

Chapter 22

Embrace Change, Technology and Trends

■■■ There is a famous adage that the only things certain in life are death and taxes. I'd like to add another one -- *change!* The companies and sales professionals that embrace change will thrive and consistently make more money.

Back in the late 90's there was a fear that the Internet would replace promotional products advisors, but that hasn't happened. The Internet has made it easier and faster for your customers to buy promotional items, but it will not replace you!

Your customers may be using the Web to search for items and find new and interesting ideas, but when it comes to placing an order, they want to talk to a live person! They need your help selecting the right supplier, making the best recommendations and following up so they can concentrate on what they do best - their job!

Make it easy to do business

Use the Internet to expand on what you do best. Build a better website; one that makes it easy for your customers to search for products and contact you. *In today's time crunched environment, the key is to make it as easy as possible for customers to do business with you.*

Consider these Tips to enhance your services and stay current -

— **Have a distinctive and fast loading website.** Create a website that's not just loaded with great products, but full of tips for using those products to the max.

— **Embrace the latest technology.** Respond faster by letting your customers know all the different ways they can get in touch with you: email, cell phone, web, fax, etc.

— **Offer the “Company Store” solution.** Customers love the one-stop-shopping convenience. These can be **real moneymakers or profit drainers**, so investigate all the options and costs before you get involved.

— **Have a great research system.** Customers want answers quickly. He who responds the fastest gets the rewards. Use the research technology specifically designed for the promotional products industry. Ask for a demo of new programs before you purchase. See the **Resource Section** of this manual for companies offering research systems.

— **Keep current in the industry.** Participate in industry email support groups, subscribe to industry magazines and stay current with industry issues. Join your regional promotional products association.

— **Subscribe to business publications.** Your customers appreciate a knowledgeable rep and, in particular, someone who understands their business issues.

— **Understand accepted artwork standards.** We live in the digital age - **Vector Graphics Files** are the **format of choice for most suppliers**. Educate your customers and yourself as to what will work best in reproducing their logo. Become artwork savvy. Take classes, read books and learn as much as possible so that you can turn an order around - **FAST!**

► *What Can You Do Now?* ◀

- Take classes at industry trade shows and adult education venues to keep abreast of the latest technology.
- Ask for demos of industry research systems to evaluate them before purchasing. Ask questions.
- Get feedback from others in the industry as to what works for them.