

Market: Drinkware Program: Product Launch

A glass company launched a new line of color-changing glassware in an online catalog, and company reps wanted a unique way to promote the product in-house. So they turned to a distributor for ideas. After discussing marketing and promotional objectives, the distributor called on Buffalo, NY-based Apple Imprints Apparel to print specially decorated T-shirts for the drinkware company's employees.

"We worked with the distributor and decorated 100% cotton basic T-shirts with sun-sensitive photochromic color-



changing ink," says Mary Poissant, marketing and sales manager at Apple Imprints Apparel. "We distributed them during the initial product launch for in-house manufacturing and office personnel."

The initial T-shirt order was 576 pieces, and the team at Apple Imprints projects 10,000 of this particular design will be printed in 2013. "While color-changing inks aren't unique to the silk-screen print industry," explains Poissant, "they have become more popular in the last year in promoting new product launches and events."

Sun-reactive inks are available for a variety of applications, such as packaging labels, ceramic mugs, stickers, toys and more. Pair an apparel item decorated with photochromic ink with other sun-reactive promotional items for robust branding purposes, product launches and event publicity.

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Poissant suggests thinking outside the box when designing decorated apparel to be used for product promotion; a T-shirt with a unique attribute, she says, will enjoy a long life of wear. "The success of this item is in the longevity of the T-shirt in the end-user's possession," she says. "Printed T-shirts with a distinctive characteristic, such as color-changing ink, glow-in-the-dark ink, glitter highlights, gel accents and more, are perceived as higher value and certainly kept." It also has more of an impact when the sun-sensitive print blends in well with the apparel. "The more hidden the ink is," she says, "the greater the impact of the design when it finally appears."

Market: Technology Program: Meeting Giveaway

When the Windows Phone division of Microsoft proceeded through the planning of a recent all-company meeting, the organizers decided to design and distribute a quality, branded giveaway for attendees as a souvenir of the gathering and an appreciation gift. To find a solution, they turned to Image Source (*asi/230121*), which had secured a coveted partnership deal with Microsoft several years ago.

"We're one of a small handful of



approved Microsoft merchandise & apparel partners, and we work with every major business unit," says Jeff Holt, vice president of marketing. "Since we landed the Windows Phone merchandise website project, we've been the official provider of their branded products."

Image Source's client came to the distributor needing ideas for a giveaway for 2,400 people. "The project entailed finding the right item to appeal to a broad audience, providing an appropriate size run for both men and women, packaging the apparel in a specific way to aid in distribution and hitting an aggressive delivery date," says Holt.

Holt and his team worked with supplier Cutter & Buck (*asi/47965*). "We decided to work with them, as our longtime supplier partner, for a variety of reasons," says Holt, "including their ability to locally deliver to the Microsoft campus in Redmond, WA, the overall quantity requirement, a short production schedule and the client's desire for top-quality jackets. Cutter & Buck's deep, local inventory levels and very high overall level of quality were great matches for our particular needs on this project."

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To succeed with a similar promotion, says Holt, put the sales pitch to the side when necessary. "I suggest that companies ask good questions up front and then really listen to the client," he says. "It's amazing what you can hear when you're not busy trying to fill every moment with sales talk. Good merchandise and solid strategy sell themselves."

Market: Pets Program: Charity Fundraiser

In November 2012, Switch, an experimental marketing agency in St. Louis, MO, launched the Ugly Holiday Sweater Tees fundraiser for its annual "Switch-mas." This event benefits local charitable organizations. In deciding on a four-week campaign centered on the holidays when themed clothing is in high demand, Switch's team was left wondering how they could combine those two factors into a win for the cause, all while helping the sweater-less guarantee style



success at their holiday events.

For the second consecutive year, Switch chose to donate funds raised in the campaign to the nonprofit Animal Protective Association (APA) of Missouri, which provides shelter and adoption services for homeless dogs and cats and animal welfare education to the public. Switch implemented social media and local media exposure in St. Louis to get publicity for the cause. According to Public Relations Specialist Jen Beidle, "Switch's effort netted many free mentions in the media valued at approximately \$25,000, with 807 Facebook likes, 119 Twitter followers, more than 6,000 website visits and more than 61,000 impressions on LinkedIn."

All proceeds from the \$22 T-shirts featuring holiday sweater designs were donated to the APA, raising \$13,065 during the campaign with the sale of 820 T-shirts. Since 2009, Switch has donated nearly \$50,000 during holiday campaigns to local charitable organizations. "We thrive on using design to create something good for people – or animals – who really need our help. These shirts represent that intersection, and make you look totally rad, too," says Brent Coder, creative director at Switch.

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Get involved in the community. By teaming up with a local nonprofit, Switch was able to reach a wider audience for its brand, gain more social media attention and benefit a deserving cause that will have longstanding positive results for both APA and Switch.

Market: Repeat Clients Program: Social Media Campaign

PostcardMania, a company focused mainly on direct mail marketing, has always prided itself on innovative and wacky promotional campaigns. Last year, the company used the romantic spirit of Valentine's Day to generate revenue through a creative social media campaign.

In early February 2012, the company mailed packages including red wax lips and a holiday-themed postcard to its top 500 customers. The postcard encouraged clients to put on the lips,



take a photograph and post it on the PostcardMania Facebook page. Those who complied received a complimentary copy of PostcardMania CEO's informative book, *The Ultimate Postcard Marketing Success Manual*.

The brains behind the idea was Sarah Kicinski, PostcardMania's CMO. Kicinski's goal was to develop an inexpensive and simple way to target customers who may have been overlooking their direct mail marketing needs. The campaign was essentially a reminder for loyal clients to place their next postcard order.

It was not only a fun way to celebrate the holiday, but it also proved to be a huge success. "Out of the 500 customers, 68 new orders were placed on or within the same week as Valentine's Day," says Amanda Rice, director of public relations at PostcardMania. "Those 68 orders resulted in \$102,637"

Along with the financial success of the promo, the company also received a hearty amount of social media attention. Eighteen customers posted wax lips photos onto their Facebook page, and three of those customers sent e-mails thanking the staff for their free version of the educational book. Although the campaign targeted returning customers, it also seemed to catch the eye of new prospective clients. The company's Facebook page received 20 new "likes" within the week of the promotion.

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Dream up ways to stand out and follow-up with loyal clients. PostcardMania used the fervor of the romantic holiday along with the power of social media to generate revenue. Don't forget to have fun with it!