

Christmas In July

The art of holiday gift promotion and selling

SELL



DELIVER



PLAN



PROMOTE



Written by Joel D. Schaffer, MAS

Christmas In July & August

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying insanity is doing the same thing over again and expecting different results. While he applied this postulate to scientific experiments, it also applies to sales strategy particularly in a very difficult economy. The fourth quarter of the year has proven to be the strongest sales quarter with over 35% of all sales recorded. The heavy spending on holiday gifts, calendars and greeting cards contribute to the concentrated sales program. Fall apparel and party supplies add to the volume. Awards are often overlooked. Most programs are annual and are ordered for presentation at end of year events. Those involved with fund raising also see the heaviest volume in the last two quarters.

What is it Christmas In July?

It is a business stimulus program aimed at getting you a visit with a client or prospect to entice them to order early for the holidays. It also presents an opportunity to open a conversation of discovery seeking to find other immediate promotional needs and sales opportunities. Simply, once you are in front of a prospect or customer you can probe.

When?

July and August are the best months to execute your plan. These are the dog days of summer when most businesses are slow. Marketing people are not yet ramped up for annual planning. Sales people are making fewer visits. Other than vacations and some time off, clients and prospects are accessible, if there is a key reason to see you. June is the best time to make your plan.

Who?

This business stimulus program initially targets as many as suspects possible. Start with existing clients encourage referrals. Add every dormant account as well as current prospects. Add new prospects who may not be your primary targets, but under the assumption that 85% of all businesses order something at the end of the year, these targets can still bring you business. Incorporate your social network from places such as Linked In, Facebook, My Space, Second Life.

Why?

We know the sales arguments concerning early ordering, but let's refresh them as they to be second nature in your telephone and person to person conversations;

Stress – there is enough stress in the current business world and stress levels rise quickly during the 4th quarter of every year. Making a decision on holiday gifts, greeting cards, calendars and other seasonal products during a slower time of year means reducing stress and staying healthy.

Inventory – the current economy and the fact that many products are from Asia means a greater possibility of inventory not being available. Early order allocates inventory and insures you get what you want, when you want it.

Price –Few people can forecast price however, petroleum based products, tech products with memory and many others are very volatile. The current economic conditions see prices low; the pending economic recovery will see higher prices and perhaps inflation. Locking in an early price makes sense and the ability to tweak the price before the order is produced provides a comfort level. It may be wise to guarantee that a price will not rise, but were there a decrease before delivery, it will be revised down. History shows there is limited risk. If your margins are good when the order is placed any guarantee you may have to honor, which cannot be renegotiated with the supplier, can easily be covered by your margins.

Packaging & Shipping – Shipping is becoming more of an issue than ever. Shipping from a supplier factory to a client is a hidden, but real cost. Ordering early may allow you or your factory the opportunity of drop shipping, packaging, labeling and preparing the program for cost effective distribution. A one pound package sent early by priority mail can save a client 50% on shipping. That savings can be applied to the product budget or simply saved by the client

The Key Reason To See You

Most suppliers involved in holiday gift product have early order incentives. Those who do not have an early order incentive will often agree to a special program if approached. Combine this with a possible incentive carved out of your margin; the overall incentive for a buyer to order early is compelling. Discount is the most attractive carrot. However, merchandise incentives have worked in the past and work today. Some products have a great cost vs. retail value. Your suppliers may have closeouts and other values to offer a gift with purchase. With enough time, distributors have even offered free gift packaging and brought in day laborers, temps and high school students to gift wrap a package. This has a low cost of goods, but is an appealing service if not crammed into the last two weeks of a holiday gift selling season.

How

While Christmas In July can be as simple as making phone calls, a well crafted marketing program can make a world of difference. Prospecting via the internet, via snail mail and the telephone offer a powerful assault. You can create your own theme or approach, but you need to be creative.

