



# ADVERTISE IN STYLE

## BUILDING YOUR BRAND WITH PROMOTIONAL APPAREL

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**APPAREL  
LITERALLY  
GOES  
EVERYWHERE  
THAT PEOPLE  
GO**

### a. Why Apparel?

Everyone wears clothes. Everywhere. Almost all of the time.

Apparel is one of the most important categories of promotional items and a must-have in your brand building toolbox. With its variety in style and functionality, you can use apparel to fit any situation, personal taste or brand value. This versatility gives you the ability to promote your brand both internally and externally.

Because apparel literally goes everywhere that people go – home, work, out with friends – it has the potential to display your logo or message in front of a large amount of people. This means impressions. The Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) found that the average promotional cap leaves 3,136 impressions per month and the average t-shirt leaves 2,450 impressions per month.\* When you multiply those numbers by how many caps or t-shirts you give away, the number of impressions skyrockets. However, impressions only scratch the surface of the benefits of promotional apparel.

#### Non-Verbal Communication

Apparel shapes the perception of the individual. What an individual chooses to wear is an expression of their personality, identification with a social group or a promotion of shared values. Research has shown that 55% of a first impression is based on physical appearance.\*\* Understanding this, brands can cash in on non-verbal cues created by personal style or brand.

First, apparel shapes how your brand is perceived by your target audience. For example, the attire worn by the service staff in a restaurant sets the tone for the dining experience that customers can expect. Compare the famous and less than modest Hooter's uniform to the all-black uniform, complete with button up shirt and tie, worn by staff at five-star restaurants. Both accurately portray the brands that they represent and create the atmosphere that identifies with their target audience.

\* Research provided by the Advertising Specialty Institute, ©2016, All Rights Reserved

\*\* Albert Mehrabian, *Silent messages: Implicit Communication of Emotions and Attitudes.*

Header images courtesy of SanMar

## WEARING APPAREL WITH A LOGO IS A PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT FOR THAT BRAND

Apparel can also serve as a personal endorsement. When a person chooses to wear a cap with your logo on it, they are actively aligning their personal brand with yours. Because of the personally expressive nature of clothing and style, that alignment is a powerful influence on all who see them. While it may not be as grandiose as a celebrity endorsement, this personal endorsement is more genuine and potentially more influential.

### Let's Check the Statistics

As a promotional tool, apparel has been proven to be a viable vehicle for brand awareness and continues to surpass other forms of promotional advertising in effective long lasting impressions. In their 2016 Global Advertising Specialties Impressions Study, ASI returned the following results about promotional apparel:

- **58% of U.S. consumers own a promotional shirt, 41% own promotional headwear and 50% own promotional outerwear.**
- **85% recall the advertiser that gave them a shirt or hat.**
- **On average apparel items are kept for 7 months.**
- **Apparel products are ranked among the Top 5 most influential products. (Outwear is #2 and Performance Wear is #5.)**
- **Apparel items, whether they are shirts, outerwear or hats, are cited as the most enjoyable to own by consumers.**

### CONSUMERS LIKE PROMOTIONAL ADVERTISING

The 2016 Global Advertising Specialties Impressions Study also found that when asked what types of advertising they like best, consumers under 55 prefer promotional products over news, magazine, radio, television, mobile and internet ads.

What do these numbers mean for the advertiser? Over half of average consumers not only own a piece of promotional apparel, they enjoy having it. Apparel owners remember the brand favorably while generating an average 19,215 impressions in the typical seven months they keep them.

### b. How to Use Apparel

Now that you have an idea of what apparel can do for your brand, let's look at a few applications. It may seem pretty straight forward – someone wears a shirt or cap with your logo – and for the most part it is. However, understanding the different reasons to use apparel and how it is distributed can help you maximize the effect it has on your brand.

#### As a Billboard

The most basic application of promotional apparel is to use it like a billboard – displaying your logo and message so that as many people see it as possible. In this case, your caps and t-shirts build your brand through simple exposure. This can

## FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN BUDGET, MESSAGE AND STYLE.

### UNIFORMS

*"When you pull on that jersey, you represent yourself and your teammates. And the name on the front is a lot more important than the one on the back!"*

- Kurt Russell as Herb Brooks in *Miracle*

work in one of two ways. First, the more common is the indirect way of giving apparel to the masses for them to wear at their discretion. The second and more direct way is by placing several pre-determined people (like staff) wearing your apparel in places or at events where there are a lot of people.

