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“The best way to predict
the future is to create it.”

Peter Drucker
Social Ecologist

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Mastering The Tradeshow Giveaway Game

Walk around any tradeshow and you will be able to collect a “trick-or-treat” bag full of tradeshow giveaway items, all intended to promote business. Everyone enjoys receiving a gift.

I had a unique opportunity to explore some fun ideas, working for a marketing/promotional-product company in Seattle.

One such idea came to us while we contemplated attending our second Seattle Chamber of Commerce tradeshow in 2007.

“What should we give away?” we pondered. Like any small business, we were faced with a small budget. But we were experts in the “promotional product” arena. Our potential clients would surely be looking to us to set a good example. The key was not only to think big, but also to think of something novel, unexpected, or just too fun to ignore. After several brainstorming sessions, our marketing department came up with a fun, yet unexpected, and attention-getting solution: Service Bells! Yes, those shiny little bells that reside on your receptionist’s counter or your favorite teriyaki restaurant. What a hit-literally. Our theme and tagline: “At Your Service!”

We solicited some co-branding help from Andrea Jacobsen, of Exhibit Design and pulled together a respectable and professional tradeshow booth, ordered our service bells, and continued to work on our tradeshow message and goals.

At your service!



The giveaway result? A HUGE success! By the end of the show, half of the tradeshow booths had our bell in their booth for attendees to use. The “ting” of little bells could be heard over and over in the distance. Very few people could resist tapping that shiny little bell. An unexpected “gift” and a perfect promotional tie-in with our message: We are “At Your Service”.

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You can contact Chris Hettich directly for quotes or to ask questions at (425) 402-6468 or email him at chris@crossingsdesigngroup.com

I have used Crossings Design Group, and Chris Hettich for promotional and apparel needs many times. Their quality and customer service is unsurpassed. I give them two thumbs-up (and two big-toes!) ~ Mark Palazzo

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There was no need to have the biggest booth, or the best booth location, if we had the best promotion. People sought us out to get their hands on that little gem. Simply put, creativity, not our budget, won us business at the show.

Before jumping into the tradeshow giveaway game, consider the following steps:

- 1. Set Your Objective** - What do you want to achieve by giving away a promotional item? Tradeshow giveaway items should be designed to increase your recognition, communicate a message, motivate an action, or promote your business. It's important that the message has impact, but the item itself must make an impression consistent with the message. In the case of our "Service Bell" giveaway, we were selling our creativity and our service at the same time.
- 2. Define Your Audience** - Having a focused objective for your tradeshow giveaway will also help you decide who should receive it. Consider having different gifts for various visitors. You might have gifts of different perceived value for your key customers, prospects, and the general passer-by.
- 3. Set a Budget** - The price range for tradeshow giveaway items is as wide as items to select from. Quality, quantity, and shipping all impact the price. Establish a budget as part of your exhibit marketing plan. Consider ordering the same item for several different shows. Typically, the greater the quantity for your order, the lower the individual unit price. Make sure the perceived value is appropriate for the audience and the expected return justifies the investment. Order in plenty of time to avoid expedited shipping charges and production rush fees.
- 4. Find the Right Item** - There are nearly a million different items you could consider as a giveaway. However, which one will best suit your objective? To select the right item, use your objective and purpose to make your selection process easier. Remember your company image is reflected in whatever you choose to giveaway. Consider items that reflect your brand. The perfect item will not only tie in with your message, but will be used over and over again by the attendee-keeping you in front of your audience.
- 5. Establish Qualifiers** - What must visitors do to qualify for a giveaway item? There are several ways to use your tradeshow giveaway effectively:
 - As a reward for visitors participating in a demonstration, presentation, or contest
 - As a token of your appreciation when visitors have given you qualifying information
 - As a thank you for stopping at the booth
- 6. Include a Sales Incentive or Call To Action** - Will your tradeshow giveaway directly help future sales? Hand out a discount coupon or a gift certificate requiring future contact with your company for redemption. Consider giveaways that will help generate frequent visits to your booth by attendees, such as calling you for free refills. Give coupons for goods that have to be redeemed in person at your storefront during a promotional period, or must be brought to the customer directly by your sales force.
- 7. Inform Your Target Audience** - Creative tradeshow giveaways can actively help draw prospects to your booth. Make sure your prospects know about it. Send a pre-show invitation with details of the giveaway, or create a two-piece premium, sending one part out to key prospects prior to the show and telling them to collect the other half at your booth.

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8. Implement a Tracking Mechanism - Establish a tracking mechanism to measure the success of your tradeshow giveaways. If it is a redemption item, create a code so that you know any future transactions resulted from the show. Post-show follow up could include a question about the giveaway - did visitors remember receiving it and how useful was the item? Or, use a unique 800 number that is only affiliated with that show's particular promotion.

After the tradeshow, critique your giveaways with your marketing team:

- Did it draw specific prospects to the booth?
- Was it eye-catching enough to persuade passers-by to stop?
- Did your customers find it useful?
- Did it project the right corporate image?

There are plenty of exciting tradeshow giveaways for you to choose from. Pens, pencils, and key chains can be useful, but do you have so many, you rarely think of the company that gave it to you when you use the item? Make your company stand-out by applying the above strategies to master your tradeshow giveaways. You will experience more booth traffic than your competitors, and it will be money well-invested.



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