



The ROI of Promotional Products: Which Items Deliver the Most Value?

By: OPVEON Creative

When businesses evaluate marketing spend, the same question always comes up: what kind of return will this actually deliver?

While digital ads and social media campaigns can generate quick bursts of visibility, promotional products operate differently. They create ongoing, repeated brand exposure every time the item is used. Instead of disappearing after a few seconds, they remain in circulation for months or even years.

According to the **2026 ASI Global Ad Impressions Study**, promotional products generate an average of **approximately 3,300 lifetime brand impressions per item**, with a median **cost per impression of around \$0.006 (six-tenths of a cent)**. The study also found that **82% of consumers remember the advertiser** on a promotional product and **78% keep items specifically because they are useful**, reinforcing that utility is the primary driver of long-term brand visibility.

Not all promotional products perform equally, however. The real ROI comes down to how often an item is used and how long it stays in someone's daily routine.

Why Promotional Products Deliver Strong ROI

Promotional products work because they're practical. Instead of interrupting someone's day with an advertisement, they become part of it.

A branded pen on a desk, a tote bag at the grocery store, or a tumbler used during a morning commute keeps your business visible long after an event, meeting, or purchase.

The most successful promotional products share three characteristics:

- They're useful.
- They're used frequently.
- They're kept for a long time.

When all three factors come together, your brand continues working without any additional advertising spend.



1. Drinkware: One of the Best Long-Term Investments

Branded drinkware including tumblers, water bottles, and coffee mugs remains one of the strongest performing promotional categories because of its high frequency of use.

ASI data shows that promotional drinkware generates **approximately 1,300 lifetime impressions per item**, largely because most recipients use it weekly or daily. **Drinkware is typically retained for 13 to 14 months**, making it one of the longest lasting promotional items in circulation.

The combination of frequent use and long retention means a single item continues generating brand exposure long after the initial distribution.

Best for:

- Employee appreciation gifts
- Client gifting
- Corporate events
- Customer loyalty programs



2. Tote Bags: Walking Advertisements

Tote bags are one of the most efficient promotional products when it comes to cost per impression.

ASI research shows that a **\$6 tote bag generates approximately 4,900 lifetime impressions**, with a cost per impression of just \$0.001, which is one tenth of a cent.

Because they are used in public settings like grocery stores, events, travel, and daily errands, tote bags extend brand visibility far beyond the original recipient.

Few marketing channels can match that level of sustained exposure at such a low cost.

Best for:

- Trade shows
- Conferences and expos
- Community events
- Retail promotions



3. Pens: Affordable and Effective

Pens and writing instruments remain one of the most widely used promotional products because they are practical, portable, and consistently shared.

According to ASI, promotional writing instruments generate an average of **1,900 lifetime impressions per item**. The study also found **77% of consumers would be more likely to do business with an advertiser** who gave them a promotional writing instrument.

Because they are inexpensive and frequently used across both professional and personal settings, pens remain a dependable driver of long-term visibility.

Best for:

- Networking events
- Professional offices

- Healthcare settings
- Financial services



4. Apparel: Brand Visibility Beyond the Workplace

Branded apparel creates some of the highest visibility of any promotional product because it turns recipients into active brand ambassadors.

ASI data shows apparel can generate thousands of impressions over its lifecycle due to repeated public exposure. **Apparel is typically retained for 9 to 12 months**, offering nearly a full year of brand visibility.

Unlike most promotional items, apparel also multiplies reach by creating impressions every time it is worn in public.

Best for:

- Employee uniforms
- Company events
- Brand awareness campaigns
- Community sponsorships



5. Office & Desk Products

Desk accessories, notebooks, calendars, and similar office products create consistent brand exposure in environments where work is happening every day.

ASI research shows that desk and office accessories generate approximately **1,200 lifetime impressions per item**, while calendars generate around 400 lifetime impressions. Although calendars generate fewer total impressions, their daily use provides steady, predictable visibility throughout the year.

Because these items remain in direct line of sight during work hours, they reinforce brand awareness continuously.

Best for:

- Law firms
- Corporate offices
- Healthcare organizations
- Client onboarding kits

How to Choose Promotional Products That Perform

The highest ROI promotional products aren't always the most expensive. They're the ones your audience will actually use.

Before placing an order, ask yourself:

- Will this product be used regularly?
- Does it fit my audience's lifestyle?
- Is it something people are likely to keep?
- Does it represent my brand well?

A smaller quantity of useful products often produces better results than a large quantity of items that get discarded.

The Bottom Line

Promotional products remain one of the most effective ways to increase brand visibility and create lasting impressions. The key is choosing items that provide genuine value to the people receiving them.

Drinkware, tote bags, pens, apparel, and office products consistently deliver some of the strongest returns because they stay in use and keep your brand in front of customers long after the initial interaction.

At OPVEON Creative, we help businesses find promotional products that fit their goals, budget, and audience. Whether you're preparing for a trade show, community event, employee appreciation initiative, or marketing campaign, our team can help you select products that make an impact.

Ready to put your brand in customers' hands? Contact OPVEON Creative with your project details, and we'll help you find promotional products that work as hard as you do.