

TRENDY Trinkets

From pens to personal accessories, give your customers the gift of variety

By Abby Heugel | Managing Editor

Most people know they can go to a party store and get a variety of party supplies such as balloons, plates, costumes and favors. But not many of those people know they can also get a variety of affordable gifts while they're there. As retailers, you already have them in your store for the basics, so why not remind them that many of those same items make great gifts as well?

"It's important for independent party stores to keep a generous selection of gifts in the \$10 to \$20 range," said Katherine Dikeakos, marketing manager for the Madison Park Group. "However, they should not forget the power of the impulse buy. We suggest providing a variety of items that retail for \$6 or less, as customers often look at these products as having a higher perceived value and will often stock up for future gifts — or for themselves."

Dikeakos added that when looking to put together a collection of gift items, it's also smart to have items in the \$3 to \$8 range so customers

don't hesitate to mix and match. Offer some "under \$5" impulse buys like magnets that can tuck right into a greeting card and mini notes perfect for purse or pocket. These are things that when priced well, customers won't think twice about picking up as a gift.

Practical Presents

The items marketed as gifts can be anything from balloon creations and pens to personalized stationery and plush.

A representative from Grasslands Road, the specialty gift division of Amscan, said that one account has developed a personalization service for monogramming and/or embroidery of nearly any type of logo, emblem, etc. onto canvas bags, shirts, hats or other fabric items. This account also prospects clubs, organizations, businesses and other groups for special contract jobs that may be favors or premiums given out at various

events sponsored by the prospect. On top of adding much-needed volume, this also gets the store name visible in the community.

But a gift can also be something as simple as candy, a popular party favor with kids and adults alike. The more bright, colorful and long-lasting the candy is, the more fun it is.

"We offer Teeny Lollipops in a variety of specialty shapes like Easter eggs, watermelon slices, hearts, flowers, butterflies and flip flop sandals that can be used in creative ways to enhance any party or occasion," said Jan Shrode of Squire Boone Village. "Use fancy ribbon to tie name cards onto the sticks, then place a lollipop on each plate. Or fill teacups with 'bouquets' of Teeny Lollipops.

"Cupcake decorations have become big business," Shrode continued, "and Teeny Lollipops are the perfect size to stick into the top of each cupcake."

Customers are seeking fun, well-made and beautifully designed gift items at good price points, especially consumables — those gifts that not only look great, but are useful as well.

"Well-designed stationery sets continue to be a top-selling gift item," Dikeakos said. "Notepads, sticky notes, pens and pencils, desk sets, memo mouse pads etc. make ideal gifts and should be offered at a number of price points to fit any budget.

"And items like beverage napkins are a must-have for independent party retailers," she continued, "as they're the perfect addition to any gathering and make wonderful hostess gifts."

Show Off

The personal accessories category is also a valuable addition for retailers, as items like purse mirrors, emery boards, tweezers etc. make great gift items and

can be featured with additional gifts such as cosmetic bags, lotions, soaps, and/or candles for an enticing display full of affordable options.

"To make gift-giving easy and fun, offer collections of like products with gift bags or

baskets on one tabletop display," Dikeakos said. "Place individual displays of bath salts, emery boards, mirrors, etc. next to baskets, cosmetic bags, or gift bags for customizable spa baskets. Customers will love choosing their favorite colors and styles, and retailers will find shoppers buying multiple items, rather than one grab-and-go gift."

If you have an endcap with items like beverage napkins and plates, add in wine tags, party coasters and bottle bags to create the ultimate gift and additional opportunities for impulse purchases.

"It's important to offer your customers a varied selection when bringing in a product line," Dikeakos said. "Rather than

displaying a few magnet styles, for example, we always suggest bringing in a filled display. Not only will it give your customer more options, but it will draw more attention to the products themselves. If these items are also priced well, you'll find customers purchasing multiple styles and coming back for more."

And never underestimate the design of a product and its packaging. Remember that when shopping at an independent store, customers expect to find unique items not available in the big box locations. By mixing the items already in stock with items brought in from colorful new collections, retailers can provide their shoppers with creatively designed gifts and favors that will improve not only the occasion, but also your bottom line. P



Items like Shannon Martin's collection of best-selling beverage napkins make a great hostess gift, while things like memo mouse pads are gifts that recipients will use every day.



Squire Boone Village has a large variety of Teeny Lollipops in shapes like Easter eggs, watermelon slices, hearts, flowers, butterflies and flip flop sandals.



Pet images, such as these on notebooks, postcards and beverage coasters from I Can Has Cheezburger?, resonate well with consumers looking for inexpensive gifts.



New Floaty Pens from Anne Taintor are best cross-merchandised with any of their paper products like magnetic notepads, sticky notes, mini notes and greeting cards.