



SUCCESS IN BRANDED MERCHANDISE:

3 STEPS TO GETTING IT RIGHT

Executive Summary

Branded merchandise has come a long way. With so many options available now, understanding what is going to best represent your brand and your customers is vital. The right product will make the difference between a highly successful campaign and one that misses the mark.

GHI is a branded and promotional merchandise specialist across a broad range of industries. To create this paper, we teamed up with Sintoro Sales and Marketing, one of Australia's fastest growing consultancy firms.

This Paper examines the key steps you need to consider when researching, selecting, sourcing and producing branded merchandise.

GHI has developed a simple methodology to assist you in making the right promotional product choices. This approach has been tested and refined for over 20 years. It has a proven track record of delivering results for businesses of all sizes and industry types.

Our 3-step Approach...

1. **Match your brand and your customer:** Understand how a promotional item reflects on your brand and is of value to your customer.
2. **Go for widespread appeal:** Make your branded merchandise appeal to the widest audience possible.
3. **Plan the execution:** Be thorough in your planning process to avoid problems and ensure you deliver the right outcome.



**GHI's 3-step
Approach**

Getting it right: Our 3-step Process

When investing time and resources into branded promotional items, there's plenty to consider. The right merchandise can be a great, and cost-effective marketing tool to increase your brand recognition and drive interest in your product or service. So, with multiple options available, how do you get it right?

For this White Paper, GHI together with Sintoro, explored how businesses can make the most out of their investment when it comes to branded merchandise.

The simple, 3-step Process delivers a winning result, regardless of industry or business size.

1. Match Your Brand and Your Customer



Every successful business has two key marketing goals at the forefront of their strategy and planning: building the value of their brand and understanding their customer.

What does your Brand stand for?

“In working with our clients, the ones that achieve the most success are those that have promotional products that represent their brand and the values of the business.”

Anthony Wells, Director, GHI

When looking at promotional items, matching them to your brand, your company standards, reputation and values has to be your focus. Your merchandise must convey the same core marketing messages that the rest of your business does. It absolutely must align.

A common mistake is selecting an item only based on cost, without examining the impact on your customer's view of your brand. Asking yourself “will this convey the right message about our brand?” early in the process can save you a huge amount of time and energy.

Quality is key. The quality must align with what people expect from your brand. For instance, if you are a premium brand, providing a low-quality product clearly conveys the wrong message. Conversely, if your product is at the volume end of the market, high-end branded goods are an unnecessary expense.

Start with the Outcome in mind

Another factor to consider now: what outcome do you want to achieve? It might sound like a simple question, but it's often overlooked.

This is about understanding how a branded item will help you reach your specific goals. So, ask yourself some simple questions...

- **What is your overall purpose?** Are you informing customers and/or prospects of a new product or service? Is it part of a wider awareness campaign? How will the item support your purpose?
- **What action do you want the recipient to take after receiving the item?** Thinking realistically, what is your ideal outcome? Do you want recipients to go to your website, or call you or perhaps sign up for something?
- **When will they act?** Are they likely to have an immediate need or want for your product/service or is the need more likely to arise in the future and you want to be top of mind when it does?
- **How do you want them to feel about your brand?** For example, do you want them to think of you as an experienced brand with a long history? As a Local? As an International?

- **How do you want the customer to engage with the item?** Is the intention to represent what your product or service does, or is it a gimmick to engage the customer with something fun and exciting? Does it have long-term value to the customer? Does it have a practical use? How often are they likely to use it?

Purpose is an important aspect. Longevity is hugely valuable when it comes to promotional items. Developing a concept that has long-term benefits means it's desirable to your customer using the product. It also ensures that your brand stays top of their mind.

Simply put, your customer's perception of your brand is the single most important factor. You need to ensure your branded merchandise matches those expectations.

"Focus heavily on your customer. If they can see a practical use in your promotional item, it has a much higher perceived value. The item itself then becomes in demand and extends the reach of your marketing spend."

Luke Maddison, Director, Sintoro Sales and Marketing



2. Go for Widespread Appeal

Think back to promotional items you have received. It's almost guaranteed that you will have seen an item you thought was an awesome idea. You then promptly forgot all about it and the brand it was promoting.

Having branded merchandise that is quirky might sound great in a team meeting, but will it translate into something that the customer will value? Does it align to your brand values? 'Edgy' items are not always popular or useful and often won't provide the result you need.

Find the Right Balance

Striking the right balance between uniqueness and something with widespread appeal is crucially important. Often simplicity and practicality can provide a much better outcome, whilst still having an unique take or feature: customising an item to suit your specific needs should always be on the table.

When giving your product as wide an appeal as possible, there are good rules of thumb to follow:

- **Stick to unisex:** Unless there's a strong reason to make it gender specific, keep your branded items unisex. There's no point in alienating a big proportion of your potential market straight away.
- **Stay on brand:** Stick to your company or brand colours. It might look great on the item, but it makes it much harder for the customer to link it to your brand. At the end of the day, that's what you are trying to achieve.
- **Target your demographic:** Make sure the item is desirable to your targeted age range and matches the lifestyle they have (or want!).
- **Make it 'everyday':** Daily use items are excellent for ensuring the customer regularly interacts with your brand.

What's trending?

Here's where the value of a good promotional product partner is of real benefit: Understanding what branded merchandise is trending today helps ensure that the items you choose will be seen to have relevance.

