



Little Products That Can!

Most folks go through life thinking that carrying a big stick gets major results. Well, that couldn't be farther from the truth if you consider some of the powerful outcomes that our industry's "littlest" and/or most basic products have achieved. Here, a few distributors share stories of ordinary little products that pack a big punch.

BY TONIA COOK KIMBROUGH



We've all heard the story *The Little Engine That Could* as a child or read the story to our kids countless times. The tiny train around which the tale is centered isn't anything fancy – just a small coal-fed steamer that gets left behind a multitude of other shiny, sharp engines carrying important loads of passengers. In the end, though, with gumption and a mighty amount of can-do attitude, the Little Engine climbs the biggest mountain to successfully deliver toys to awaiting children on the other side.

Nice, warm and fuzzy, right? Well, you too can delight your clients with a few simple, little products fueled by creative, can-do thinking. We asked *Advantages* readers to share some of their favorite stories of the “little products that could” and here's what they delivered.

Tiny Notes Tell All

Let's start with the lowly little note. Once “sticky” is added to the back, it becomes a beacon calling all who encounter it to “Peel me off and read my message!” That's actually the impetus behind some local newspaper publishers selling advertising “lift notes” to be flagged on the front page of the news. The trend just goes to show how this tiny product makes a big impact.

The potential didn't escape Sheryl Wilk-Sparrow, of P&S Promotional Specialties Inc. (*asi/288990*). She has found that a simple little notepad

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“Sticky Notes are my favorite item, as everyone and anyone can use them.”

– Sheryl Wilk-Sparrow
P&S Promotional Specialties Inc. (*asi/288990*)

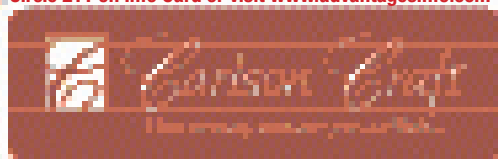
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makes a big impression with her clients. In particular, she uses BIC Graphic USA's (*asi/40480*) 3x3 Sticky Notes to great effect. “Sticky Notes are my favorite item, as everyone and anyone can use them. For example, I used them for a client with a gift-basket business. She has so many themes and holidays she can do baskets for, and wanted to express that with her leave behind,” she says. “We placed her logo and contact information in green and then used a ghost imprint at 10% to list all of the various baskets/holidays she can do, such as coffee/tea, baby arrivals, just because, custom corporate, shiva, thank you, birthday, bath & body and so much more!”

Mug Magic Motivates

For Ross Baxter of The Business Mechanic (*asi/343544*), the strength of an ordinary coffee mug has been one of the most enduring and versatile items he's sold over the years. “From the many case histories I have, one that really stands out was when we used a bone china coffee mug for a SuperClubs Resorts promotion to generate reservations of their premier property, ‘The Grand Lido Resort’ in Jamaica,” he recalls.



The simple mug became an effective vehicle for brand-building and motivation, thanks to the elements supporting the campaign. “The concept was to use a classy mug with the resort logo in full color on one side and a packet of Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee, imprinted (gold packet, black imprint), stuffed into the mug,” Baxter says. “For every reservation a travel agent placed during the promotion, they were sent, via FedEx, a mug and coffee with an insertion card reflecting the quality of Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee as the most expensive in the world. Also verbiage encouraged them to collect a whole set.”

The quality of the resort was conveyed and sales were increased, while the strength of the Grand Lido property brand gained market share in a very competitive environment.

The many versions of mugs in today's marketplace – from translucent to color-changing – allow distributors many opportunities to turn a simple, traditional drinking vessel into a

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LITTLE PRODUCTS, BIG RESULTS

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Innovation

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Over A Half Century of Innovation



Over 300,000 T-shirts were sold to help increase membership in a Nickelodeon *Rugrats* book club.

dynamic vehicle. The mug, with its ability to sit on a desk for hours, serving as a billboard for your client, can carry valuable cargo – whether coffee packets, tea, candies or even a lovely plant.

Tempting Tees

Another tried-and-true product that is often overlooked as a commodity item is the T-shirt. Yes, the simple tee is a ubiquitous product that one might be tempted to count out as a contender for a powerful little promotion. However, it makes the grade because of its long-enduring motivational aptitude – particularly enlivened by creativity.

When direct marketing giant Grolier Books needed a promotional giveaway for its Nickelodeon *Rugrats* book club, in order to increase membership and grow marketshare, the company turned to promotional product specialist Sheree Jordan of The Jordan Group LLC (*asi/237522*).

The T-shirt is one of her all-time favorite “little” products to employ for incentive programs. The trick, she explains, is how you present the offer, and packaging and imprinting that carry the tee through the program. Her solution for Grolier: A colorful direct-mail piece that included an offer for both a free book and colorful *Rugrats* T-shirt. The imprint was silk-screened in 14 colors to depict the characters happily reading a story with the word, “Wow!” to reinforce the point that reading is fun.

The result was as spectacular as Jordan had hoped it would be. Over 300,000 new memberships were generated – meaning that over 300,000 of the pint-sized T-shirts were sold and distributed through Jordan Group. Not only did membership in the book club grow, so did brand awareness thanks to all the little “rugrats” wearing the tees.

Out of Pocket

Just as you’ll see lots of tees on the beaches during Spring Break, you’ll also encounter dozens of Coolies – those foam beverage can coolers. Here’s the thing about a small-but-mighty promotional product: It has the power to spread the word, even after it has been long lost by the original recipient.