The mailer

A postcard or letter will suffice, but creativity in your mailing is always appreciated. Your mailing should offer the compelling reasons why the prospect should see you. While it should have a response mechanism, don't expect overwhelming replies. Success is obtained only with telephone follow-up. Gatekeepers filter the mail, so take the time to handwrite the address, mark it personal and confidential and apply every "trick" you know to get through to the target. If the prospect is really good you may want to spend some extra money on Express Mail. If you are doing a regular mailing don't use a postage meter, use stamps. Try to time you mail to arrive on Tuesday. It is the lightest postal day.

The e-mail

Fashion a clean e-mail presenting the opportunity to preview your collection and save stress, time and money by ordering early. This is only a tease and a precursor to your phone call asking for an

appointment. If you have the capability, personalize the mail for your specific client. Consider adding your picture and signature to the e-mail and denote yourself as a “holiday gift advisor or consultant. Try to send your e-mail just after 5:00PM. You are a personal shopper and many people make their living in that job description. In the early 1980’s an executive VP of Merrill Lynch asked his wife to buy gifts for his clients. She did so. The gifts were outstanding, the notes of appreciation poured in. Soon his associates asked her to shop for them. The result was a real business with huge volume and this person still travels Manhattan by limo seeking gifts throughout the year. Keep in mind that her success was based upon her taste in gifts. Your success will rest on the same skill.

The Phone Call

The phone is key to success. Call between 8:00 and 9:00 AM or between 5:00 and 6:00PM. Do not make that call unless you are ready to leave a memorable voice mail. Sing “It’s Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas”, or say what you will, but be prepared to leave a great message so he or she will call you back, or pick up the phone the next time you call. Rehearse with your spouse or fellow sales person. No less than half your calls will result in a voice mailbox message.

Good Morning Bob, I’m sure you received my mailing and e-mail about previewing my holiday gift collection. Bob, my single biggest objective is to save you money on this year’s gifts, greeting cards and calendars. We have a great collection and many early order incentives. I’d like to set up a meeting, perhaps lunch and we can review the collection.

In your brief telephone presentation you need to answer “what’s in it for me”. You have a list of reasons, but none more prevailing than saving money. Your presentation is tailored to the relationship you have, or may not have with the prospect.

Your Collection

You may want to partner with others in your office or a distributor you met at a show. The work you are doing can serve more than one sales associate and a team of people working on the project can cut time and expense.

Selling and presenting holiday gifts differs slightly from being a promotional consultant. In this transaction you and the client know your focus is on gift and product selection. How you present product makes a world of difference. Grabbing a pile of catalogs and samples can result in a sale, but to build a reputation as a gift consultant take a different approach.

Your objective is to create a “collection”. A collection of gift ideas that reflect your personal and company’s choice in gifts. Roger Horchow created the famous “Horchow Collection” by looking around the world for unusual gifts to showcase, while the real volume came from everyday items. Go through catalogs of your favorite suppliers. Identify gifts you want to sell. Look outside the industry for leading brands that can “wow” the buyer, even though they may not have the budget. Your selection criteria should be applied to everything

- What are the most popular holiday gifts, is this product among them?
- Consider the market, is it business appropriate?

- Does it meet required price points?
- Are my margins good?
- Is it good for men and woman?
- Are the minimums low enough for smaller buyers?
- Can it be personalized?
- Will there be stock in late November?
- Does it have a good perceived value?
- It is easy to ship and package.
- Is gift packaging included?
- Can a card be inserted with the gift by the supplier?
- Will the recipient likely have one already?
- Is it perishable?

Add your own selection criteria. Run your selections by friend or colleague. Seek a person not only with good taste, but one who may be a buyer. Let these people be your jury. Once you have identified a gift, qualify the supplier by writing your CSR and ask them to send you a single image of that product as a JPEG file to fit on a 8-1/2" x 11" page. Request no less than 200 DPI. Let them know you need it by a certain date and tell them they will be a feature product in your holiday presentation. They should not object to your asking questions to confirm your criteria. The photo file can go right to Kinkos on a flash drive, or be printed your own color printer. Print *three* copies to size. Do not put any copy on the picture with the possible exception of a product name, page number or ID. Image is everything. No prices and no unnecessary copy.

