

'Tis (Soon) the Season! Ideas and Trends for Promotional Products for the Upcoming Holidays

The year-end holidays are a prime time for businesses and organizations to recognize loyal customers, hardworking employees, generous donors and helpful volunteers for their valued business or key contributions over the past year. And what better way to thank people for their service than with gifts!

But what should you offer? Almost any thoughtful gift will be appreciated by recipients, but the company or organization that is giving the gifts should strongly consider gifts that also double as promotional items. After all, it usually costs no more to give a branded version of a gift — so why not deliver both your best wishes and your branding?



Here are some ideas and trends to guide you in selecting what items to give this season:

Idea: Drinkware. Branded coffee mugs and insulated water bottles are always popular holiday gifts. Consider sets of glass or even crystal barware if a more impressive offering is called for.

Trend: Drinkware is a category of promotional products that's moving into the retail-inspired realm. While people appreciate any gift, they'll truly appreciate top names like Avex[®], CamelBak[®], Contigo[®], Nalgene[®] and others. The good news? There's no shortage of sizes, styles and price points you can brand with your own logo.

Idea: Bags. Backpacks, tote bags and duffels are an ideal holiday gift, and they're especially valued by recipients if they are attractive and reusable. As a plus, you can pack your gift bag with a product sample, food or beverage!

Trend: If your audience includes Millennials and members of Generation X, they may be quite attracted to bags with recognized names. For example, backpacks from Fjällräven — a leading outdoor supplier and apparel company — are widely admired and could push you ahead of competitors.

Idea: Desktop Accessories. Your company or organization's name and phone number will occupy prime real estate if it gains a place in a client's office.

Tell your promotional products provider your objectives and budget, and ask for some suggestions.

Trend: Today's consumer is increasingly hard to impress and poor-quality or ill-conceived gifts won't cut it. So, while desktop and office accessories remain popular, you may have to dig a little deeper — and spend a little more — to deliver a high-quality item that stands out. One idea? A digital picture frame on which the recipient can display photos of their family.

Idea: Branded Apparel. Customers, workers and volunteers often appreciate receiving logoed caps/hats, shirts and outerwear — among other branded apparel — as gifts. You'll appreciate their services as walking billboards for your company or organization.

Trend: Give some thought to incorporating an attractive graphic into an apparel item in addition to your company or organization's logo. Premium materials are also appreciated, such as moisture-absorbing clothing items with odor control as opposed to simple cotton. Consider promoting your brand alongside today's popular retail brands rather than simply applying it to a generic hat or sweatshirt. Finally, know that people want fun and attractive clothing that fits into their lifestyle, and for many that's casual or athletic wear.

Idea: Electronics. Recognize valued clients, employees and donors with tech gifts that can be used at home as well as work. Wireless Bluetooth headphones, battery chargers, mobile camera lenses and mobile power banks are popular items for anyone who uses a smartphone, which is practically everyone nowadays.

Trend: Technology-related items may prove themselves to be the top promotional trend of 2017, primarily because they're so useful. In fact, the usefulness of a promotional product is the recipient's number one reason for keeping it, per the Advertising Specialty Institute. Giving a practical technology item not only ensures that the gift recipient will have a favorable opinion of your company or organization, it also assures you the product has a high potential for generating ongoing brand exposure during use. One super-hot technology item in 2017 is wireless earbuds. Why? One likely reason is the release of the iPhone 7, which does not have an auxiliary port for traditional headphones.

Idea: Food. There's no denying the appeal of gift baskets filled with delicious treats, but once the contents are consumed, the promotional value is gone.

The solution? Select a holiday food gift that comes with a reusable promotional item, such as nuts packaged in a desktop penholder.

Trend: In today's gift-giving world, two is better than one. So, if your initial thought goes toward a food item, consider pairing it with something complementary. One example? We've all seen the high-end steaks that can be ordered over the phone and delivered direct to your door. How about pairing that gift with a handsome barbeque utensil set or Instagate's Tailgate in a Box® kit that features a portable grill?

Final thoughts: Higher-value advertising specialties are in and items perceived as cheap are out. Now more than ever, recipients are judging the items they receive as gifts — making a direct correlation to the company or organization handing them out. Not surprisingly, giving a poor-quality item says that you didn't put much time and effort into your holiday giving. All of which isn't to say you need to give out expensive items; a branded T-shirt might be appropriate, but consider giving a higher-quality one from a premium brand such as Hanes®, perhaps made with recycled materials.



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