

Growth in promotions

ADVERTISING: Creating the gift that keeps on selling

BY WENDY MCLELLAN BUSINESS REPORTER

As soon as it's in your hand, you know it's going to be impossible to throw away. The clever pen with the flashing top; the clear plastic ice cube that lights up when you drop it in a drink; the magnetic button cover that doubles as a golf ball marker; the key chain with a built-in USB port and memory card.

Promotional products — those logo-stamped little gadgets and ball caps and golf shirts — are a \$2.1-billion industry in Canada that keeps on growing. "If you can think of it, someone is putting a logo on it," said Anne Carroll, president of the B.C. chapter of the Promotional Products Association of Canada. "There is no end to creativity in this industry. People are always coming up with new stuff."

The Association held a small trade show in Vancouver yesterday so that suppliers could show off their products to local distributors, and there were thousands of possibilities on display. Golf clothing, golf balls and golf accessories are clearly popular giveaway items. Then there were booths displaying nifty pens, fridge magnets, lapel pins, T-shirts and foam stress balls.

But promotional products can also be higher-end gifts for special clients and employees who deserve a nice reward, and there were beautiful leather diaries, luggage, wine fridges and even cruise vacations on offer.

"Anything can be a promotional item," said Kurt

Reckziegel, president and COO of the association. "We're trying to get away from the old image of cheap key chains — we still do key chains, but there are lots of other quality products."

The industry employs about 25,000 people across the country and is the fastest growing segment of the advertising and marketing industry, Reckziegel said.

With more than 300,000 products, there is something to please anyone looking to get their logo into your hands. "Everybody likes a gift," he said. "We think we're the targeted personal touch.

And you're not going to throw it away — it keeps on sending the message over and over."

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