You may have purchased wedding invitations and paged through a binder, perhaps you have looked for wallpaper or viewed an artist portfolio. You may have leafed through a photo album or coffee table book. This is the concept behind a binder presentation.

The Binder

Spend a bit of money on an attractive leather or simulated leather 3" ring binder. You can consider a scrapbook presentation as an alternate. It can be fabric or frilly, so long as it has a business image and meets your personality. If you can, personalize the cover and give your collection a name. "The Dimensional Image Holiday Collection". Refer to your collection by name in your mail and conversations. This is an attempt to brand it. In time, you and your collection can get a reputation for fine gifts, great taste and the ability to identify the best in corporate gifts. To fill the binder you will need approximately 50 clear vinyl pocket page holders. Into those holders go your illustrations. Be sure to have a cover sheet as your first sheet when the book is opened as well as a last sheet with an index of gift ideas by page sequence.

Descending Cost Order

All of us are guilty of spending more than we expect. Your prospects should be encouraged to do that by virtue of how you present your collection. Start your collection with your highest priced gift. Perhaps it is a Wii or another electronic toy. It can be a \$500 gift or two. Depending on your market, your collection

begins the price decent stepping down about \$50 a product until you hit a plateau where you feel comfortable with the majority of gifts. Perhaps that is \$100. At that price you can have a handful of selections and continue down to \$75 and \$50. While you may be seeking an order for 100 gifts at \$50, there is frequently a need for a special higher priced chairman's gift or special client gift. In all, having 50 items in your binder should constitute a good collection. 25 page dividers will do the trick. Earlier it was suggested you have three copies of the gift in each pocket. That backup will allow you to remove a copy for the client to keep and still have one or two remaining.

On a separate "crib" sheet held outside the binder you can have the details of the product, pricing etc. Even the catalog page makes a perfect fact check document. It is simply something you don't need to or want to show the client.

Pinky Pointing

It may seem a bit trite or even over dramatic, but presentation is everything. The finest restaurants, car dealers and retailers know the tricks of the trade. Work side by side with the client or work upside down. Always control the page turning and try not to let the client turn the page. Use a pen or your pinky to point out the features of a product if you pause for a moment. Put a Post-It-Note flag pack in the client's hand and suggest they place one on any gift they are interest in. Pinky pointing is an old skill in an internet world, but still a positive touch in gift selling.

Catalogs In Back

In the back of the binder place a paper dividers behind which are the selected catalogs. Appropriate catalogs include calendars, diaries and greeting cards. These are perennial favorites and cannot be presented as the gifts were. Be sure you have the most reliable suppliers and do not speculate. Holiday orders are always under the gun. Delivery is everything.

Your book is complete. Insert it into some protective bag, sleeve or slip case. This binder will last you a lifetime. Pages will be updated and replaced as needed, but buyers will become familiar with you. Why not have a holiday lunch and presentation in July?

Good Selling!!

Soundline Self Promotion Tools



When you succeed, we succeed.



Special mailers to stimulate your sales

While you are busy selling...
We print - We package - We mail

For additional details e-mail
info@soundline.com

Christmas In July (2009) Stock Designs

Please note: These cards can accommodate variable data on the cover. All cards are 5"x7".



