

Fresh Ideas for the New Year

By Brian Greul

Can you believe that 2008 is here already? If you are like me, it seems like Thanksgiving was the week before last. Christmas was like the snooze button on my alarm clock, before I knew it the alarm was going off again. Fortunately, the calendar worked out right to have a nice long weekend for Christmas. I sincerely hope that you and your family had an enjoyable holiday.

As we pull away from the Holiday season our thoughts return to winter, spring, and summer. Or in the business world, how to plant the marketing seeds that will develop into sustainable and profitable sales for the new year. As any good farmer will tell you, you don't pick your seeds the day you plant your crop. Marketing is a lot like farming in that you need to plan in advance. I think January is one of the best times to plan because it's usually slow for most businesses. If your January is not slow, than there is probably a month that is slow for you and that makes the best time to plan.

If you haven't done so, take a calendar, a physical paper calendar is best, and circle or highlight all your upcoming marketing goals and activities. Then go back and determine the deadlines that go along with each event. An example for Easter would be: Circle Easter. Circle the date 7 days before Easter, this is the "get it done by day." Or more succinctly, this is the day I hope to have everything on hand that I need for my event. Count back 5 weeks. This is the day that I should have all my t-shirts and promotional items ordered by. Now count back 4 more weeks. This is the day that I should begin actively looking at shirts, gathering data, and requesting samples of promotional items. Now, if you are good at math you are probably thinking, hey that's 10 weeks. Yes it is. If you

start at 10 weeks out and order by 6 weeks out you will have an economical and efficient event.

Ever wonder what most businesses do? Let me tell you what we see a lot of in promotional products orders. 10 days prior to the event, someone yells to marketing, hey did you order stuff to hand out for the event? Marketing replies, Stuff? What stuff? Who's budget is paying for it? What event? I really hope this isn't your office. This is the hallmark of disaster looking for an event to spoil. Marketing then scrambles to make it happen, paying rush charges, air freight, and finding it's selection vastly nar-

rowed to only the factories that can turn on a dime. Of course, in this model why you are handing out promotional items usually takes a back seat to the fact that you are handing them out. Imagine being so obsessed with having an ad in the paper that you

forgot what you wanted to sell? Sound stupid? Yea, but you'd be amazed how many organizations function this way.

We understand that you can't do it all by yourself. In fact, we would be delighted to help keep track of when your critical dates are and to contact you before those dates. If you want to set that up, contact Rex at rex@txshirts.com and he'll be happy to schedule a convenient time to synch up. We don't make very much on freight or rush charges and we'd much rather help you avoid those charges.



Promotional Products Web Makeover

By Brian Greul

Sometimes the web can be a great thing, and sometimes it can be like wading through a sea of junk. In an effort to make our site better we have made a major change. For the last 2 years we utilized a web based solution from ASI, a promotional products service bureau. As our contract expired at the end of this year and we decided to bring this component of our business in-house to provide better service. The challenge that many customers faced was that the navigation was a bit daunting at times. It frustrated us too, because we are used to being able to fix things that don't work right. Sometimes, you do have to reinvent the wheel, and that is just what we are doing.

We're proud to unveil the new promotional products section of our website. Each item is hand picked by our team based on it's quality, the factory's reliability, and it's value to you as a client. In addition the new products will be integrated into our search tool so you can type in Red mug and find the mugs that come in red. It's going to take us some time to put in the products we have picked. Please bear with us, and feel welcome to call if you need something and don't see it.

As part of our commitment to offering the best products and the best service not every product we have access to will be listed. To do so would list over 800,000 products and it would literally feel like wading through a Sea of them. The most popular and the ones we have hand picked will be loaded into the site first. Then we will add new products each month.

At this time we are not enabling online ordering. Sure we could do it, but there are too many options and details that can really bite the customer in online ordering. Having the customer call or email allows us to go over each of these options and make sure everything is right. One example would be if you ordered coffee mugs but didn't add the recommended super boxes. You'd lose about half the mugs in shipping and be very angry with us.

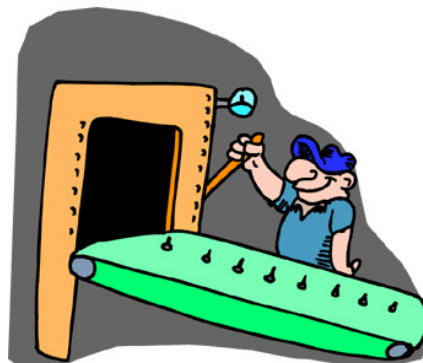
We invite you to look through the new site. Please be patient as we load items into it each day. Remember, if you don't see exactly what you want, you can always call and let us go find the item for you. Nearly any item you see anywhere in any catalog is produced by one of the 4,000 factories we can work with. In some cases we can find a item that is a better value, for example, a mug factory located near you to reduce shipping and overall costs. One

thing we can't put on the web is our proprietary software that has over 800,000 items in it. Don't worry though, it's easy for us to find what you need, just give us a call.

