

# UNIVERSAL *appeal*

Desk and office products are über-useful—and have amazing staying power to get brands noticed

By Lisa Horn, CAS



SCAN WITH LAYAR

**T**HERE'S A REASON why more than a billion dollars worth of promotional desk and office products are sold every year: They're effective. From sticky notes and pens to journals and mugs, the items we use during every workday are the perfect vehicles for promotional advertising.

With the vast number of items on the market today (read: thousands upon thousands), how do you choose which ones are best? Beyond fitting the scope, theme and budget, the item your client selects must fit the personal preferences of the recipients. Being audience-centric is essential if you want your product to capture that coveted desktop real estate.

To make the selection process just a bit easier (and more fun!), we've come up with five personality types and showcased items that will appeal to each of them. Some are fresh and different; others are new twists on old favorites. Whether you choose one of these for your next promo or merely use this story as a conversation starter on your next sales call, one thing is for sure: Desk and office products are ideal carriers for advertising messaging because of their universal appeal.

## MODERN MINIMALIST

Sleek. Clean. Stark. The modern minimalist's office may be sparse in terms of personal effects, but it's rich in style. These spaces are comprised of clean architectural lines highlighted with stainless steel, chrome or other metals—all in a neutral color palette (black, white, gray, beige, brown) with pops of bold color. Since clutter is the enemy to the modern minimalist's style aesthetics, choose products that combine form with function.



### Digital Photo Frame from Hirsch Gift Inc.

**Why We Love it:** Having photos of friends and family warms up a modern office. Plus, with the ability to upload up to six photos, this is the only frame a minimalist needs.

**What Makes it Different:** The brushed aluminum frame features an ultra-bright LCD L.E.D. screen with 480x234 pixels—even with the lower power consumption technology photos look sharp.

**How to Sell it:** "These are a great way to introduce a new car or residential home development by uploading images and placing them strategically at events," said Peter Hirsch, MAS, owner of Houston-based Hirsch Gift Inc. "Sports teams have also used them as gifts for suite holders, sponsors and season ticket owners, as we can either pre-load videos or images of the teams."

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### Clock and Weather Station from Logomark

**Why We Love it:** The sleek shape is reminiscent of something that would be found on the Star Trek Enterprise. (The J.J. Abrams rendition, of course.)

**What Makes it Different:** The comprehensive display of date, time and weather conditions helps you plan your day, and its usefulness will get a prime location on any desktop.

**How to Sell it:** Play up the time theme ("It's time to...") or tie into the weather aspect (We'll be there for you, rain or shine.). Use it as an executive gift, raffle it off at trade-shows (drop your business card for a chance to win) or create a gift-with-purchase incentive program (order \$500 or more by a specified date to receive the gift).

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**EXECUTIVE TRADITIONALIST**

The traditional design aesthetic never goes out of style. It's elegant but comfortable, classy yet unfussy. While lawyers and bankers may come to mind, you don't have to have a corner office to enjoy this style. Since fine craftsmanship is the hallmark of traditionalism, a higher price point may be in order to get the attention of these executives.



**Dual Format Avenue Desk Daily/Weekly from Castelli North America**

**Why We Love it:** The patented dual system for keeping track of daily and weekly appointments is just plain smart. By using half pages for daily notes inserted in between weekly spreads, you can record everything from the mundane to the important.

**What Makes it Different:** Logos can be debossed on the metallic blue, orange or black cover for that elegantly understated look. And the interior includes an address book and extensive reference section for even more value.

**How to Sell it:** To customize even further, include additional tip-in pages to make this planner an even more sound investment.

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**The Zen Gift Set from K&R Precision Corp.**

**Why We Love it:** The cast iron construction gives the set substance, which is contrasted with the Zen design that softens the overall aesthetic.

**What Makes it Different:** The teapot has a loose-leaf tea filter to create the perfect blend for your individual taste, and the set is completed with two cast iron teacups—perfect for sharing.

**How to Sell it:** This gift set would be a great addition to merchandise sold at local tea and coffee shops. Use it as an executive holiday gift. Create a two-part promotion: send prospective customers an invitation for afternoon tea and bring gourmet tea to the sales call; once the deal is closed, give the gift set as a welcome/thank-you gift for becoming a new customer.

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**GREEN ENVIRONMENTALIST**

Kermit the Frog may think it's not easy being green, but we beg to differ. With more and more importance being placed on sustainability, the promotional products industry has answered the call with an extensive variety of eco-friendly items.

