

Communication Handbook - Factsheet 8

Version 1 – April 2012

Promotional products

- ⇒ Most common promotional products
- ⇒ How to choose a promotional item which fits with your project goals
- ⇒ How does your projects brand and image fits with promotional products
- ⇒ Choosing long lasting, useful promotional products suitable to deliver your message
- ⇒ Case study of creative use of promotional products



Promotional products that count

These are the most common promotional products that can be sourced and branded almost anywhere and on-line

- ⇒ Ball point pens / pencils
- ⇒ Coffee mugs
- ⇒ Mousemats
- ⇒ USB flash drives
- ⇒ Conference bags
- ⇒ Umbrellas
- ⇒ Key rings
- ⇒ T-shirts
- ⇒ Conference folders
- ⇒ Notepads
- ⇒ Diaries
- ⇒ Paper weights

This is a rather random selection – which illustrates the random disorganized nature of promotional products. Many of these items have little or no practical value and most of these would not add much value to your project communications.

The other problem is 'promotional product fatigue'. Most people don't need or want a new mouse mat.

Are promotional products a useful addition to your project communications? Because they are easy to source does not mean that they are useful.

Questions to consider

Do they fit with your project goals?

- ⇒ **Are they in line with the messages that you want to convey about your projects?**
What do they say about your project? Do they fit with the themes, the outputs, the deliverables or are they simply merchandise that are useful for people to have?
- ⇒ **How do they support the promotion of your project?**
Is there a creative angle to the product that makes it really memorable? Will people 'want one'?
- ⇒ **Who are you going to give them to? At what event or occasions?**
You don't want your project to come to an end and then find a cellar full of expired promotional materials.
- ⇒ **What do they say about the features and benefits of your project?**

Do they fit with your branding and image?

- ⇒ **Are you able to brand these in line with the image of your project?**
*If purchasing products on-line, can you get the exact specifications of your logos and the EC identity standards? Sometimes you have to adjust settings of images to fit the specifications of the products offered.
Colors and quality of images differ on various media. Are you able to check that the colors that you specify come out right on different materials such as paper, glass, textiles? Sometimes the result is not as you anticipated.*

- ⇒ **Can you fit the logo and message onto the product?**
Some products are too small to be able to represent your logo or message in an appropriate way.

- ⇒ **Will they actually work and continue to work?**
*Cheap ball point pens rarely work for a long time if at all.
Timing – are there any dates contained in your product which will render them redundant after a particular time – e.g. diaries, conference dates on pens, branded stationery?*

- ⇒ **Is the source of these in line with the ethical policy of your project?**
People are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of products and so it is vital to check that the product you buy are from appropriate sources. Many companies that provide cheap high volume promotional products will not be as up-to-date with ethical issues as you are expected to be.

How to distribute?

- ⇒ **Who are you going to give these to? On which occasions?**
Do people want to receive promotional products or will they end up in the bin?

- ⇒ **Do these have a limited or long shelf life?**
*Some simple canvas or cloth conference bags, that are well branded, are really useful to people after the event now that more and more supermarkets charge for carrier bags.

Conference folders can be used for years after the event.

A sturdy good quality umbrella will be used for a long time and will continue to show off the name and brand of the project.*

Promotional products - ingenious carriers of message

Ideally you should only purchase promotional products that are able to carry the message of your projects in a way that other media can't.

- ⇒ *Florescent bicycle clips are cheap, easy to brand and really relevant to a project that deals with sustainable urban transport. They are useful too.*
- ⇒ *Reusable water drinking bottles are a striking and imaginative give-away for a project promoting responsible use of water.*

Here is an example of a campaign where the use of a promotional item was inspiring and creative:

Thames Water

Thames Water, a water supply and sewage disposal company, was struggling to present an interesting and appealing image to target audiences. Thames Water wanted to create a more dynamic reputation and enhance its relationships with the key politicians and opinion leaders who shape its regulatory environment.

What they did

Thames Waters' messages were that through the efforts of Thames Water, the River Thames had achieved the status as the cleanest metropolitan river in the world.

To highlight this in a memorable way, they organized a Parliamentary Charity Duck Race as part of a wider political outreach program.

Members of Parliament were invited to throw large plastic yellow ducks from Westminster Bridge into the River Thames.



The ducks floated along side the Palace of Westminster and the first one to pass the finish line (the steps of the House of Lords) won a donation to a local charity for its Member of Parliament. Through mailings, including gifts of bath-sized rubber ducks; event branding; pre-race festivities and a post-race reception, Thames Water had ample opportunity to spread its positive environmental messages, as well as to develop personal relationships with Members of Parliament.



IN SHORT

Only spend money on promotional products if they fit with your project goals.

Are they in line with the messages that you want to convey about your projects?

How do they support the promotion of your project?

**Who are you going to give them to?
At what event or occasions?**

What do they say about the features and benefits of your project?

and finally... make sure you use them before they expire...