

As co-owner of Corporate Promotions Unlimited in Calgary since 2003, Cheryl Macdonald believes in the industry's ability to enhance and elevate marketing and advertising. Corporate Promotions Unlimited is a full-service advertising specialties company, and as a distributor, Macdonald feels that changing the perception of the promotional industry starts with educating the end-user.

She says the promotional industry is far more than selling inexpensive widgets. To change this perception, she encourages industry members to ensure their clients recognize their array of services, such as program development, implementation and management.

“This industry is sometimes viewed as one where anyone can open their doors and become a distributor. We run the risk of undervaluing the services we provide and the expertise we offer when this happens.” This can also perpetuate in a variety of ways, including but not limited to, people with a low sales acumen or people underselling their value.

“Distributors are experts in what they offer but sometimes it becomes just selling inexpensive items rather than offering the full scope of services, one example being program management.”

She is also aware that client budgets can limit finding the best solution, but “if the client is really impressed with the response with any particular request, you can build loyalty and confidence.” That one small pen order can turn into something larger and more meaningful.

But she can only do so much as it is ultimately the clients that have a major obligation to present a marketing campaign of value. “Perception is reality in that products and services offered to our clients must be viewed as the ultimate solution. This translates to price, reliability and return on their investment. The end-users need to feel they've gotten the best product and price and response to the offering, which in part drives the ROI.”

The client also needs to feel that you are becoming more of a full-service partner in offering solutions to more than just the conference that needs pens. “Distributors have to become more educated in all facets of the industry to be able to offer a wider palette to customers.”

And that, she adds, means distributors (marketers) need to walk the talk. If you want to be perceived as being creative, then do something creative. “Thinking outside the box is imperative. Just reacting to what the client is asking for limits the possibility of becoming the go-to company for any inquiry. Offering more than what they are looking for that addresses their need is a great way to showcase all you can do.” She says the path to doing this is to better understand your client’s business and scope. “Creativity and innovation in product selection and service is what makes one distributor more valuable and part of the client’s team much more than someone only reacting to the inquiry.”

Translation: Stop giving away trinkets in hopes that clients and prospects view them as creative, she says. “Becoming a solution-based distributor makes you part of their team in the client’s mind; offering solid and tested products and services can make you invaluable.”

PLAY

“To me, dog is God spelled backwards,” says Macdonald, who (along with boyfriend Garry Akitt - a WestJet pilot, and friends Donna Ohlson and Kathie Nosworthy) created a dog rescue organization in 2009.

DINO began as the brainstorm of Macdonald and the others, but it was during a trip to Mexico with Garry and Donna that the name itself was actually solidified. “Garry was really set on DINO the dinosaur as a mascot. He wouldn’t budge!” As a compromise (and while sitting around a table of nachos and drinks) they eventually conspired and created an acronym for DINO, Dogs in Need Organization. That made Garry happy!” 😊

In Mexico stray and abandoned dogs are everywhere; in Mexico City upwards of 20,000 stray dogs are killed a month according to a documentary on Mexican dogs called [Companions To None](#). “We were at a café and a terrified puppy came sliding in. It had been doused in motor oil because someone had tried to kill it. It was absolutely frantic! It was vomiting and desperate. We snatched her up, raised her to a shower and cleaned her up as best we could. We named her Peanut. Peanut was our first official dog into DINO! “DINO pretty much took off at that moment. We came home with one happy puppy (and a cat) from that trip.”

DINO (Dogs in Need Organization) is a not-for-profit organization that takes in dogs in need. Cases might include a family pet from a divorce situation, but their main focus is more dire needs: dogs from puppy mills, abused and abandoned dogs, strays or dogs snapped from kill shelters. (Shelters are more often than not forced to euthanize animals that are not adopted because they simply don't have the room to keep them). Last year she even took in dogs from the nearby Humane Society when a major flood destroyed the city's shelter. DINO also works with other organizations and takes in animals from them when they become too overwhelmed. When rescued dogs come in, she finds them foster homes until she can find permanent homes.

Macdonald takes in animals with all kinds of health problems, but she does try to draw the line at those with severe behavioral issues: she just doesn't have the resources to re-train them. She will however, network to assist those dogs into groups that are able to help them.

Dogs with passports are often among the biggest groups DINO takes in. For example, many dogs are from large urban centers. "In LA they get over a hundred dogs a day and can't keep up with them—we grab the lucky ones from euthanization, bring them in, provide medical attention and find them loving, forever homes."

Macdonald has always loved dogs. Her desire to help them began when she was quite young after witnessing a dog being severely abused.

Today the DINO organization has a bountiful number of dogs. "This is my thing. I don't have children so that's where the dogs come in."

With no government funding or consistent revenue stream, fundraisers and fees from adoptions is DINO's only means of raising money for food, spay / neuter and other medical expenses. "We just recently had to remove an eye out of an abused dog; another puppy required serious abdominal surgery. We drained the last of our monies. It's always so tight (the funds) but we just keep moving forward. It's the right thing to do! What other choice is there!"

"It's time consuming and stressful, but it's worth it, says Macdonald. "I just wish I could take them all home."

For more information on DINO visit their website at www.dinorescue.com.