To appeal to the environmentalists, look for items constructed from natural fibers or recycled materials in color palettes of soft creams, rich browns and earthy greens. For clients with specific compliance requirements, check with suppliers to get applicable certification documentation.



**Floral Biz Cards from Gempire/Floral Promotions**

**Why We Love Them:** Giving someone a business card with a back panel that can be removed and planted is memorable and sends a great environmental message. When the wildflowers bloom, customers will think of who gave them the seeds.

**What Makes Them Different:** The handmade 100 percent recycled linen paper dissolves as the flowers and herbs grow. Several standard seed mixes are available—marigolds and cosmos mix, sweet alyssum and baby's breath mix, black eyed Susan or basil—and custom mixes can be created for the perfect floral statement.

**How to Sell Them:** "Play up the theme with taglines such as 'Come Grow with Us,' 'Business is Blooming,' 'Plant a Seed' or 'Watch Your Investment Grow,'" suggested Harvey Mackler, MAS, president of Tampa, Florida-based Gempire/Floral Promotions. "Since growing a business is universal, the cards can be used in almost any industry from banks, mortgage brokers and insurance companies to utility companies, waste management firms and landscapers to name a few."

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**For All Office Workers**

Looking for an idea good for all personality types? Try this one below.

**Flip Calendar With Image Personalization from Bencil**

**Why We Love it:** Showcasing your client's name through personalization within the featured images makes this calendar a unique standout that will be kept—guaranteeing advertising messages will be seen.

**What Makes it Different:** The sturdy pop-open tent is made from 18 point folding board in four color options (black, blue, red and white) and two sizes. Your client can choose to highlight up to four special dates each month and start the calendar in any month.

**How to Sell it:** Make the calendar even more personal by creating your own artwork and adding variable text. Know your client's birthday? A personalized birthday cake image can be placed in the recipient's birth month.

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**Eco Swanky Pen from Points of Light**

**Why We Love it:** The 5.5" pen has a recycle symbol on the tie/clip, which shows users that it is made from bamboo and recycled plastic.

**What Makes it Different:** The Eco Swanky pen, which is made from bamboo and recycled plastic, features a smiley face plunger that will make you grin every time you use it.

**How to Sell it:** In addition to targeting the environmental market, look for ways to incorporate ecological products into trade shows, sales meetings and tourism destinations.

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**TECH SAVVYIST**

Whether or not “savvyist” is a real word or not is up for debate, but we feel it suits the tech set. Technophiles everywhere crave the latest electronic devices to make their lives easier—and more fun. Choose products that enhance their tech experience—and help keep devices fully charged, protected and ready for use at any time.



**MicroBuff TAB Screen Cleaner from HandStands**

**Why We Love it:** Smudges all across our iPads make us crazy, and this little jewel will have your client’s brand at their customers’ fingertips.

**What Makes it Different:** Sized 3.4375x2.5”, this cleaning cloth is decorated with four-color-process PermaBrite sublimation to make a big impact in a small space. The Repositionable Sticky Pad Technology allows it to grip tightly to the back of a tablet or inside of a laptop.

**How to Sell it:** The MicroBuff TAB is thin and lightweight, so it’s perfectly suited for direct-mail campaigns and trade show giveaways. Remember, you can target more than just tech companies with this item. “Since all types of industries have a client base using a wide variety of consumer electronics, the field is wide open to all markets—not just for technology companies,” Conie Mangum, vice president of promotional sales for HandStands said. “Anytime you can provide a product that is useful to end-users, the cost per impression becomes small because it is used so often.”

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**AC/DC Power Adapter/Charger from Tomax**

**Why We Love it:** The full-color imprint on the adapter face will grab attention for every use—giving you the brand impressions every advertiser wants.

**What Makes it Different:** Whether a tech savvyist’s office is in a building or on the road (or both), this adapter does double duty by offering power via AC (wall) or DC (car) to keep all electronic devices juiced up.

**How to Sell it:** This product is all about the versatility, so look for professionals on the go. Target the travel industry. Car rental agencies would be an ideal match.

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**For All Office Workers**

Looking for an idea good for all personality types? Try this one below.



**Post-it Custom Printed Notes Cubes - Cube In A Box from 3M Promotional Markets**

**Why We Love Them:** Post-its are so dang handy that they’re a must for any desk and office promo. Whether used by receptionists to take phone messages or CEOs to make notes on an important contract, there are hundreds of ways to use this office staple.

**What Makes Them Different:** While the notes are only for large orders (they have a 10,000 piece minimum), the full customization allows you to print a different message on each side and promote multiple services, products and locations.

