

Not using my [name] pen to write you a check



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Pens, t-shirts and apple butter?

Right now, I have a pen on my desk from a design studio in Washington, DC. I like the way it writes. But I don't think I will be using that design studio for any work any time soon.

I have another pen that I picked up at a conference a couple of weeks ago. I also like the way it writes, but I don't like the web hosting company whose name is on it. I used to host my website there and had nothing but problems. I would never take my business back there or recommend the company to anyone. But I do use that pen.

And then there's the t-shirt I picked up for a service I don't even understand, but hey, this t-shirt is super soft and comfy. Or the magnetic calendar I got from the local realtor, who has also delivered apple butter (in a branded jar) to my door.

Is your promotional item really promoting you?

All of these are promotional items, sometimes called

advertising specialties. Some cost pennies each and some cost much more. The question is, no matter how little or a lot you spend on these items, is it money well spent? I believe the answer lies on your expectations.

Sales?

If you expect to gain sales from a promotional item that you have given away without any type of qualification, then you are probably wasting your money. If instead, you ask people to provide an email address or fill a questionnaire, then you will at least have generated a potential lead. However, it's also true most people are willing to give you some information in return for a good item (t-shirt, notebook, etc.) without having the slightest intention of buying from you.

Brand recognition?

If you expect to gain name/brand recognition, and nothing else, and that's all you want, then you will have spent your money well. Promotional items are designed by nature to boost brand recognition. Generally, they are items that you use regularly, like pens or mugs, making the name on the item very familiar to you.

Bottom line

If you want to boost your name recognition, and you have money to spend, it may work in your favor to produce some promotional items. My advice is to choose useful items that people keep around for a while.

If you want to boost your sales, you have to do more than hand out stuff with your name on it. The decision to buy is not simply based on name recognition. It is based on need, trust and perception of value. There are better ways to accomplish

that then spending money on pens and other items. Especially if that pen is never used to write you a check.

In order to allocate your marketing budget wisely, you must be clear on your goals and how much you are willing to spend to accomplish them.