

PROMOTIONS

PPAI MEMBERS SHARE THEIR SUCCESSFUL PROMOTIONS



LEFT Law firm employee Mary Hirsch, who inspired the healthy lifestyle campaign, shows off the products that helped attract her co-workers to the program.

Healthy ROI

THE RECIPIENT OF A 2009 PPAI SILVER PYRAMID AWARD (EMPLOYEE INCENTIVE OVER \$10) SHARES THE STORY BEHIND A WINNING PROMOTION.

By David J. Hawes

Brand has become a buzz word. Companies invest considerable time, money and resources to define and refine their brand. They hope to attain the rewards that name recognition and approval produce. However, when their primary focus is external, the results are frequently disappointing.

I am a brand architect with Geiger. We believe great brands are based on core values, not trends or catch phrases. These core values inspire trust and foster long-term, mutually beneficial relationships.

We help our clients build better brands by using promotional products to convey their message. By appealing to all five senses, promotional products are tangible symbols that are both personal and powerful. They create connections that forge relationships. Our medium is targeted, cost-effective and produces measurable results with lasting impact. Here is one example:

It was a magnificent May morning in Minneapolis: blue sky, not a snowflake or mosquito in sight, and the Twins were in first place. I was eager to answer my phone when it rang.

Vicky, the executive director for the law firm Schwegman, Lundberg & Woessner, P.A., was calling with a challenging opportunity for me. She had just completed a very emotional meeting with Mary, a tenured employee who had recently been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. Though frightened and overwhelmed, Mary was also optimistic. Her doctor assured her that lifestyle changes, including exercise, could reverse the effects of diabetes.

By emphasizing her need for peer-group support, Mary motivated Vicky to embark on a walking program for their company. Geiger's reputation, and my passion for empowering others to improve their health, prompted her to call me. We decided to meet the following day.

During our meeting we agreed to begin with the end in mind, while honoring the values and culture that serve as their brand's compass. Schwegman, Lundberg & Woessner, P.A., is a firm comprised of innovative industry leaders who are mindful of the vital contribution every employee makes. Our goals for the walking program included:

1. Achieve 50-percent staff participation
2. Increase participants' energy and morale
3. Reduce corporate health insurance premiums
4. Support Mary
5. Have fun

To motivate participants and maximize the results, we selected three promotional products. We decided that participants would receive a single-function step pedometer and they would use it to measure their daily progress for two weeks. Those who reached their step goals would also receive a multifunction PC pedometer to download their daily performance. Participants achieving their step goals after four weeks would be awarded a BPA-free water bottle designed for walkers. All products would be imprinted with the corporate logo, SLWalkers' logo and the initiative's mascot.

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The enthusiasm level mounted as we finalized plans for the six-week pilot program scheduled to begin June 1. We agreed it was imperative to make participation voluntary, and to allow individual walkers to determine their daily total step goal.

On day one, the company launched SLWalkers with a rally. Each participant received a pedometer and considerable encouragement. Two weeks later the second rally became a celebration. Employees achieving their self-determined goals earned the PC pedometer and were encouraged to begin downloading their daily progress. At the completion of the fourth week, step-goal achievers received their logoed water bottle. At the conclusion of the six-week program, participants achieving their step goals were awarded a pair of walking shoes.


The program exceeded our expectations. Seventy percent of the staff volunteered to participate, and 72 percent achieved their walking goals. Morale and energy levels soared. They were able to validate the program's success by using the PC pedometer data. During contract negotiations with its health insurance provider, SLW's annual health insurance premium decreased by 4.1 percent, producing a healthy 649 percent return on investment. It would be foolish to imply that the rewarding results were due solely to the promotional program, however my client believes it was a significant factor and that's good enough for me.

What matters most isn't profit—it's people. During the six-week SLWalkers pilot, the participants established their goals and

pursued them vigorously. They had fun and developed what for many will become a healthy lifestyle habit.

The best news is about Mary, whose courage inspired the program. Her blood sugar dropped from 137 to 101, a remarkable reduction. She continues to walk and demonstrate dramatically that people don't make a difference, they *are* the difference.

It was a pleasure to partner with SLW on this program. Like most successful companies, they know a healthy employee is their best brand ambassador. Last month Schwegman, Lundberg & Woessner, P.A., was awarded the prestigious Best Places to Work 2009 in Minnesota designation by the *Minneapolis-St. Paul Business Journal*.

The promotional products industry is a very challenging and rewarding profession. Our customers frequently entrust us with their most precious possession: their unique identity as it's reflected in their brand. We are limited only by the confines of our imagination, resourcefulness and courage. What we do with each opportunity has the potential to strengthen our customers' brand; how well we do it will determine ours. 



David J. Hawes, MAS is a brand architect at Lewiston, Maine-based distributor Geiger (UPIC: geiger). An avid walker, since 1982 he has logged over 45,000 miles for fitness and fundraising. David and his wife live in Minneapolis, Minnesota; they have three children and six grandchildren.

Each participant received a pedometer and those who reached incremental goals throughout the program earned a BPA-free water bottle and a PC pedometer.

