

HOT THIS MONTH

Safety First

This emergency-response set tells recipients that you care. Made of 600-denier polyester canvas, the 18-piece set includes four raincoats, two Mylar blankets, a first-aid kit, mobile phone charger, two mini flashlights, jotter notepad, pen, four whistle navigators, PVC tape, multifunction tool and a portable case with an integrated reflective warning triangle. It's a great product for campers and vacationers, and for anyone to keep in the trunk of their car. From *asi/66887*.



HOW TO PULL OFF AN ... OPEN HOUSE

The new year means new potential. Get started on the right foot with a corporate open house. It's a great opportunity for you to mix with your current clients and prospect for new ones. Follow these steps for a successful event.

Step One

Decide on the purpose. An open house gives you the opportunity to network on your own turf. "Of course, an event is a great excuse to schmooze clients or look for new prospects," says Sheri Brainsky, CEO and event maven at Lighthearted Events. But, beyond the social contact, the open

house should have a purpose, like rolling out a new product, announcing new pricing or introducing a new staff.

Brainsky warns against having an overall theme for the function, however. "Themes are outdated and cheesy," she says. But you can create a color theme, using flowers, napkins and drinkware that tie in with the corporate colors. "When you can pull in your logo and color, it's going to be remembered," she says.

Step Two

Create personalized invites. If the open house is a private function for clients and prospects, make the invitation as personal as possible. "Personalized invites make people feel important," Brainsky says. An invitation for a morning event could include a personalized coffee mug which the recipient would be encouraged to bring. Or a pen could be sent with the promise of a leather jotter to be picked up at the event.

Brainsky says her clients are using social media to tout their larger, more public events. Some have created special blogs for their open house and used Facebook and Twitter to spread the word.

Step Three

Have a signature beverage. When it comes

FIVE MUST-HAVES FOR AN OPEN HOUSE



1 A coffee mug imprinted with your company logo will be used every morning, keeping you top of mind with clients and prospects. Available from *asi/40261*.



2 This desktop caddy features a pen/pencil holder, picture frame and quartz analog clock. It will be appreciated and used often. Available from *asi/30208*.



3 Why not use a tote bag as a gift bag? The recipients' ongoing use of the bag will result in increased exposure for your company. Available from *asi/67557*.



4 This polo shirt would make a nice parting gift for all guests. It's wrinkle- and stain-resistant with moisture-wicking and antimicrobial properties. Available from *asi/89380*.



5 A useful desk accessory like this leather journal won't be thrown away or stuffed inside a drawer. Available from *asi/66887*.



to food, your best bet is finger foods. Brainsky recommends avoiding anything that requires people to sit. She also suggests setting up food stations in different areas to create numerous spots for mingling. As for alcohol, it's not a bad idea. But rather than having an open bar with every spirit possible, think about having an assortment of wines, beer and perhaps one signature drink. Brainsky is currently working with a client who's creating an apple martini bar for an upscale event.

Logoed barware makes a great gift for guests – match the feel of your open house with fun, acrylic light-up martini glasses, or classic, etched high-balls.

Step Four

Offer a tour. A private event should feature private tours of the facility. An open house that invites the public could include a group tour, with employees stationed at designated areas through the build-

ing to talk about what happens there.

“Obviously you want to captivate your audience and engage them,” Brainsky says. If you take them into an automated warehouse, demonstrate how material is picked from shelves. If you provide services rather than hard, finished goods, then show guests conference rooms and areas where brainstorming sessions take place.

Step Five

Provide a parting gift. “You want to get some quality products in their hands – and something that they're going to use,” Brainsky says. “I always ask clients, ‘If you received this, would you use it?’ If they say ‘no,’ I say, ‘Then why would you spend money on it?’”

Products that are useful in an office, such as a business-card holder or other desk accessory, work nicely. Just don't forget to have all items logoed so the recipient will always remember the event. *

INSIDER INFO PASS THE SUNSCREEN

Spring break, that annual rite of passage for college students, brings hordes of the young adults to places like Cancun, Mexico, South Padre Island, TX, and Panama City Beach, FL. Sure, there will be lots of drinking, dancing and sunbathing, but there's also an incredible opportunity for marketing. Why? Because today's college students are tomorrow's employees and consumers. That's why each year, companies like Sprint and Geico set up shop to tout their businesses and services. They also come armed with imprinted products. But, before you set up your booth on the sand, here are some things to consider:



▶ TAKEAWAY TIPS:

Small Is Better

If students aren't flying to spring break destinations, then they're jamming into a car and driving. Regardless of their mode of transportation, it's a given that they have little room for large souvenirs. If you want to hand out products at spring break, consider those that easily fit in luggage, backpacks and carry-on bags. Light-up ice cubes, silicone bracelets and other fun, small items can be part of a nightclub promotion and are easily packed away.

Style and Decoration Are Important

Students will definitely appreciate logoed apparel, whether it's caps or tees. But before you order thousands of screen-printed shirts, keep in mind that you want the apparel to be worn, so really think about the decoration. All-over imprints and those that mix media – screen printing with rhinestones, metallic foils or threads, etc. – are more desirable to younger people. Plus, distressed caps and burnout T-shirts are more fashion-forward than a basic six-panel cap and 100% cotton shirt.

Make It Useful for Campus Life

To get additional mileage for your logo, make sure your giveaways will still be appealing once students are back on campus. Tote bags and backpacks will be walking billboards for your firm. And products like can coolers and logoed drinkware will be used often, and can even become a cherished souvenir of their wild, weeklong adventure.