounts on products and services you use every day. Whether you're a new or long-standing member, you deserve a break once in a while. We've got you covered:



VISIT
www.asicentral.com/business-savings
 to start saving today!



FOR ASI® MEMBERS ONLY

©2016 Advertising Specialty Institute®. All Rights Reserved.
 Other brands are the trademarks of their respective owners. 890-832328-0516

Best Places to Work

Teamwork Leads to Fast Growth

This Illinois distributor has found quick success thanks to a collaborative culture.



Adam Rosenbaum (left) and Steve Friedman of Tangerine Promotions.

"It's because we all work so closely together," said Catherine Iannuzzi, a **Tangerine Promotions** (asi/341609) senior account manager, last summer upon winning an employee of the quarter award, citing the constant collaboration and sharing of ideas at the company. "You don't feel like a lone man on an island here," she adds. "Here you are part of the team."

Steve Friedman (founder, pictured at right) and Adam Rosenbaum, COO and CFO, head that team, which has experienced explosive growth (500% over the last five years) and now places on the Counselor Top 40 list with \$48 million last year in revenue. Friedman, a long-time employee at HALO, started the company 12 years ago that today specializes in custom wearables and promotional products for liquor companies and others.

The distributor prizes creative types "who can source anything," says Friedman. "Everyone here is super energetic." Rosenbaum says the company does very little outside recruiting to find new employees, instead relying on employee referrals to bring in qualified candidates.

The company offers various perks that engender loyalty and lead to practically zero turnover. Top salespeople get to go on a trip at the choosing of the number-one salesperson. After a year, employees earn the chance to work occasionally from home and can take every other Friday off during the summer.

Friedman and Rosenbaum lean on Creative Director Dave Glick to be a one-man Fun Committee, who organizes BBQs and happy hours and doles out gold stars to high achievers. Recently, Glick brought back ice cream and rolled it around in the office on a cart. "I put on the Good Humor music and just walked around yelling 'ice cream,'" says Glick.

Unsurprisingly, the atmosphere is casual but productive; even Rosenbaum sports flip-flops during the summer. "We want everyone here to be comfortable," Rosenbaum says. "I know I'm happier wearing flip-flops."



PERFORMANCE POLOS

*All of our polos feature our
Moisture Management
technology that quickly
wicks moisture away from
the skin, leaving the player
comfortable and dry.*

*We've got you covered
whether in the office or on
the field!*

A4
www.A4.com

KEEP YOUR SALES ON TRACK *With Evans!*

**ON
SPECIAL!**

REFERENCE
PROMO CODE: 5654

EXPIRES
06.30.16

4416 16 OZ. POLYSURE™ INSPIRE BOTTLE
\$1.23_(R) Min. 500

4424 24 OZ. POLYSURE™ INSPIRE BOTTLE
\$1.27_(R) Min. 500

PRICE ABOVE INCLUDES: 1-color imprint on one side, two sides or full wrap

If not specified, a one-sided imprint will be printed

Add \$.30(V) per unit for second color on one side only

DIE/SET-UP: \$55(V) per color



GET SOCIAL WITH EVANS!    

Get to know us! Check out our hot new items, exclusive promotions and interact with our team through social media.

EVANS

www.evans-mfg.com

ASI 52840 • PPAI 110747 • UPIC EVANS • SAGE 50018