



50 Marketing and Sales Promotional plans

Looking for promotional plans to kick start your business campaign? Got a deal, product or service to promote and are short of ideas? Here is a compilation of 50 promotional ideas that you can use to promote your product or service. This list would suit all products and services and all types of budgets - be it a high end, premium product that requires a promotional pitch without diluting its brand image or a simple deal that calls for an innovative, cost-effective pitch - '50 Promotional Plans' has all that and more.

'50 Promotional Plans' has been compiled to help retail businesses browse through the many options that are available. You need not reinvent the wheel there are so many tried and tested, creative models out in the open already. Use the best fit to get the maximum visibility, cost-effectiveness, reach, branding, footfalls, sales and much more.

1: Happy hours: Forget beverages; all businesses with non-peak hours can use this great tool. Fitness centres, salons, coffee shops, metered cabs, for example, can all make up their own happy hour offers to increase capacity utilization. For example, Green Mill Restaurant and Bar, Wichita, offers a “Kids Free” Menu on Tuesdays between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Kids under 12 get to eat free and also get a kids free item with each adult entrée! Get the whole family in! VLCC, a slimming and beauty salon, offered 50% off during happy hours between 11.30 and 4.30 for a limited period.

2: Free trials: Expensive or technologically new products get faster customer acceptance through free trials. Your prospects can actually touch and feel the product or service and once they get a taste of things to come, you get them thinking on how to acquire it! Online games, software, songs, ebooks are all available for free downloads! Netflix and Blockbuster for example, send in free videos once a month for trial! Golds Gym, a fitness centre with an all India presence, conducts Fitness Tuesdays where interested members are given complimentary workout classes and members get free energy drinks and weekend gift vouchers and merchandise.

3: Customer care: How about free drops by pubs after late nights! This service comes as a measure of how much you really care for your customer. True friends don't let their friends drive drunk! Unbounded loyalty and priceless goodwill! The Reform Place, Durham, England, pays for a free taxi ride to customers provided that they billed four times the fare at the pub. Reason – competition and customer loyalty. In Indiana, USA, PDQ Taxi Owners Association offers free drops to bar patrons to overcome drunken driving problems and - it works! 25 bars participated in this service as well.



4: Complimentaries: Nothing brings a smile on your customers' face more than an unexpected complimentary. Be it a snack with a beverage or a small gesture on somebody's birthday, complimentaries are addictive and keep customers coming back. Keep that smile plastered on your customers' face and you have just bought enduring loyalty, rather cheaply one may add.

5: Group discounts: Items like a refrigerator, LCD TVs etc can bring in group sales if you offer heavy discounts on group sales. Friends and relatives motivate and push one another to go for the next aspirational level if there is a substantial discount. And you get a block sale going!

6: Cross promotion: Subscribe to a magazine or a holiday package and get a nice premium gift like, say, a pair of premium casual wear at a cost of Re. 1! Can you see your customer feeling smug about the deal already? India Today does that with Reebok if you've noticed.

7: Motivational offers: Decrease the waist or your blood pressure and get that discount equivalent to your improvement. We care for you and we also have a walking testimonial for us! All round good if you ask me. Pearlene's in Winnipeg, US offers its designer clothes at a discount to those who lose weight – 10% off for a 10 lb loss and so on. They record your weight when you start the 'We support your loss' program and support your weight loss.

8: Fun offers: Your waist size plus 20% off! It's a fun way to get your customers laughing at the offer and wanting to try it out. A whacky offer with low loyalty but what the hell, they will remember the good time and the good offer. Some more whacky offers? Colleges in the US apparently offered scholarships for left handed students, for tall people, for short people, for sweet toothed and even for twins. Jealous21, an Indian apparel brand, had a promotions campaign where customers got discounts equivalent to their waist size plus 21% !