This came across clearly for Bruce Korn of ZakBack Inc. (*asi/365556*) when



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“They liked the idea so much the pen has become a staple in their marketing regimen, and they’ve ordered in excess of 50,000 pieces.”

– Cal Ormiston, Outlook Inc.
(asi/288445)

he imprinted an inexpensive giveaway – a collapsible, Pocket Coolie – to stir client interest. “I gave out a bunch of Pocket Coolies that we had produced with Numo (asi/74710) for our own self-promotion. They were imprinted with ‘For Cool ideas, call ZakBack,’ giving our contact information as well,” Korn says.

He distributed them by the oodles to clients, prospects, friends and family. (That’s one of the great perks of those “little” products – you can afford to be generous in your distribution.) Then one of Korn’s friends took the Pocket Coolie with him on a trip to Hawaii. “Upon his return, he was upset that he lost it while on vacation. Not a problem, we had a plenty so I gave him a few more,” Korn says. “Six months later, we get a call from the Lawai Beach Resort in Hawaii. They found this thing and really liked it and wanted to get some for a Roses Parade. Didn’t amount to a huge sale, but it did put our company name halfway around the globe.”

Pens with Power

One clue that you’ve got a powerful little product in your repertoire is an order out of the blue because someone just happened to receive or pick up an item you’ve imprinted or, of course, repeat orders. Cal Ormiston of Outlook Inc. (asi/288445), created just such a scenario by looking at the imprinting opportunities on a basic pen with a fresh perspective.

“Six years ago, I had a meeting with a potential client. My contact showed me a pen with five lines of copy on the barrel. The corporate requirement for all of this verbiage made the message too small to read with ease. I suggested imprinting the Web address on the clip,” he says.

The additional charge to do this was a small price to pay for making the rest of their message easier to read. The client liked the idea so much, the pen has become a staple in their marketing regimen, and they’ve ordered in excess of 50,000 pieces. They are also now Ormiston’s number-one client with a strong, trusting relationship.

A pen is easily the best go-to product for distributors because of its many styles, formats and applications. “Time and time again, when I am stumped for a unique promotion for a bank or an organization that is doing a survey, I use the checkbook pen. It is inexpensive, everyone can use one, it is flat and mails easily. Every time I show it, it is the first time it has been seen, so it always creates a favorable reaction,” says Jovan Van Drielle of Geminus, Inc. (asi/203683).

Today’s pens range in size, style and function. They come in shapes, colors and with mechanical features, such as flash drives for computers. This little product can do more than ever and is very much worth your time to investigate.

Magnetism

Likewise, magnets continue to evolve. But as our reader-respondents showed us, it’s still the simplest of refrigerator magnets that get the most bang for the buck. “Business card magnets have been successful for me in developing business card appointments. I developed one for a blood bank with logo, etc., and left blanks behind,” says Garry Pierce of GC Promo-

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stick2it

NOTES

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“The client placed a first order of 50,000 pieces. The order has been repeated numerous times in the past five years and has been the most successful campaign my client has executed, a response rate of 85%!”

– Evan Cummings,
Evan Cummings Promotions
(asi/172351)

tions (asi/212145). The blood bank then gave out its logoed cards, with a written note indicating when a person gave blood and when they could give again. “People never remember and voicemail doesn’t always work. But with the magnet card, donors take it home, place it on their refrigerator, and the blood bank gets publicity and people remember to go back at a scheduled time,” he says.

The concept worked so well that Pierce applied it to another client – a carpeting business. This time, the magnetic business card carried a message from the company president that was also imprinted with a blank line on which the carpet installation date and warranty expiration could be written. This visible reminder gives the carpet company visibility when visitors are in the home, plus it serves as a reminder to customers to get their carpet cleaned to stay within warranty. “Once completed, new dates can be listed,” Pierce says, keeping the magnet around a household for an even longer period of time.

The great thing about a magnet is its versatility and ability to serve as an add-on to a much larger program. Distributor Evan Cummings, of Evan Cummings Promotions (asi/172351), works with the largest hospital and medical center in his city of Vancouver, WA. His client’s marketing goal was to reach newcomers in the community.

Working with Magnet LLC (asi/68520), Cummings put together a sampling of tri-fold postcards. The client’s graphics department created artwork; the marketing department created copy. “We inserted a sealed magnet into the front of the tri-fold card, which had a form that the newcomer filled out and mailed back to the client. An incentive for them to respond was a free gift, which was a really nice first aid kit from Pillowline (asi/78105) that retails for \$25.

“The entire program was my idea. The client placed a first order of 50,000 pieces. The order has been repeated numerous times in the past five years and has been the most successful campaign my client has executed, a response rate of 85%! Even though my client has a marketing department, they appreciated my creativity. What would have been a one product sale, turned into a three product sale: the tri-fold postcard, the custom magnet and the first aid kit,” Cummings says.

Wow. It’s hard to argue with an 85% response rate – all thanks to creativity and the application of a simple little magnet. So the next time you’re stumped for the latest, greatest promotional product to present to your prospects, consider some of the littlest, most enduring of items in the promotional marketplace. There’s a reason that they’ve been around for a long time. Add some spunk and spark with creative distribution, copy and artwork and you’ve got a nonstop ride to Salesville! ▲

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