A good promotional product partner should be able to advise you on what is working and what isn't. They will have a good understanding of what others have done successfully, both in your industry and in other sectors. This must form part of the discussion from the outset.

3. Plan the execution

As Benjamin Franklin famously said, *"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail"* — still true 250 years later!

Planning and lead-time

The most common mistake encountered with branded merchandise is the lack of foresight and planning. Where is this mostly a problem? In delivery timeframes.

With merchandise being produced overseas, you need to factor in delivery. It often takes 3 to 4 weeks to be produced, excluding samples, design iterations, and unforeseen production delays. Add in shipping from sources such as China and possible Customs delays and it's easy to see why planning ahead is critical.



"We often encounter the challenge of timelines. When planning any promotional item, you need to really understand the time from ordering to delivery. It is not unusual for the whole process to take a minimum 8-10 weeks. For GHI, the absolute number one rule is to make sure the item is delivered on time for the campaign that it is a part of. Planning ahead on this will go a long way to avoiding disaster"

Anthony Wells, Director, GHI

When thinking about the timeframe, include the following in your planning:

- **Brainstorming to generate ideas:** It's always good to have as many ideas as possible on the table from the very beginning.
- **Samples and Concepts:** Look to get an understanding of what the product would look like? Samples take time and it's worth factoring this into your timeline.
- **Budgeting and Quoting:** Have you allocated budget to the project? It may sound simple but it's often overlooked. Many promotional suppliers will require a part payment upfront so having the funds approved and ready will avoid costly delays.
- **Manufacturing and Production:** Working with your supplier, factor in an appropriate amount of time for delivery. It's always safe to add some additional leeway at this stage for production delays or unforeseen challenges.
- **Shipping and Customs:** Whether you choose sea or air freight, you need to factor in the time it will take from the production facility to your door. Adding in enough buffer to cover delays in Customs, unforeseen weather events or other shipping delays is essential.

Remember Important Dates

Running a campaign around key dates such as Christmas? Think about how much of a disaster it would be if your product arrived on January 2nd instead of before Christmas!

This is true for all campaigns, but particularly so around Christmas time and Chinese New Year holidays.

"As a marketing strategy company, we firmly believe in executing from a strong strategic plan. Be smart around your key marketing activities throughout for planning period and ensure that you're well ahead of any potential obstacles. By far the most common challenge we see is missing deadlines and dates through a lack of foresight and planning. It's completely avoidable"

Luke Maddison, Director, Sintoro Sales and Marketing



Think ahead on other avoidable challenges

It's not just factors outside your control: When looking at the execution of your campaign, it pays to think ahead on potential challenges and obstacles.

For example, factors such as unintended offence, potential media backlash (in either traditional or Social Media), mixed messaging, breaching of government regulations, or lack of cultural awareness. Undertaking a risk assessment as part of your planning process can be an incredibly valuable exercise.

Also consider the safety aspects of your chosen product. For example, has it been tested and do you have safety reports? Is the packaging adequate and cosmetically appealing? Are the safety warnings correct and visible? Are there care instructions? Is there a country of origin?

All of these questions are critical for on time delivery and for avoiding potential ramifications.

"So much time, work and money go into a great promotional marketing campaign. Dropping the ball on the final details can bring it all undone in a heartbeat!"

Anthony Wells, Director, GHI

Concluding remarks

Following a tested methodology and selecting a partner you can trust will bring you great results. There's no one magic bullet when it comes to selecting the right branded merchandise. Take the time to understand your brand, the customer, and what you want to achieve with the item. This will get you on the path to success!

The knowledge of your client or audience being targeted will help drive the right level of appeal. The more of your target consumers it resonates with, the more likely it will seem valuable. Understanding what's trending, rather than attempting to design something edgy or quirky, is an excellent rule of thumb to follow.

Planning your campaign with appropriate timelines and avoiding as many predictable challenges as possible gives you the best chance of success. Don't leave it till the last minute: If you plan, you will get a better result.



About GHI

Building a campaign that hits the right customer, at the right time, with the right message is a challenge for all businesses. Making sure it resonates and delivers the right outcome is crucial to your marketing success.

GHI helps you through that process by providing promotional products that compliment your brand and message. Our direct link to the factory means that you have access to the latest and greatest trends, coupled with our expertise in understanding what works. We keep you informed every step of the way so that you know you'll hit the deadlines you require. With GHI you are guaranteed to have the right outcome that brings your brand to life.

So whether it's the latest IT gadget, an environmentally friendly keep cup, or the ever present branded pen, GHI can source options that are cost effective, low maintenance and always on time.

To find out more, visit www.ghimports.com.au



About Sintoro Sales and Marketing

We're a proactive, fast paced consultancy focused on helping you understand why your client buys from you, and then building a strategy to make that happen.

Our approach is to firstly build the right strategy to reach your clients and then help you execute it. We cover everything in the marketing and sales space with a practical, straightforward approach that focuses less on jargon and more on results. So whether it's running your marketing program, training your sales team, or thrashing out a strategy everyone can get behind, we're the right partner to help you make it happen.

Our name comes from the Spanish words 'Sin Toro' meaning 'without bull'. That's our approach! We believe that being direct and straightforward to work with is the best way to work.

To find out more, visit www.sintoro.com.au