9: More the merrier: The more people you bring on, the bigger is the party – for you. Get 3% extra for each new member you bring in. Or how about a group discount! Cruises, travel, theatre, theme parks do this. Contiki offers packages where 10 people get 10% off and the eleventh person gets it absolutely free! In fact they have plans for 3, 4, 5, 7 and 10 people! Theatre Royal, UK offers group discounts as well for its shows!

10: Free service: How about having the expert consulting your customer right then? Or a recipe book by post or a fashion tips newsletter? Add value and make the customer feel cared for. Get a haircut in the next one month and get free hair lessons from Jawed Habib. From romantic ideas to health queries, kite flying to drumming, surfing to job aptitude, free expert advice works best when it comes to proving one's credibility.



11: Spare the customer: When you sell the car, sell spares too – at a handsome discount. Give 40% discount on all the spares if they have purchased the car from you. Coupon codes could be given which can be used online to get the spares you wish. Motorbike and car spares, cleaners' spares are some of the advertisers of this service. Prestige pressure cookers is one such advertiser too.

12: Sell attractive packages: A whole package is more interesting than one product or service alone. Shoes could get a lot more interesting if they came with an attractive package of 5 pairs of socks, polish and Hawaii Sandals! Or a hotel that offers stay for 2 Nights and 3 days, with complimentary breakfast + lunch + free airport drop for just Rs.7800! That sure does sound like a deal! For example Kerala tourism offers packages for honeymoon tourism, backwater tourism, religious tourism, ayurveda tourism etc starting from a day trip to 10 days and includes all that is involved with the experience. Not just hotels and resorts!

13: Pay just the shipping cost: Get the product absolutely free: This looks incredible! But you do get VCDs, DVDs Free. All you need is pay for shipping. You make money on the deal with the courier company of course! Any CDs, USA, sends you a free CD if you pay standard shipping charges. Video Professor also uses this model – they should know, they built a multi-million dollar business around this model.

14: Referral: Introduce one new member and get 50% off the monthly fee. Saves marketing costs for you and keeps clients happy and busy. Dr. Smith, a get thin program, based in Georgia, US, offers a referral credit to show their clients how much they appreciate their compliments. Similarly, Mark Rogers Photography, a Bay Area photographer, offers 15% off or a 75 print credit to clients who refer paying customers.

15: Block renewals: Have your customers renew membership for a period of 6 months, and offer them a one year membership! It does work out of course and the customer feels good at having had a good bargain! Season ticket renewals, domain name renewals, magazine subscriptions, motor insurance are some that promote their products and services in this fashion.

16: Senior Citizen Discounts: Special discounts for senior citizens, a gradually increasing segment with specific needs, is a great idea. In fact, there is a site entirely dedicated to this segment -- seniordiscounts.com. Through senior citizen specific schemes you can promote any product or service that senior citizens may need and build a whole new market segment. For example Super Religare Wellness had a scheme where it gave 10 percent off to all senior citizens. Even Ayurcare offered special discounts to senior citizens for its therapies and detoxification programs.



17: Discounts to Niche Customers: Select the target segment you wish to focus on -- say, a particular membership card holder that suits your profile -- and offer them a discount. For example, a top end restaurant providing discounts to Club Mahindra holders would bring exclusive focus to an attractive, new segment.

18: Tie-ups with Banks: A tie-up with banks to provide special discounts for customers who use their bank cards at your retail outlet provides access to many potential customers at negligible cost. Several banks are ready to do this.

19: Early bird customers: How about early bird schemes where customers get special discounts for buying early? Such schemes prod customers into buying early to avail the discount. From travels to wellness centres and even corporate training programs, early bird incentives are always a great way to promote your products and services. Wild Frontiers, an adventure travel site offered a 5 percent discount for early bird registrations while VITS Wellness Centre, Andheri offered a limited period special discount for early bird couples.

20: Reward the customer for his efforts: Reward your customer for the efforts they put in for their own good. 'Fitness First', a fitness centre, rewarded its customers for losing each kilogram, with a Rs. 500 discount for each kilogram lost.

