

Chapter Swag To Engage And Delight The Right Audiences



Is your chapter swag “closet” overflowing with items you seem to bring back from every event because no one takes them, even though they’re free? Or are you constantly placing reorders, because everything gets snapped up as soon as you put it out?



If you’re still giving away things like mousepads, keychains, and stress balls at events and conferences, you may not be getting the engagement you’d expect. Items like these, along with USB drives (less prevalent these days due to security concerns) and branded candy that looks like it’s been around since 2019, don’t usually deliver the impact you need.

People’s expectations have changed, and instead of stopping at your table for a chat because they see free stuff, many people, especially younger ones, keep walking. Instead of picking up things just to have them, they’re looking for practical, portable, sustainable, stylish, and tech-friendly.

Yes, everyone enjoys all the free pens. And they typically appreciate the candy with your chapter logo on it. But the branded candy wrapper, the pen and other items often get lost or end up in the trash quickly. It’s time to revisit your swag and explore options that better align with people’s values, for a stronger chance they’ll stop to pick up an item, have a chat and remember your organization.

Here are a few swag ideas you may not have thought of, to improve your chapter’s visual brand and make your organization more memorable.



Everyday chapter swag that gets real use

Lightweight tumblers & insulated drinkware. Perfect for on the go, or for those who sit at their desk for hours, tumblers and insulated drink wear are a good option. They're a good canvas for a simple logo or short chapter tag line. Just make sure they're not too heavy to be carried comfortably.

Reusable tote bags. Foldable, compact and practical, tote bags encourage sustainability. Used regularly, they provide your chapter with high visibility, especially when you use a bold, bright logo or tagline.

Compact umbrella. And people are always looking for umbrellas they can throw into their briefcase, purse or reusable shopping bag. Umbrellas are a great spot for a simple chapter logo, and the people who have them will remember you every time they use it.

Tech-savvy swag that works

Phone PopSockets and phone grips. All the rage these days, these affordable, highly functional items appeal to younger community members. With just enough space for a simple logo, they provide visibility without being intrusive, and with just enough space for essential cards.

Portable phone chargers. Phone chargers are the perfect premium swag for a conference or event. With so much going on, attendees often forget to charge their phones before they leave home. Though a bit more expensive, they can make your chapter be seen as their savior. And, branded with your chapter logo, it's another item they'll thank you for each time they use it.

Laptop stickers. Stickers have increased in popularity recently. Simple and clean logo stickers are another way to show that someone identifies with your chapter and your mission. In addition to putting these on laptops, many are adding them to their traveling drink wear.

Think about the swag design

What would happen if you chose what you thought was the perfect swag and "just the right" application of your chapter logo, tagline, mission statement, etc., only to have the final version do a poor job reflecting your organization? Maybe there were too many colors, you used a low-resolution



logo or one that doesn't show well on the item you chose or your tagline was too long for what it's printed on.

For the best impression, choose subtle, simple designs in just a few colors, focus on quality materials and where possible, review a proof of a single item before printing an entire run and learning it's completely wrong.

To increase the perceived value of your swag and increase the chances a person will stop to talk to you, think about ways to make your swag a "must have," like a limited run of an item or something that you only give away at certain times of the year. The additional marketing your chapter could do around a tote bag with a fun Halloween-related tagline and in a color that you only offer in October could go a long way to increasing member engagement.

Offer swag with a purpose

Before you order a lot of what you think is a hot item, ask your members what would make them stop to talk to you and grab a free item if they weren't aware of your chapter. Would they use it six months from now? Does it appropriately reflect your chapter?

Many people will still grab candy or a free pen from the bowl on your table. But swag that has a purpose — utility, brand alignment, social or environmental impact, etc. — will do a much better job engaging your different audiences.

If you're worried about paying for items you give away for free, you could consider partnering with a local promotional products company in an inkind sponsorship agreement, where they give you the items for free or at a reduced cost in exchange for visibility with your audiences. Another option would be to sell some of your swag in an online chapter store. You may find that people will be willing to pay for a second travel mug or PopSocket, chapter branded notebook or other item.

Whatever you choose, chapter swag should be subtle, something that someone would feel comfortable using regularly, something that reflects member values, societal impact, sustainability, etc. When you choose the right swag, people are more likely to stop and talk to you. And if they're more comfortable using it, your chapter will naturally remain top of mind for all who see it.