In deciding how to create your "billboard," you need to find the right balance between budget, message and style. If you are looking to pursue a more generic audience and want sheer numbers, basic t-shirts or caps will stretch your budget to give you the maximum coverage. If your audience is more defined, your apparel selection will need to reflect that through the style, brand or functionality of each piece. The closer you match your apparel to the style of your audience, the more likely they are to wear it.

### As a Uniform

Uniforms can be used to help build a distinct culture that strengthens your brand internally. Through an effect called organization identification\*, uniforms help employees identify with the organization's mission and brand values. Similar to the effect of an athletic team's jersey, this alignment between personal identity and corporate identity improves loyalty and positively affects job performance. As the front line of your brand experience, higher performance builds your brand externally.

Customers notice the difference, too. The right uniform can also help create the proper atmosphere for your brand experience. Uniforms make your employees easier to distinguish from other patrons and project a level of reliability and professionalism to the customer. A study found that 60% of prospective customers feel that uniforms make a worker look better trained and proud of their company.\*\* The perception leads to a customer who is confident doing business with you.

So what makes a uniform? It can be as simple as a polo shirt with your company logo on it or more complex with additional branded pieces like caps, ties or jackets. Differing uniform colors and styles can be used to recognize achievement or distinguish between specific functions within the organization. To be successful, the uniform must be acceptable to the employees who wear them. The style, functionality and performance of the apparel pieces must fit the working conditions of the employees.

### As a Prize

Want to get a crowd of people worked up into a frenzy? Start throwing out free t-shirts. Or, better yet get the t-shirt cannon. People love free caps and shirts and giving them away is a great way to build brand awareness. No matter how you distribute the prized apparel pieces, build an exciting experience and story to share involving your brand. By creating a more emotional connection, they are more likely to wear it and take your brand wherever they go.

## PEOPLE LOVE FREE CAPS AND T-SHIRTS

\*Source: Tompkins and Cheney (1985)

\*\*Source: Weintraub Associates

## USING APPAREL AS AN INCENTIVE WILL IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF YOUR ROI

You can take this concept further by making the apparel piece something to earn. Building brand awareness is great, but what if you received something valuable to your business in exchange for the piece? This could be having a prospect give their contact information, filling out a survey or anything that leads them closer to taking the desired action – purchase, donate or volunteer. Make the prized garment more desirable by using an interesting or exclusive imprint or more trendy style. Using apparel as an incentive prize rather than a simple giveaway will improve the quality of your ROI.

### As Merchandise

Fans spend \$3 billion per year on their favorite National Football League team merchandise.\* You too can create a healthy revenue stream by selling brand apparel. In addition to the revenue, you are giving fans a way to express their loyalty and fandom everywhere that they go. The personal endorsement of your brand is stronger because the wearer is letting everyone know that they were happy to spend their own hard-earned money to align their personal brand with yours.

You first need to create a reason for people to want to buy your apparel. If your brand represents a sports team, tourist attraction or nonprofit organization, you may have enough of a loyal fan base willing to wear your logo. If not, you still have a few options. You can sell commemorative shirts or caps for an event that you are hosting or sponsoring. The event name and year should take precedence, but if your brand name and logo are on the shirt then you'll still earn impressions. If there is a specific charity that your organization supports, sell apparel and donate a portion of the proceeds to that charity. Even if your logo is not the main reason why the shirt or cap is purchased, you will still earn some revenue and gain more brand awareness.

### As a Partnership

Apparel, particularly t-shirts, offers a large canvas that can handle multiple brands. Co-branding happens when two or more brands appear on a single promotional piece. The brands split the cost and are able to reach more people for the money than they would have by themselves. Co-branding occurs most often in sponsorship situations, but it's a tactic that can be used with any complementary businesses, partners or affiliates.