21: Use short codes effectively: Let your customers participate in an on-the-spot contest, and in the process get their mobile numbers too. Give a freebie or a discount to whoever participates in the contest. Subway used this scheme by asking customers to enter a contest: Subway gets the customers contact details such as mobile number and email id while customer gets discounts or freebies.

22: Special Event promotion: A special event such as an anniversary, festival or a special day like Valentine's Day is a great time to offer a promotion scheme. Give a special discount to anyone who registers or buys on occasions such as Children's day, Mother's day, Father's day, Teacher's day etc. For example Gold's gym offered a special discount for couples who joined the gym on Valentine's day and Big Cinema gave away free tickets for women patrons on Woman's Day.

23: Price guarantee: When real estate prices are falling and people do not buy because of uncertainty, a promotional scheme that offers to pass on the price benefit in case of lower prices in the future drives sales. A limited period offer for those who book during the period protects those from future price fluctuations. Aparna Constructions in Hyderabad has offered such a promotional scheme in view of the uncertainty in the real estate market to assuage fears of the customers and provide them with a window of opportunity to invest.



24: Surprise gift: Offer a surprise gift along with a service. Getting something free in the most unexpected of times always remains etched as one of the most memorable experiences for customers. It does not matter whether it is a small gift or a big one, what matters is that you have made the customer feel like the lucky one. For example Jaipan sells a combo package of home appliances such as a vacuum cleaner, toaster, blender and roti maker and throws in a surprise gift!

25: Social causes: If your service has a social element to it, offer a promotional pricing with it. For example, Times Matrimonials offers a discount for those who wish to advertise in their matrimonial column without a dowry requirement (or without a caste and religion bar). Similarly they offer discounts for senior citizens and widow/widowers and differently abled customers.

26: Environmental cause: An environmental cause like energy efficiency could focus on a specific scheme targeted at its customers. For example the Bureau of Energy Efficiency in India had called for a specific segment, the BPOs, to provide a star rating for BPO buildings for energy efficiency. To promote the scheme, the Bureau has announced a waiver of a hefty registration fee of Rs. 1 lakh for the first 100 applicants!

27: Buy more, get more: Buy 1 item get 10 percent off, 2 items and get 20 percent off and 3 items and get 30 percent off. The more you buy, the greater the discount you get. 'Allen Solly' offered this deal in Chennai for its menswear and women's wear sections. Similarly Bombay Dyeing did this for its bed sheets!

28: Old for New: This is an attractive scheme especially in times when consumers are buying more. Every thought of replacement comes with the problem of what to do with the old. Big bazaar has launched a scheme where the customer can take the old and exchange it for new stuff. It takes care of two problems for the customer -- getting a new product and getting rid of the old.

29: Establish a strong relationship with your customer: To find out who is buying your products and to establish a relationship of trust with them is what all retailers wish to do. Ranbaxy offered an innovative promotion scheme of a scratch card + SMS for its medicines. When customers buy medicines, they are provided with a scratch card that has a unique code, which must be SMSed to Ranbaxy. When the customer purchases the same medicine three times and SMSes the unique code each time, he gets a PIN, which he can use to get the fourth medicine free. Ranbaxy also provides the option to the customer of receiving reminders on taking the medicine - a nice way of being in touch with the customer and reinforcing the thought that you care.



30: Attractive add-on charges: A nominal Re. 1 charge for a normal service such as making charges for jewellery attracts customers - even more than a free service campaign. Reliance jewellery recently offered a Re. 1 making charges scheme on jewellery bought at their stores.

31: Guess and Win: To promote your place and the experience it gives to customers, there can be no offer more sensational than this. Let your customers guess or predict the outcome of a sports event due on a specific day. If they are right, they get a discount on their purchases from you. Zha Cafe, a concept coffee shop located in Adyar, Chennai, gave an offer during IPL4 cricket matches where the one who guessed right could eat for free if their favorite team won! People had to register their favourite teams in advance of course. It is a great way to make people comfortable with the place, and certainly a fine way to encourage new and repeat customers!

