

The art of dealing with difficult people

Entrepreneur

THE 10 BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES OF NEXT YEAR

Millennials, mockbusters, craft booze, cowboys (and more) revealed

TRENDS

2014

SELL MORE!
HARNESS THE POWER
OF HUMOR

WHY STARTUPS FAIL
IN THE SECOND
FUNDING ROUND



DECEMBER 2013 | ENTREPRENEUR.COM

Self-promotion that keeps on giving

SURE, YOUR CLIENT might like that holiday bottle of wine or basket of cookies, but what do gifts like that say about your creativity? Take a tip from these design firms, who've dreamed up client gifts that get attention, inspire interactivity and promote their own unique identity. —Lynn Haller



Touchwood Design in Orangeville, Ontario, is known for creative self-promotions, which often play off the “wood” in the firm’s name. “On a recent trip to New York we came across a cool wooden puzzle, and it immediately struck a chord,” says creative director Shawn Murenbeeld. “The robot puzzle was designed by David Weeks for Areaware [a Brooklyn-based consumer-products company], and it addressed all our requirements for an interesting gift. We ordered a bunch of them and then designed, silk-screened, hand-trimmed and folded the boxes. We proceeded to brand our logo directly onto the wood puzzle.”

For its 2012 client gift, Seattle design and illustration firm Invisible Creature came up with a fictional retro Lego set based on its cyclops-mummy logo. (Lego, a client, approved the project.) The firm used Lego’s Digital Designer software to design the 3-D toy and ordered all the necessary elements. “We toiled around with numerous shapes before landing on a perfect sphere that also doubled as a container with a hinged lid,” says Invisible Creature owner and principal Don Clark.

The box—each customized with the client’s name—was another production. “Since we wanted the box and presentation to feel as authentic as possible, we set up a photo shoot using my own children as models (decked out in vintage clothes via Etsy) and re-created a Lego scene à la 1970s and ‘80s toy packaging,” Clark says. The firm extended the promotional value of the limited-edition gift by posting a documentary on the project to its blog.

“We have a soft spot for nostalgia, and one of our favorite childhood toys was the View-Master,” says Sara DeRose, creative director and copywriter at Colorado Springs, Colo.-based Fixer Creative Co. “We searched out a company to make customized View-Masters in our brand colors of white and black and created a slide [show] with fun projects and moments we had with our clients throughout the year. We also included a few vintage slides unique to each client’s industry or interests. We designed and wrote a short message inside to each client on a series of four small cards that, when turned over, became a puzzle.” Recipients were so happy with the gift that they continued to show it off long after the holidays were over, resulting in new clients for Fixer.

For a gift that keeps clients interacting throughout the holiday season, Calgary, Alberta-based Trigger Communications designed a nontraditional take on the advent calendar, with chocolates and activity suggestions for each of the 25 days leading up to Christmas. “Designed from the ground up, it’s a gift that injects a tiny bit of creativity and tasty treats into the holiday,” says Trigger president Larry Bannerman.



JARGON

Job (v.)

DEFINITION: To take on the characteristics or mannerisms of Steve Jobs.

USAGE: Ray has been Jobbing it lately. He kept us in a meeting until midnight, came up with a handful of brilliant new strategies, yelled at us for being idiots, then thanked us for being so dedicated.