Give the Gift That Keeps On Giving

Use holiday gifts to keep clients coming back next year

Just like Santa, your business has likely created a customer and client holiday gift list. If not, it’s not too late to make one. But, before you go out and buy just any gift, you may want to consider a gift that keeps your business top of mind. Not only are holiday gifts a great way to say “thank you” for the past year’s business, but they can easily become a marketing tool to bring clients and customers back for the next year.

Here are some creative ideas the US Small Business Administration offers for giving gifts that keeps on giving:

**Remind them of your brand.**
The simplest way to make your holiday gift a marketing tool is to choose a promotional product with your company’s name or logo on it. Ideally, this is something they will actually use. Also, make sure it matches your brand and is relevant to your business. It’s important to avoid being too generic. Think about the recipient first. If you sell to in-office businesses, a high-quality pen set, note pad or travel coffee mug is likely a good choice. If your clients own a business that works primarily outdoors, a logo baseball cap might get more use when they’re out on the job in the hot sun.

**Personalize it.**
Another easy branding idea is designing your own wrapping paper or gift boxes for your gifts. This way, you’re subtly reminding clients of your brand.

**Gift your products.**
Gifting your own products is a great way to showcase clients your merchandise, plus saves you money since you are using your own inventory. Simple gifts like your own fresh roasted coffee beans can become a daily reminder of your brand. When the recipient uses your product, it will be an instant refresher of why they love doing business with you.

**Show up and shake their hand.**
If your clients are local, go out of your way to personally deliver your holiday gifts. Make a brief appointment so you’re not disruptive and just stop in, say hello and thank them in person. These shouldn’t be sales oriented. Be sure to listen, and don’t disregard an opportunity to cement your interest in working with them again next year.

**Time is on your side.**
Instead of giving a physical gift, add a personal touch by inviting a client out to breakfast or coffee. It doesn’t need to take a lot of time, but gives you time to reconnect. This could be key in standing out from the crowd of social media connections by making personal connections in real life.

**Offer a gift that needs a follow-up.**
Relevant information like a book or magazine subscription that’s relevant to your client’s industry can be a well thought out way to impress them. Plus, it provides the opportunity to follow up and ask what they thought of the book or if they are enjoying the magazine.

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Wise Giving

Include ‘wise giving’ in your business’ holiday plans

During this season of thankfulness and gifts, charitable giving can make a difference in your community and shed favorable light on your business. With all the charities out there, how do you determine which charity is the right fit for your business and your community?

Better Business Bureau serving Central, Coastal, Southwest Texas and the Permian Basin offers an easy way to narrow down the list by offering free Charity Reports on hundreds of nonprofit organizations through BBB’s Wise Giving Alliance (WGA). Charitable 501(c)(3) organizations, which meet all 20 Standards for Charity Accountability, become BBB Accredited Charities. BBB’s WGA has standards that seek to encourage fair and honest solicitation practices, to promote ethical conduct by charitable organizations and to advance support of philanthropy. BBB Standards for Charity Accountability were developed to assist donors in making sound giving decisions and to foster public confidence in charitable organizations. Charity Reports can help your brand determine if an organization aligns well with goals and priorities.

“The holiday season is a great time to show customers how you’re making the world a better place.”

“Not only does it feel great to contribute to your community, it is a great way to attract new customers and market yourself as a brand that cares about more than a bottom line.”

-Carrie A. Hurt, President/CEO of BBB serving Central, Coastal, Southwest Texas and the Permian Basin.

Charitable giving is also great for employee morale because it brings employees together to support good causes that are separate from their everyday work-life. Creating a toy drive or canned goods game within departments is also a great way to get employees enthusiastic about giving.

Here are five things to consider when integrating holiday giving into your business plan:

Find a good match.
Getting involved with an organization that appeals to the same demographic as your business is a win-win. For example, if your company sells clothing items, consider aligning yourself with a children’s or women’s shelter where your donation directly impacts the individuals there.

Research the organization.
Once you choose a charity your business would like to help, learn all about the organization by checking its credentials by looking up the BBB Charity Report.

Visit give.org to find out about an organizations finances, governance, solicitation materials, and effectiveness.

Volunteer time.
Consider having your employees volunteer to help a charity during the holiday season. Call the charity directly and arrange for opportunities to make giving back a company event.

A direct donation.
A monetary donation can be a great option for businesses that are very busy during the holiday season. If you donate online, be sure to print the confirmation page for your records, as many donations are tax-deductible. Donating a percentage of your sales for a given period of time can help create extra buzz for the charity as well as your company.

Spread the word.
Use your giving as an opportunity to brand yourself as a business who cares. Sharing your efforts through advertising can help educate people about a charity’s mission and could increase the amount of support for its cause.

For more information on donating to charities, visit BBB’s Wise Giving Alliance at give.org and to check the reliability of a company, visit bbb.org/central-texas.

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