Need an example? One client wanted imprinted red noses, like the kind that Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer



wore. We searched high and low and couldn't find them. Neither could anyone else. For added fun, the client had a specific event that they needed them for. Our solution? A high quality clear sticker with a white imprint, and a regular clown nose. End-result, a item that did what they wanted (blinking nose) and had their logo on it. Delivered on time and assembled by our production department to take the hassle out of it.



Filling your mugs with money

This month I'm going to talk about how to use coffee mugs, or any other promotional product as an incentive in a fundraiser. For my commercial readers it shouldn't be that difficult to stretch this to a sales promotion. I like coffee mugs because they have wide appeal, they are simple, and carry quite a bit of message for the minimal cost. Let's face it, the most important thing in a fundraiser is how much money it can raise for an organization. We've all been plied with Girl Scout cookies, bake sales, chocolate, cookie dough, magazines, etc. However, when you look at a professional fund raiser like a PBS station, public radio, or a charity you'll often find that they are using incentivized donations. They typically read like this, "With your gift of \$25 you will receive this wonderful t-shirt with our logo that is not available in stores." If you are fast with math you see what's going on. A \$3 t-shirt gets a \$25 donation which means \$22 in profit or funds raised. I often tell clients that when it is a school, church, or other worthy cause the value rule flies out the window. People don't stop and ask how good a deal they are getting with God. For good reason too! I'm not advocating that you take advantage of this, I'm just suggesting that you don't have to worry about taking a \$1 coffee mug and using it to sweeten the pot for someone giving \$10 or \$15 to your organization.

In reality, the coffee mug will cost you \$2 by the time you pay setup and shipping. They are heavy, bulky and easy to break in shipment with UPS. The answer at our factory is a specially designed box that cushions each mug so that not even UPS can harm them. Mugs weigh about 1 pound each and that adds up fast. I generally tell clients to budget about \$1 for shipping.

The second key to making this work is to pre-sell the mugs. In a fundraiser this works well also. You don't want to buy 1000 mugs and discover you only have 200 customers. It's far better to sell 200 mugs and then order 215 mugs and only have a few left over. It works best if you can sell at least 144 coffee mugs. Less than that and it can be hard to get them printed.

The third key to making it work is coming up with a slogan or message that is suited to printing on a mug. Keep it simple. Keep it related to the organization or it's mission. One great idea is to have kids do a contest to draw the design. Just keep it to one color and it can be scanned in and printed on to the mugs. Black is the best color for this purpose but other colors can work too.

Here's how the math works: On 144 mugs, you'd wind up spending about \$300. You'd sell them for \$10 each with would bring in \$1440. That would net the organiza-

tion about \$1100. If you've presold them, then you don't have very many left over. You do need to buy them in case quantity, which is sets of 36. You can expand the math a bit and do a two for \$15 and reduce your profit but increase your volume. This is excellent if you are trying to make it to 144 and have a small audience.

The lasting benefit is that the mug will serve as a reminder to the donor about the good your school or church does. It can also raise awareness as it gets used every day or displayed somewhere like a shelf. Each time someone sees it they will think about your organization.



Putting Buttons to Use, Effectively!

Rex Green

We've all seen those little round buttons. Texas Shirt Company is now equipped to produce them in-house for our customers, with very quick turn times. There are many effective uses for buttons the main and most effective use is simply awareness. Financial customers (banks and credit unions) are known to use these to promote a new service, a special interest rate on certain loans, new locations or extended hours. Customers simply being aware of what's offered will increase your results. Restaurant clients can use these for specific promotions as well, such as: extended or changed hours, new menu items, specialties from the kitchen or bar. If you want to ramp up sales in a particular area, you have to push it! Buttons are a great and inexpensive way to promote any area of most any business. We'd be glad to drum up some ideas with you for your next promotion, whether it is internal or external.

January Special- Mention this article and receive free ground shipping on quantities of 250 or more!

Embroidery VS Screenprinting: Differences You Need To Know Part.1

Part 1 - Screenprinting

Screenprinting and Embroidery are two very different animals. They each have limits to their capabilities and understanding the differences is paramount to getting a knockout design with each medium.

Screenprinting is nigh limitless – you can do pretty much anything from reproducing good copies of photographs to printing very tiny writing. Screens range from “low resolution” to very “high resolution”. Think in terms of the thread count of your linens. The higher the thread count the tighter the weave and the softer and silkier the linens feel. The lower the thread count and the courser the linens feel.

Now apply this concept to screenprinting. The lower the thread count of the mesh, the lower the resolution you will get. The higher the thread count of the mesh, the more details you can

capture – such as the nuances in a photograph or SMALL lettering. The lower the thread count of the mesh and the more details you lose.

The choice of garment is important. Different fabrics have different printing limitations. As a comparison, let’s look at different types of paper. Print the Mona Lisa on newsprint and it’ll look pretty good. Print the same art on plain copy paper and it will look better. Print the same art acid free museum quality paper. The same image will look very different on the different types of paper.

While some really amazing things can be done with screenprinting on garments, we need to keep in mind that the average t-shirt is about as porous as newsprint.

If we don’t expect a museum quality print on newsprint paper, then we won’t be disappointed. Instead, we can work together, within the limits of the process and the limits of the fabrics, to produce incredible garments that everyone will adore.