32: Special Day Offers: On special days like the Teacher's day, Mother's day, Father's day etc that have a sentimental value attached to them, make a special offer to the mother-child, teacher-student duo or group so they get special discounts when they purchase stuff together. Everyone loves these little gestures and such an offer would only prompt a bit of an impromptu celebration between the customers and spread considerable good will about your business. People remember such gestures and they will remember your store long after the event is over. Tiffany's in Bengaluru had an offer recently on Mother's Day where one could take their mother to Tiffanys restaurant and get 20% discount on the bill and a glass of wine free. Now whoever went there would certainly remember Tiffany's. Would they not?

33: Big On Sale, Big On Discount: Sell in bulk on any product or service with a discount to match the bulk purchase. The discount helps in making the whole deal attractive, encourages brand loyalty and volume of sale. For example, Groupon has struck a deal with Quinzos where one gets 50% off on a deal for eight sandwiches or salads - bulk sale gets a bulk discount. Similarly one could give a deal for, say, 30 Happy Meals, Buffets, Car Servicing etc. Once customers buy the deal, perceiving value in it, they keep coming back to you to use the discount.

34: Pamper the Customer with a Choice of Free Gifts: Offer a choice between two or more free gifts and make the customer feel like a Queen, or King. There is however a danger of the customer falling into indecision and wanting both! But it does catch the customer's attention as it is different.

35: Step-Up Free Gifts With Sale Size: Reward your customers based on their order size. Step up the reward with the order size so that the more they order, the more gifts they get, or the higher the gift quality. It makes immense sense for customers who have decided on buying the



product anyway and strengthens their loyalty that much more. It also helps to prompt those who are undecided yet, to buy something of a higher value if the gift appeals to them.

36: Match the Lowest Price: Make an offer to match the lowest price in the market. This will send the signal across to customers that you are price friendly and that they are assured of getting the best deal with you. However this scheme works only if you are competing on price. Travel Republic.com, a UK based company offers to match the lowest price offered by its competitors i.e. if you find a lower price than the one you bought at Travel Republic, you get a refund for the difference.

37: Long Term Guarantees / Warranties: Offer long term guarantees for a year or longer, or even a lifetime guarantee with your product so the customer feels that she is covered. This builds trust and forces a decision when the customer is unsure between brands. Ceat tyres offered an unconditional life time replacement guarantee scheme for its entire range of Secura two wheeler tyres.

38: Single Price, Any Item: This works a bit like a dollar store but with a variation. You can have a section in your store where you pick up anything for one price. During the recent IPL4, Fortune Hotel, Bengaluru, gave an offer on any beer or any veg or non-veg starter for Rs. 99. Anything 99 Not out! It is an innovative way to make things simpler. State the price and the deal up front – so everyone knows what's coming their way. Now they can concentrate on the main action.

39: Rebates: Offer a coupon or check for a value that will be given after a purchase. Big bookstore and retail clothing chains such as Landmark, Westside and Crossword Bookstore chains use this technique where they give a coupon for a sum which can be used against future purchases based on a certain amount of purchases done now.

40: Installment purchases: Where the one time price may daunt the customers, installment schemes work wonders. Take a down payment which is attractive and offer installments to be paid monthly with no interest. High value products such as cars, two wheelers, real estate, consumer durables, holiday packages are some of the items that are sold through this scheme. Several companies tie this up with EMIs on credit cards. Make the process smooth and then watch the sales zoom.



41: Buy-back scheme: A guaranteed scheme that you will buy back returned goods any time increases customer confidence tremendously in not just the product but the retailer as well and prods him into making a purchase. These schemes work well with consumer durables such as televisions, tyres etc. Hindalco has offered a buy back scheme for its Aura alloy wheels.

