

Holiday Business Gift-Giving - 10 Tips to Make it a Success!

Sending thoughtful, memorable holiday gifts can not only show your clients that you appreciate them, but can also work as an effective marketing tool to solidify business relationships and let your clients know they are valued.

Tip #1: Company Gift Policies are Important!

Know your own company's gift-giving policy as well as your client's gift policy before sending a gift.

Many companies have a formal or informal policy of "No Gifts" or place limits on the types and values of the gifts that they are allowed to receive. "No Gift" clients usually include government agencies, government contractors, and businesses that purchase items through a formal bidding process.

TIP #2: Plan Early!

Start planning early in the fall by updating your business contact list and checking in with your gift suppliers.

Avoid the holiday rush by giving your (updated) mailing list as early as possible to your supplier, specifying the date you want your gift mailed. Most suppliers will allow some changes to the mailing list up to a week before the mailing date.

TIP #3: Mail Early!

Mail your business gift early, preferably immediately after Thanksgiving.

Food or wine gifts will be especially appreciated if mailed early, as they can be used for holiday entertaining. For other non-holiday gifts, try to have the gift arrive before the event. When the event occurs, your gift could come up in conversations!

TIP #4: Personalize, Personalize Personalize!

Personalize your business holiday gift with a note. Personalize each gift with the recipient's name.

Most gift companies will send a personalized note with the gift. Your note should mention a word of appreciation, an accomplishment by the client, or a task you've accomplished together during the year. For example, "Enjoyed working on X project with you this year. Looking forward to working with you again in the future."

A nice pen, a letter opener or a portfolio engraved with the recipient's name will be appreciated for many years. And the recipient will remember the sender each time he uses the gift.

TIP #5: Don't Oversell with your Company Logo!

Corporate logos, while a great way to promote your company, should be discreetly printed or engraved on holiday business gifts, so as not to be construed as over-selling. Remember that beautiful photo frame you very much wanted to display in your home...but it screamed Company X? If it is a thoughtful gift, your client will remember who gave it, long after the holidays.

TIP #6: Know your client's interests!

Give a business gift that reflects the individual's interest ONLY if you are certain it will be appreciated.

If the recipient is a golf enthusiast, a personalized golf item will be valued. An expensive bottle of wine makes for a great gift if the recipient is a wine connoisseur. Send a culture-specific gift only if you know the client well and know that the gift will be welcome and appreciated.

TIP #7: Play it Safe!

For a safe bet, stay with the most popular business gifts.

Gifts that can be consumed or used during the holidays are always welcome – your client can never have “too many” of these. They include: food gifts, snack gifts, wine, fruit gifts, serving trays, etc.

With logoed or personalized gift items, desk accessories are usually the most appropriate (calendars, calculators, paperweights, memory cards, pen sets, mugs, photo frames, clocks, etc.).

TIP #8: Expensive Gifts could Backfire!

Avoid extremely high value gift items or any personal gifts that may potentially cause discomfort to the recipient.

A gift with a high “perceived” value tells the recipient he/she is valued and appreciated. This does not necessarily translate into an expensive gift. A very expensive gift may be construed as bribery. Keep individual gifts under \$200 (group gifts may exceed that amount). If the gift is bulky, consider mailing it to the home.

With personal gifts, visualize the gift being opened in the presence of the entire office. Do not send a gift, which could be a source of embarrassment, ridicule or discomfort to the recipient. Avoid gender-specific gifts, jewelry, personal clothing, and perfume.

TIP #9: Group Gifts should be shareable!

Be sure your group gift is one that can be shared by the entire group.

A large gift basket or snack tower, with a variety of food items, makes an ideal group gift. If you know the number of individuals in the office, a box of umbrellas, travel mugs, or nice key chains can be sent to the office for distribution.

TIP #10: There's always a reason to Give!

Take advantage of other opportunities throughout the year to recognize a client.

Remember, like you, they are human and will remember those who share their happy times, accomplishments, milestones, and low times. While these opportunities can be recognized with a gift, a greeting card with a hand-written note of acknowledgement or encouragement will be equally appreciated. Remember the old saying...it's the thought that counts...and will be remembered!

Recognition Opportunities:

- New job or Promotion
- Retirement
- Business anniversary
- Launch of new product
- Completion of a project
- Receipt of a significant award
- Birthday
- Marriage
- Birth/adoption of a child
- Family illness
- Death of a family member
- National Appreciation Days (eg. Nurse Appreciation Day, Administrative Professionals Day, etc.)

BONUS TIP: If you are a recipient of a business gift...acknowledge the gift immediately.

Call the sender or send an e-mail as soon as you receive a holiday gift. Many gift senders wonder if the gift is lost in the mail or if the company responsible for sending the gift actually sent it. A sincere "Thank you so much for the gift. It was very thoughtful of you" is sufficient. However, mention something specific about the gift ("The atmosphere at my home felt a little like Christmas morning when the kids tore open the package and saw all the goodies inside!"), and you may just become the sender's favorite client. If it is a personal gift, which reflects an interest or hobby (or was very expensive), call immediately, but follow with a hand-written note immediately after the holidays to recognize the extra effort of the sender. Any business gift received during the rest of the year should be acknowledged with a phone call as well as a thank you note.

A business gift does NOT have to be reciprocated. Again a gracious "thank you" is all that is required.

Call us at 770-998-7111 to simplify your gift giving this year!