**How to Sell Them:** Since the box is refillable, you can create a campaign that includes additional Post-it cube refills to get even more impact.

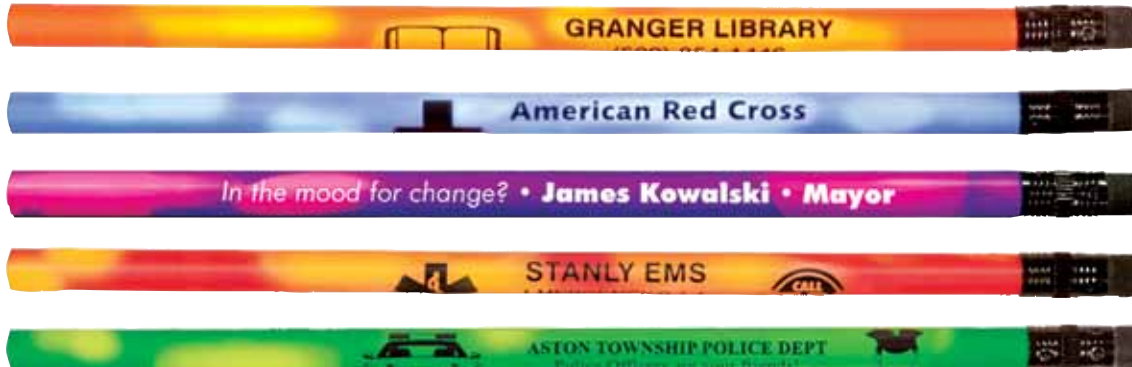
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**FUN-LOVING COLORIST**

When Robert Propst released his cubicle design for Herman Miller in 1967, the intention was to offer employees a greater degree of privacy and personalization than the row after row of desks in an open room. But the uniformity and blandness resulted in Dilbert (and many other cubicle dwellers) to call these spaces “sensory deprivation chambers.”

For creatives who work in these spaces—marketers, writers, graphic designers and more—color can add that much-needed spice to cubicle life. To get noticed, skip the traditional corporate colors and go for something on-trend—electric blue, raspberry, tangerine or emerald green (Pantone’s 2013 color of the year).



**Mood Pencils from AAkron Line**

**Why We Love Them:** Just pick up the Mood Pencil and watch it change colors with the heat of your hand. Whether you’re 3 or 83, the color-changing fun never gets old.

**What Makes Them Different:** With your choice of 18 imprint colors and up to five lines of copy, you can really get your message across. In addition to the spot color changes—orange to bright yellow, blue to light blue, violet to bright pink, red to bright orange, and bright green to bright yellow—nine styles are available, including stars, paw prints, clovers and hearts.

**How to Sell Them:** Fire and police departments as well as schools are ideal targets. Financial institutions can use “In the Mood for Saving,” while travel-related businesses can use “In the Mood for a Vacation.” Restaurants can create a “Collect Them All” promotion, while any corporation can use a “Don’t Get Left in the Dark” theme.

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**Glass Hinge-Top Jar with Candy from Mid-Nite Snax**

**Why We Love it:** Ever notice how the person in the office with a candy jar is everyone’s work best friend? When 3 p.m. rolls around and officemates need a pick-me-up, your clients can be sure their logos will be seen on these jars.

**What Makes it Different:** Your client can choose assorted chocolate sunflower seeds, jellybeans or M&M’s to fill the hinge-top jars. Decorate the 1.75x3” jars with a one-color direct imprint on the jar or a four-color process label applied to the lid or body.

**How to Sell it:** After the treats are enjoyed, the jars can be used for office supplies, such as paperclips or tacks. Another alternative is suggesting that your client create an ongoing program where they regularly visit clients to bring candy refills.

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**For All Office Workers**

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**Umbra Fish Hotel from International Merchandise Concepts**

**Why We Love it:** If you really want to make a splash, this fish hotel features an award-winning design that will get noticed every time.

**What Makes it Different:** The modern architectural details are accentuated by the crisp white construction that is an ideal showcase for a logo. The inner glass bowl is removable for easy cleaning.

**How to Sell it:** Donn James, editor of social media and publicity for International Merchandise Concepts, suggested targeting the housing market. “Target architects, glass companies, modern housing developers and real estate companies specializing in high-end condo sales,” he said. “And because of the purported calming effects fish have, use it as a perk for CSRs, sales reps, brokers or anyone in a high-stress environment.”

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