



Reality Check: INTRODUCTION TO THE NONPROFIT TOOLKIT

We must conduct our professional lives during economic crisis and the current cycle is worse than most. Some fear the commitment and financial capacity of the system's supporters may not outlast the recession. To them we say – remember that these storms are periodic. Smart organizations and people figure out how to weather them. They abandon business-as-usual attitudes. Tighten up their practices. Rally and actually grow stronger. The proven response to a cyclical economy is to rediscover core principles and techniques – these being fundamentals so easily overlooked when times are good and optimism abounds.

The Nonprofit Toolkit is about those fundamentals. It is a resource for stations that want to use imprinted products more effectively in fundraising and marketing programs. The information contained here, helpful in good times, is essential during economic retrenchment. So refer to the Cyber-Essays in this Toolkit often. Let them help you better balance your budget-driven concerns against realities of the commercial marketplace. Use them to help you identify best practices in nonprofit branding, marketing and fundraising. Let them show you how to buy wisely, save money and avoid risk when working with a vendor. By better understanding these fundamentals you acquire immediately useful professional tool.

You can trust our advice. We know your business. And ours. We have held or supervised jobs like the ones our clients now hold. We held those jobs in universities and in community agencies, in health associations and in public

broadcasting stations. We also served on governing boards for institutions in each of these categories. Since 1985 we also supplied 16,000+ fundraising and marketing campaigns with imprinted branding products. VisABILITY's three officers spent a combined 51 years as nonprofit employees and board members... and another 59 years as suppliers to nonprofits, primarily in public radio and TV.

In our view most stations fall into one of three rough categories. You might agree or disagree, but we see the following:

- 1) Premium Averse** stations take a principled stand against use of contributor incentives. During periods of revenue shortfall most Premium Averse stations choose to re-examine that decision.
- 2) Premium Obtuse** stations roll along drive after drive, year after year, doing things the same way – with little imagination and less thought. They unfortunately let fundraising programs be guided by folklore, hunches and unexamined practice.
- 3) Premium Adept** stations are by far the largest category. They consider imprinted products an investment, not an expense. They use that investment to enhance revenue from listeners, to increase visibility within the community and to tighten relationships with contributors. To achieve those results they follow basic principles.

It does not matter where your station fits within these three rough categories – you can still use the information in this publication to benefit your station and enhance your own performance.

Start with this Keystone Premise, noted in our own experience and confirmed by tons of market research:

Nothing can put your mission in front of more people, more often, more positively and with less cost per impression, than high-quality imprinted products!

This power is not an absolute virtue. Products with your logo are obviously a marketing asset. They can also be a marketing risk. That's because once a product with your organization's logo is out in the hands of end-users, it is forever beyond your control. Yet it will affect your brand equity in ways that are helpful or harmful as long as it survives. Or as long as it is remembered.

FAQ Lite ~ 5 Basic Questions About the Keystone Concept

Q – What are imprinted promotional products?

A – Useful and/or decorative merchandise imprinted with an organization's name, message and/or logo, thus adapting it to serve as an enduring communications device.

Q – How are they used?

A – They are given away for free. By design these brand recognition products are retained by the end user – and

make a lasting impression. Because they carry a sustaining message many marketing programs, including nonprofit fundraising, consider them essential tools in building brand recognition and affinity.

Q – What is a premium?

The term is defined by use. Imprinted promotional products become premiums when used to induce a person to perform a specific act, like subscribe to The Economist, join a health club, make a charitable contribution or test drive a BMW. The premium is offered as an incentive to act.

Q – Are they effective?

A – Yes. Here are examples of research results:

- A study by the Direct Marketing Association found that a name or logo on a promotional product generates about 50% better recall than the same name or logo in a print publication.
- Baylor University research determined that premiums inserted in direct mail solicitations boost response rates by up to 75 percent.
- A month-long Baylor University study of retail sales contests indicates that periodic distribution of promotional products is a cost-effective sales boost, enhancing sales by up to 50 percent over contests without premiums.

Q – Are they used heavily by nonprofits?

A – The promotional products industry sells \$20 billion worth of logo-ware annually. *The nonprofit sector, including education and medical services, is the largest user of these products, which nonprofits give to prospective and current supporters to build visibility and to attract contributions.*

The Relationship Between Quality and Price

When pennies count, dimes rule. When dimes rule, product quality and constituent affinity often get sacrificed to price.

Going “Green” With Your Premiums

The responsible thing to do? Current marketing hype? Either way, you need to know what it means to “go green” with your premiums.

Don’t Spend More. Just Buy Better.

Four principles that will help you use your budget more wisely.

Control Your Own Product Aspirations

Your personal taste is much less important than you think. In fact, it may lead to disaster. If it does, the disaster will also be personal.

Don’t Buy Products. Buy Results!

Start the product selection process at the back-end. Decide on intended results. Then work forward to budget allocation and product selection.

Screen-printing: A Brief Explanation

Screen-printing applies your logo to most products. Why not be the only person at your station who can explain how it actually works?

Six Things Nonprofits Can Learn From Profits

Yesterday’s nonprofit heresies have become today’s common sense for professional station management.

Nonprofit Vulnerability

Because they fail to understand underlying market dynamics, many nonprofits continue to fall into common traps in purchasing and effectively using imprinted products.

How Logos Define People

The core principle underlying the use of logo products as contributor incentives in our affinity-market: pride-of-association.

Don’t Waste Money On Premiums

Why public broadcasting premiums attract contributions and upgrades when used effectively... and how to make them work better for your station.

Selecting and Training a Vendor

You must plan realistically, evaluate thoughtfully, test carefully and buy cautiously. But remember: you and your promotional products vendor might have very different values and goals.

What Your Mother Never Told You About the Graphic Standards Policy

Your organization’s branding elements are among its most valuable assets. Treat them lightly only if your resume is up to date and your bridges are already burning. Graphic Standards and job security do go hand-in-hand.



**443 Main St./POB 1659
Lyons, Colorado 80540**

Imprinted logoware for nonprofit fundraising & corporate branding programs