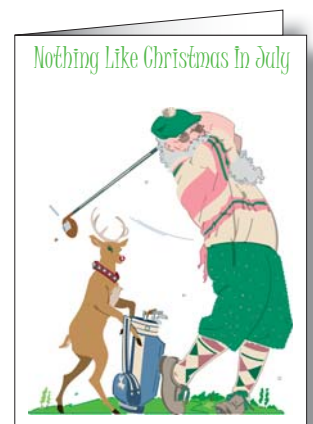
CIJ1



CIJ2



CIJ3



CIJ4



CIJ8



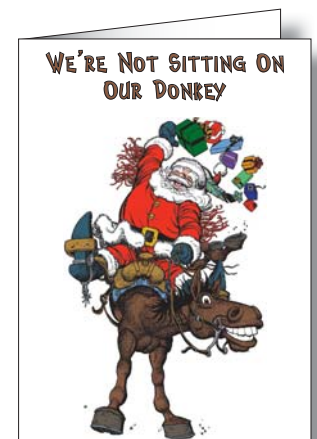
CIJ5



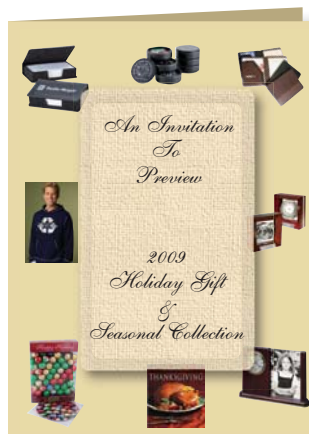
CIJ6



CIJ7



CIJ10



CIJ11



CIJ19

Select a design and a verse (or write your own)

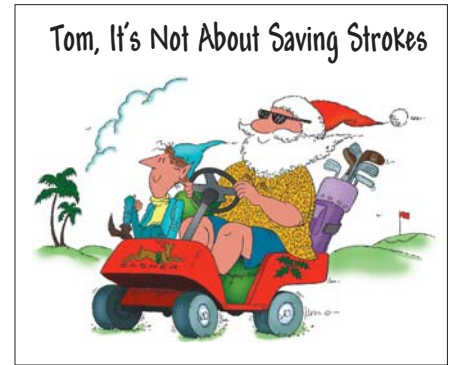


Fiber used in this product is recyclable, biodegradable and harvested from sustained growth forests. It complies with stringent environmental chain of custody ownership requirements.

Christmas In July 4"x 6" (2009) Stock Post Card



CIJPC20



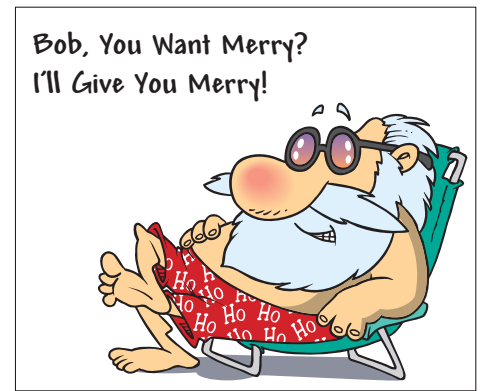
CIJPC21



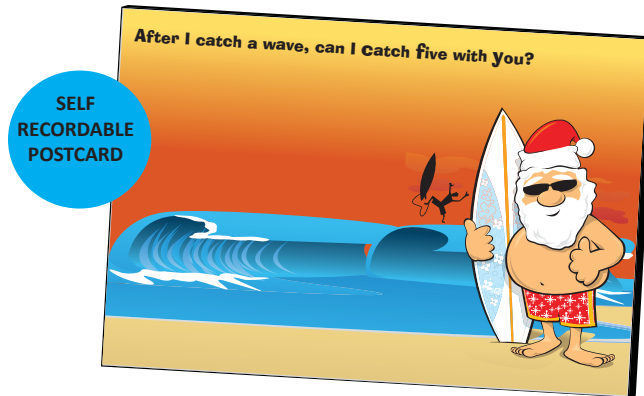
CIJPC23



CIJPC22



CIJPC24



CIJPC25

This is a talking postcard. You can record your message and get even greater impact. Hand write a greeting on the mailing side. One side 4 color printing with logo.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY SELF PROMOTION TEXT SELECTION

Select any text below. Provide your contact information and logo for printing in area shown. If you would rather write your own copy, please provide it as a MS Word document and proofed. If you would like to provide it as art, please be sure all type is saved as curves and provide in 200 DPI or better as a JPEG, AI or PDF file. RGB or CMYK is accepted.

It is the heart of summer, but the holiday season is not far away. We want to make you "very merry" by saving you up to 50% off your holiday gift, greeting card and calendar budget.