In addition to splitting the cost and reaching more people, co-branding can add credibility to your brand. Brand transference happens when a person, upon seeing both brands together, transfers the qualities associated with one brand (positive or negative) to their perception of the other. Your partner's audience will transfer the trust they have in your partner and feel more connected with your brand because of it.

### BRAND TRANSFERENCE

*When a person, upon seeing both brands together, transfers the qualities associated with one brand (positive or negative) to their perception of the other.*

\*Source: The Licensing Letter

\*\*The Transference Of Brand Attitude: The Effect On The Celebrity Endorser. Samuel Doss Florida Institute Of Technology

## As Event Marketing

Because of the role it plays in brand building, merchandising and logistics, apparel is an important consideration for any event. When exhibiting at a trade show, career fair or other event, apparel worn by staff helps set the tone of your booth and makes them easier to identify for attendees. Even if you are simply attending with your team, having matching branded apparel can help you establish a brand presence at the event and make it easier for everyone to find each other.

When hosting an event, provide apparel for staff or volunteers. This makes it easier for attendees to identify them when looking for information or help. Selling event-specific apparel can create an additional revenue stream from attendees looking for a souvenir. If it is an annual event, the event cap or t-shirt can become collectible and sought after each year by your loyal fans. The apparel sold also provides additional off-season exposure for your event, generating buzz for the next one.



Image Credit: SanMar Corp.

### COMPANION STYLES

*Companion styles feature similar styling cues yet are distinctly tailored for men or women.*

## c. What to Choose

However you use promotional apparel for your organization, it needs to do three things: 1. Accurately reflect your brand image. 2. Make the right impression on the wearer and others who see it. 3. Stand out. Fortunately, there are plenty of options in promotional apparel to help you fashionably accomplish all three.

### Style

The style or type of apparel piece can make as much of a statement about your brand as the logo that you place on it. A unisex t-shirt, while an excellent canvas for creativity, makes a completely different statement than a traditional polo shirt with a modestly embroidered logo on the left chest. A v-neck fitted tee gives a casual, trendy feel while performance apparel can portray an active, progressive brand. Neither of these options is more advantageous than the other. It's a matter of finding the piece that delivers the impression that you want to leave.

Today, styles in promotional apparel follow closely with the trends found in retail stores. Women are no longer stuck wearing polos and dress shirts that were designed to fit men. Choosing companion men's and women's styles will make your apparel more desirable to wear. The right style increases the likelihood of your apparel being worn in public by your fans and makes your employees comfortable, confident and ready to perform at their best, which also makes your brand look good.

## Function and Performance

For a simple promotional apparel giveaway, just about any garment will work. However, if you are using promotional apparel for a uniform or athletic event, you may want to look at some of the performance properties of the pieces that you select. The features may be as simple as long sleeves or short sleeves or as complex as anti-microbial or UV protective fabric. When deciding on features for your promotional apparel, make sure they match the needs of your employees or lifestyle of the intended recipient.

Apparel chosen for an employee uniform should resist the fading that comes with multiple washings and wear. For those who travel a lot, wrinkle-resistance and stain-resistance would be welcome features. Moisture wicking shirts are always appreciated at athletic events and by those working outside or in other sweat inducing environments. These additional considerations make the garment more useful to those who receive them and they, in turn, will choose to wear it more.

Performance wear has become a staple of everyday casual fashion, even when the technical properties of performance wear aren't needed. Active wear styling and fabrics are coveted by many wearers and have a high perceived value.



### **TONE-ON-TONE**

*Tone-on-tone embroidery matches the color of the garment, gives it a subtle, professional look and allows you to use apparel colors outside our brand's standard palette.*

## Color

The obvious choice is to choose apparel colors that match your brand. Lighter colors like white or heathers give you a clean canvas to make your logo and all of its colors pop. If you can't find a color that matches or would like to utilize more trendy colors, a one-color imprint or tone-on-tone embroidery can give you that flexibility. Bright safety colors make a person easy to spot in dangerous work environments, crowded events or when riding a bike at night. Apparel comes in as many colors as you can think of, so let the creativity flow.

