

## **Are Your Promotional Products Part of the Problem – Or Part of the Solution?**

Whether you're onsite at a sales call or staffing a booth at a conference or festival, you don't leave home without promotional products to hand out. Pens, letter openers, hand sanitizer...whatever the occasion or season require.

Gifting is a powerful way to make a good impression. But as your clients grow more aware about green issues, what are your giveaways saying about you? Follow these tips to send an earth-friendly message that's sure to boost your positive impact.

### **Are your gifts made of recycled, recyclable, or easily renewable materials?**

Be warned – it's a popular myth that any plastic item that sports the triangle of arrows can be recycled. In many cases, the exact opposite may be true. Items made of #3 plastic, or polyvinyl chloride (PVC), for example, are highly toxic from manufacture to disposal and cannot be recycled. For a good guide to the different types of plastics, see <http://www.greensage.com/ezone/08zines/05May08/ezone05-08GSGuidePlastic.html>.

If you're offering paper products, such as calendars, look for the highest possible percentage of post-consumer content, along with soy vegetable-based inks.

The best material of all? U.S.-grown bamboo – which requires less shipping, can nearly replace any type of wood, and can be processed into fibers to make deluxe paper and textile products.

### **Can they be reused repeatedly?**

If you're giving items such as pens or containers of liquid or gel-based products, ask the vendor what happens after their contents have run out. Can your prospects run to Staples and buy refill cartridges for your promotional pens? Can they open up your purse-sized sanitizer bottle and refill it with Purell? Can your tin of breath mints become a handy paper-clip box? Or are you giving single-use products that go straight into the landfill once they're emptied?

### **What about packaging?**

Are your products shrinkwrapped inside a nest of boxes, braced with molded Styrofoam and bubble-wrap, or is the packaging integral to the product? In one inspired example of integrated packaging, Walmart required HP to present its laptop computers in stylish messenger bags rather than boxes.

While sustainable products did originally cost more, that is changing as the demand increases and the supply grows. Bottom line? The more we seek sustainable promotional items, the more suppliers will offer them, and our prospects will be inspired to follow our example.