

## Let the billboards walk!

By Carolyn Touhey

We see it every day...everywhere. People wear apparel that bears the logo and/or other branding for companies they don't even own. And, we see people wearing apparel for companies they own or for their employer; this is especially prominent in service industries where imprinted wearables can easily become not only promotional merchandise, but a uniform.

The moral to the story is simple: let people wear your logo and you have an unpaid sales force in the world, or "walking billboards" as the term applies.

When creating a wearables program, you need to identify your objectives first. Is the purpose of the wearable to be for a one-time event (a grand opening or anniversary)? Is the wearable a gift with purchase, as a gift for attending or participating in an event, as a team-builder for a charity event, as a "uniform" for a trade show or conference?

Or, are you creating a profit-center by selling imprinted merchandise as souvenirs?

And, another option is to imprint or embroider various wearables and let people select that which is most appealing to them, since some people like t-shirts and other people want tank tops.

The bottomline is to identify the primary use for the wearables, and consider an over-run for other uses that make sense.

For instance, a marketing company wanted to give shirts to staff members on their anniversary. But, they went ahead and ordered an extra 36 shirts to give to clients and key referral sources and friends, so more "billboards" were on the street...and they got a better unit price by increasing the quantity beyond what they immediately needed.

Second, ask for samples and pricing from your promotional consultant. Not only do you want to check the samples for quality, but make sure the target market for your wearables likes them. For instance, many women do not like unisex shirts as much as more close-fitting shirts. Also, don't assume that just because you may love ball caps that everyone wants one.

You may also want to think beyond your logo for artwork. Perhaps you sponsor a contest to get local student artists to create an appealing image for your apparel, and you then get some publicity for creating a positive outlet for kids to expose their art.

Think also about recycled fabrics, the use of environmentally friendly or threads, as well.

With wearables included in your marketing plan, regardless of how and when you use them, you will create lasting impressions that may have staying power well after you retire, and the company name is still all over town.

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