

## The Event Insider

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### 23 Novel Gift Ideas Plus Inspiration for More

1. **Memory sticks**, says Steven Clayman of Endless Marketing Solutions, are the hot item right now. These tiny, super portable devices plug into a USB port and allow for easy transfer of all sorts of information. You can preload the stick with your presentation, logo, or brochure. The recipient can view your message and then reuse the stick at will. Storage capacity ranges from 16 MB on up. The memory stick can come as a key chain with an attractive case.

2. Memory sticks with MP3 players, ear buds, microphones, and PDA styluses. Yes, you can combine lots of **useful tech toys** in one gum stick size package. Play music, transfer data, record reminder messages, and more.

3. **Wine coolers**. For a conference at the Chateau Elan in Atlanta, EMS produced a wine cooler, hand painted with dogwood blossoms, and containing a nice bottle of wine from the Vineyard. The event and date were printed on the bottom. Guests arrived to find this keepsake in their rooms.

4. **Custom awards**. Instead of a plaque to hang on the wall, Originality, Inc. created a **useful work of art** as an award for a plumbing industry client. It's a stunning steel sculpture of two spigots with flowing water which serve as **bookends**.

5. **Sling bags**. Tired of the old tote bag for delegates. Backpacks are a bit awkward for meetings, Steve says, as he suggests **sling bags**. From nylon to leather, these one strapped bags look manly on a man, comfortable on a woman and allow for hands free negotiating of doors, food, drinks, and more. Many come with removable phone cases, zippered compartments, and other extras.

6. **Light up buttons with numbers**. Ok, what's so special? Well, Steve explains that the buttons have consecutive numbers. At the event, they handed out 500 buttons at registration. Four of the buttons were part of a matched pair. Delegates who found their match won a major prize. Makes for good mixing, meeting, and networking.

7. **Coasters** with a difference. When working with a transportation association holding a meeting in Boston, Steve says his group went through beans, tea, and more before they came up with the Big Dig. What could be more apt for the sponsor and the city? So, EMS etched a photo of the Big Dig on a coaster with the association logo. It was a big hit. Truly custom coasters can be memorable and treasured.

For the grand opening of X-S Orlando, a trendy restaurant and night spot, Originality, Inc., fashioned a **metal coaster** using the logo design found in the tile on the floor of the new establishment. It was a work of art that was a permanent reminder of the giver and can be adapted for any distinct location.

For an incentive to South Beach, an EMS client used posters sporting the attractive Art Deco location to promote winning the trip. EMS followed up with an in-room gift of four sandstone coasters that formed the picture on the poster when placed together. They did a similar set for a trip to Canada, showing the poster of train traveling through the Rockies.

**8. Fortune teller eight-ball.** You've seen them. They're inexpensive. But, put a twist on them. Pam Grimes of Originality, Inc., explains that they were charged to come up with a New Year's gift for a company's clients. They changed the concept to questions about what awaited the client in the New Year. Old gift. New use.

**9. Clipboard.** Meeting attendees need something to write on. How about a clipboard with your logo, or theme, as the clip itself. Picture, for example, a globe-shaped clip for an international event. Practical and tailored and a useful keepsake, Steve adds. Add-ons for clipboards that increase their value include rulers, clocks, calculators, lights, and storage boxes.

**10. In and Ex...Pens...ive.** "The least and most expensive speaker gifts I've ever done," Steve says, "were both pens." One cost \$5 and was engraved with a logo while the other was nearly \$500 and was made from lapis lazuli. So, don't rule out pens. They offer a range of possibilities.

**11. Destination welcome gifts.** For an incentive at Key Biscayne, Florida, Originality created in room gifts with an Ernest Hemingway theme that included gourmet foods, personal care products, and on the last day a hard-cover book of selected letters by Ernest Hemingway with an engraved book plate.

**12. Destination books.** Most folks could use a paperback during their travels to and fro a meeting. How about a James Lee Burke paperback when you meet in New Orleans. A John Sandford in Minneapolis. A Dave Baldacci in DC. An Anne Tyler in Baltimore. A Raymond Chandler in LA. Robert Parker in Boston. Tony Hillerman in the Southwest. Scott Turow in Chicago. Nevada Barr if you are meeting in or near a national park. And so on.

**13. Bottle stoppers.** From Florida to Alaska, every location has a theme that can easily lend itself to a delightful utilitarian bottle stopper. Originality used a charm of the state and glass oranges to top a stopper for a meeting in Florida. They can add an extra flair to a more elaborate gift package.

**14. Night lights.** Location related, industry related, theme related...so much can be done with a custom night light and they come in handy in hotels when traveling.

**15. Creative packaging.** When Originality came up with the theme "Deck the desk" for a holiday gift, they provided a package with sweets and a retro coffee cup. But they took the idea one memorable step further when they delivered the holiday package in a ...paint can.

**16. Survival kit.** To match a conference theme of "survival", EMS came up with a mini-backpack with straps that fit nicely over a belt. In the backpack were a mini-flashlight, an army knife and a multi-purpose pocket tool. Bearing the slogan "Equipped for the challenge. Ready for action", the kit was a big success.

**17. Sanitizer on a clip.** Especially great for meetings during flu season, who can resist an antibacterial sanitizer sample that comes with a clip to keep it handy in purse or pocket.

**18. Food tray.** For an event in Hawaii, guests arrived at their rooms to find a trays of fruit. Once, the fruit was gone, the guests found the tray was hand-painted with a hibiscus and the event and date, a take-home souvenir created by EMS.

**19. Travel hangers.** For much traveled businesspeople who may not always stay in top flight hotels, a collapsible travel hanger offers welcome portability for room or car.

**20. Computer care kit.** Combine a collection of little items for one useful kit: CD cleaner, screen swipes, and a keyboard brush. You'll be remembered when attendees return to their office.

**21. Travel receipt keeper.** It's too easy to stuff receipts in purse, pocket, or briefcase...or all three... and have to spend precious time back at the office seeking them out. How about an inexpensive, plastic see-through sleeve that fits in purse or briefcase to corral receipts as you get them. About 5 x 8 inches, they are just right for tiny to medium paper bills you collect. You'll find them in the Levenger catalog but they also should be easy to source through a premium supplier.

**22. Buffet tray.** They look campy and are sure to create smiles for unpretentious groups. This brightly colored plastic circle with glass holder allows delegates to nosh, and drink, and shake hands all at once.

**23. Photo paperweight.** The square glass paperweight, created by Originality, had the company's logo in one corner and contained a graphic insert with a message from the company. "It made a wonderful keepsake," Pam said, because the recipient could just slip his/her own family photo inside and make it a personal desk accessory."

## Gift tips from Originality Inc.

- Use creativity; **think beyond the traditional** – gifts don't have to be expensive, just well thought out. Avoid clichés.
- If you use your logo, place it in a not so obvious spot. If a gift makes an impact, recipient will remember who gave it to them.
- Give a gift with **"staying" power** (i.e. something useful – if giving a food gift, use a unique container that can be used in the office environment – a subtle reminder of your company).
- Pay attention to **packaging** – it is the first and last impression. A poolside care package Originality created included sun tan lotion, an acrylic glass and a coupon for a free drink and came wrapped in a blue and white cabana beach towel.
- Personalize the gift by composing a **personal, handwritten note**.
- When possible, **hand-deliver** or use a courier to deliver gifts.