## Brand Names

You may not have heard of some of the apparel brands offered in the promotional market, but they are still high quality garments. Non-retail brands can offer you the same quality at a more affordable price point.

Other brands, like Hanes®, Gildan® or Nike®, you will recognize from your favorite retail stores. Because they are more familiar, retail brands offer a higher perceived value to your promotional apparel. In most cases, these brands already have loyal customers. When your audience sees their favorite retail brand associated with your brand, your message instantly becomes more credible.

Through brand transference, your brand's perception receives a boost from the brand on the label. Customers know they can trust the retail brand for quality products, and you can, too. You can have confidence in the apparel you choose because it upholds the same standards retail customers expect.

**COMMON DECORATION METHODS**



**Appliqué:** Decoration or trimming cut from one fabric piece and stitched to another to add dimension or for design techniques.



**Digital Printing:** A 4-color process of printing directly from a computer file onto a garment.



**Embroidery:** Decoration consisting of needlework created using a special machine that is programmed to stitch a design combining texture, pattern and color.



**Laser Etching:** A process that uses laser technology to etch or burn a mark on fabric.



**Screen Printing:** The process of printing by squeezing ink through screens allowing color to pass through open areas to create a design. Multi-colored designs are achieved using one screen for each color.

Source: Vantage Apparel

In choosing a brand name, remember to pick one that aligns with your message so there isn't much disconnect. Consider how the retail brand markets itself. Does its key messages and target audience complement yours?

**Decoration**

Decoration style and location can be used to create a truly unique look that grabs attention. Screen printing is the go-to method for t-shirts and offers flexibility in size, colors and location of the imprint. Embroidery is typically used for everything else and offers a more reliable and durable decoration. Digital printing allows for full color graphics and allows you to maximize the full canvas of your t-shirt without paying per color. Laser etching and appliqués offer unique effects to help your promotional apparel grab attention and build your brand.

The standard locations for decoration on apparel is either the left chest or in the center. Our eyes are trained to look for logos in these locations. The back of the garment offers a larger area to display more complex artwork or messages and is more socially acceptable to look at long enough to read. The sleeve offers subtlety yet still grabs attention for the unique decoration location. Digital print gives you the flexibility to print all over a t-shirt to create a truly unique piece.

**d. Anything Wearable**

Apparel makes a statement. It gives you the opportunity to unify your employees, customers, volunteers and fans to personally endorse your brand. While some of the most popular apparel items are still shirts and hats, other items are available to help your brand get noticed. If you're looking at uniform apparel, pair pants or shorts with tops and sweaters. Appeal to athletes with branded sweatpants, headbands and outdoor gear that lets them train comfortably in colder weather. Consider accessories such as aprons, gloves, shoes and badges or pins, too. If your industry requires specialty items, ask for them. A promotional products expert can help you. The promotional apparel world has it all: reflective safety vests, fireproof threads, kid and pet-safe items.

Promotional apparel offers a wide range of options for you to choose a style that accurately reflects your brand and makes people notice. Its usefulness makes it a popular and effective choice for building your brand. Few other promotional products are as useful, flexible or appreciated. Remember, if you can wear it, you can brand it and advertise in style.



## About HALO Branded Solutions

Headquartered in Sterling, Illinois, HALO Branded Solutions is centrally located in order to support a national client base. In addition to our 100,000 square foot, state-of-the-art distribution and processing center, we maintain regional sales offices in key corporate markets.

HALO employs 300 corporate service team members with decades of knowledge and experience who support the over 900 creative and resourceful Account Executives across the nation who focus on implementing effective marketing solutions for over 40,000 satisfied clients each year.

HALO is a global leader of promotional solutions, combining creativity, innovation and the most sophisticated technology for dynamic results. As a "full-service" promotional products distributor, we offer:

- Company stores and fulfillment services.
- Competitive pricing, including our popular Best Sellers and BrandED merchandise programs.
- Secure Source, HALO's comprehensive product safety and social compliance program.
- Award winning marketing support for your internal and external branding campaigns.
- Brand management expertise to create consistency in logo use throughout your organization.

With top-quality products, over six decades of branding expertise and efficient operational processes, HALO offers unmatched reliability and unique solutions for every client, on every project.