42: Money-Back Guarantee: In this scheme, a customer pays up front—but if dissatisfied can return the item for a full refund. Like the free trial, this offer removes risk but allows you to use customer inertia because only a small percentage of people will take the trouble to return something. In a competitive market, money back schemes tend to draw some attention. For example Airtel and Aircel had Money Back schemes when they launched their Iphone 4, Tata Photon also had a similar offer. Even in electronics, eZone had a Money back offer.

43: Double-Your-Money-Back Guarantee: This promotion scheme serves more to catch the consumer on shock value by promising them a Double their Money Back offer. Of course one must be pretty sure that the consumer will not come back for a return in such cases – either the product must be really good (or really not worth the money of coming back for a return). Since most people never make a return, this is a simple way to dramatize both your offer and your guarantee for low-priced items. Enviro Guard, a fertilizer agent for the Aggrand brand of fertilizers, offers not just a double your money back but a triple your money back scheme. Similarly, Magic-Zymes, an odor remover, gives a 30 day double your money back scheme!

44: Pre-Publication Offer: This is a popular offer used by book publishers, especially for expensive reference works. You need to plan your print run, so you offer a special deal to reserve copies. Readers are guaranteed a copy and save money, usually 10% or 15% off what others will pay. Actually, you could use this for anything that is "published," such as software. For example, MapsWorldwide.com gives special discounts for pre-publication orders!

45: Price-Increase Announcement: When you announce price increases ahead of time customers take advantage of the old prices and buy in bulk to stock up. A classic example, though unintentional, is that of fuel price increases, which are announced in the press, forcing long queues of vehicle-owners to fill up before the price hike comes into play. Similar strategies are used by fan and air conditioner manufacturers before summer, when prices are bound to go northwards.

46: Bill Me Later: In this offer you get the benefit of a free trial offer but with a sense of obligation. It actually appeals to the customer a lot more than an offer where you pay cash up front to the customer because customers perceive value in the product and also build a relationship based on trust with you. Such relationships could be lifelong relationships many times. In such deals the customers are postponing the payment (an accepted mode of



payment in today's world), but are not discounting the value! Billing later adds to the brand value yet gives a fillip to sales. Lenovo lists Bill Me Later as one of the ways to shop for its products online.

47: Rush-Shipping Service: This promotional scheme works when you promise to ship an item overnight or within a shorter time period than normal shipping. Now this has great value especially for items that have to be delivered on a particular day – say Valentines Day, Mothers Day etc. The extra service can be offered at normal shipping charges to make the customer feel obliged - and happy to be doing business with you. Chocolates, jewellery, gift items, rakhis and such other items are ideal for rush shipping services.

48: Associate With a Cause: Announce a special promotion for a cause. For example, a cause like the Girl Child Day. On that day announce a special promotion - and earmark a part of the sale proceeds to an organization involved in promoting the cause. This will give you sales plus you earn a few brownie points to your brand.

49: Discount Pegged to a Current Event: Another interesting way is to involve the crowd into the discount scheme by pegging it to a discount – say for every sixer hit during an innings. Benzz Park, a business hotel located at T. Nagar in Chennai, made an offer of 2% discount on every six hit during an innings (10 sixes in an innings would add up to a 20% discount). This kind of a scheme would get the crowd involved in the game, make them wait till the end of the inning to avail the discount, and maybe stay longer for the next innings as well. Everyone is happy.

50: Give Existing Customers Special Prices on Upgrades: In products where there are frequent technological upgrades, in terms of versions, you could give existing customers special prices on the upgrades. For every new version, give existing customers an option to upgrade to a new version at say, 25% of the price. This scheme results in pushing sales for the new version, and reduces risk of piracy too. Music companies and software companies can use this scheme to good effect. Music companies can also have a membership club that gives all members new music at a fraction of the cost.

We hope that these 50 promotional schemes help you increase your sales. Happy selling!

There are so many more ways to take your offers to your customers and making their life seem like a never ending rollercoaster of surprises. Enjoy the pleasure of surprising your customer pleasantly, so it brings on that smile. And if they smile, you sure have got it made.