Now is the time to review our holiday collection and save with early order incentives from our favorite suppliers.

We will be calling you to set aside a few minutes of your time to do your shopping early.

Jill Hansen
Holiday Gift Advisor
Dimensional Image
(201) 355-5555
jill@dimensionalimage.net

SPV1

It's about saving you money on your holiday budget
Dimensional Image
Invites you to preview
The 2009 Holiday Gift
Card & Calendar Collection.

We have an exciting new collection of business to business holiday expressions. Taking care of your holiday needs now can save you as much as 50% on your holiday budget.

We will be calling you to schedule a short meeting where you can see the wonderful ideas and the substantial savings.

Jill Hansen
Holiday Gift Advisor
Dimensional Image
(201) 355-5555
jill@dimensionalimage.net

SPV2

And we hooked our favorite suppliers of gifts, greeting cards and calendars. We made a great catch because they are giving us an exclusive opportunity to offer you significant savings of up to 50% on your holiday budget.

Now is the right time to order and save time, money and the annual stress the holidays bring. We will be calling you to schedule a few minutes to review our new collection and take advantage of the early order incentives.

Jill Hansen
Holiday Gift Advisor

Dimensional Image
(201) 355-5555
jill@dimensionalimage.net

SPV3

It's not your average business year. We recognize the challenge you have on your budget. Our gift consultants have assembled an outstanding collection of gifts, cards and calendars with early order discounts of up to 50%.

We invite you to preview our collection and save time, stress and money. As your gift advisor, I will be calling you to set aside a few minutes to review the collection and money saving opportunities. I hope to save you time and the annual holiday stress by shopping early.

Jill Hansen
Your Holiday Gift Advisor
Dimensional Image
(201) 355-5555
jill@dimensionalimage.net

SPV4

Sure, it's summer and Santa is off at the beach. But, the holiday season is near and we want to spare you the annual stress.

Ordering early means..
Saving up to 50% on your budget .
Saving last minute stress.
Saving you time when you don't have it.

We are proud to announce:
The 2009 Dimensional Image Collection
Fine Gifts, Cards, Calendars

We invite you to set aside a few minutes and review our collection, place an early order for November delivery and enjoy the holiday season and savings. I will be calling you soon to set up a time to meet.

Jill Hansen
Your Holiday Gift Advisor

SPV5

GOLD LEVEL DISTRIBUTOR

CHRISTMAS IN JULY 2009

Pricing & Fulfillment Details

Use this sheet to calculate your costs.

QTY	STYLE #	PRICE	ITEM DESCRIPTION	ADD FOR VDP	GOLD DISCOUNT	TOTAL
		.52	Greeting Card w/ envelope	Included	Included	\$
		.85	Fulfillment – includes postage		-	\$
		.32	Post card printed 4/1	Included	Included	
		.40	Fulfillment- Includes postage		-	
		1.40	Recordable post card 4/0	Included	Included%	

Special Distributor Net Pricing 50 - 1000 units

Four panel 5" x 7" greeting card with clear or white envelope. 4" x 6" postcard printed 4/1

GOLD LEVEL DISCOUNT IS FACTORED IN TO THE PRICING ABOVE

FULFILLMENT SERVICES

Price includes addressing, first class postage and mailing. We do it all for you @.85. Post card @.40

FULFILLMENT LIST

Provide Excel spread sheet or CSV comma delineated file. Be sure to provide data in marked columns. Provide one column for each field (first name, last name, company, address, city, state, zip). Please use upper and lower case as it gives a better appearance in variable data printing.

PAYMENT

Fulfillment costs must be paid with order [VISA,MC]. All other costs to terms.

PRODUCTION

Allow 3 days from proof approval. Add 3 days for fulfillment.

ART

Provide your logo or design at 300DPI (JPEG,TIFF). Provide all type as curves.



Soundline LLC * 11 Middlebury Blvd. Randolph, NJ 07869

[973] 927-4100 * FAX [973] 927-7755

sales@soundline.com

ASI# 88241 UPIC#1SOUNDLN SAGE#50013