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The Holiday Shopping Experience – Rewarding or Traumatic?

By Lee-Anne Robert

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Picture this scenario! It's December 24th, the day of Christmas Eve. On this day you should be relaxing, enjoying time with family and thinking of all the precious memories you have created throughout the year.

No, wait! It's the last day of shopping before Christmas and you haven't even started to do your gift shopping.

You get into your car and fight traffic all the way to the local mall, only to spend an hour trying to find a parking spot. That is if you find one at all. You enter the mall in search of the perfect gifts and there is a stampede of people. Looks like everyone else is doing last minute shopping too!

You dodge the nudging elbows and stomping feet of the crowds. You're starting to feel claustrophobic, your stress level is starting to increase and you haven't even begun shopping yet!

Sound familiar? To top it all off, you browse through the stores only to find that meager offerings remain. The shelves are practically empty. What happens then? You spend too much money on something that your gift recipient neither needs or wants. Their gift wasn't chosen for them...it was chosen out of desperation.

Once again, you remind yourself that you will prepare far in advance for Christmas next year. The next Holiday Season arrives and you repeat the same traumatic shopping experience.

How many of us have waited until the very last moment to buy a gift for a loved one, friend or business associate? There is only three months left until Christmas and those days will go quickly.

Christmas is one of the most stressful events of the year. The expense of buying gifts and the pressure of last minute shopping can all take the joy out of the most joyful time of year.

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Here are some tips to take the stress out of Holiday shopping this year:

1) Make a list of the people you will be buying a gift for before you go shopping. If you have a large family or friends to buy gifts for, it can get expensive. In our family, we have made the decision to buy only for the children. Another way to reduce costs is to have everyone draw a name out of a hat and buy a present only for that person.

2) Think of gift ideas for the people on your list and write them down. What are their hobbies and interests? What are their needs and wants? If you cannot come up with anything, ask the person directly for ideas. This will save you time wandering aimlessly in the mall in search of a gift and you will give a gift that your gift recipient really wants and will appreciate.

3) Buy a few extra gifts, for instance chocolates, so that you will be prepared just in case you forgot

somebody or an unexpected guest arrives bearing gifts.

4) If possible, start your Holiday shopping a month or two before Christmas. It is never too early to prepare!

5) Don't forget about online shopping! Buy your gifts over the internet. You can find most gifts online, shop at your own convenience and you won't have to step foot in a mall.

If you follow these tips, you are on your way to a rewarding shopping experience and a less stressful Holiday Season.

We all must remember that Christmas is a joyful time of year. It's not about the gift you give or receive but it is about cherishing the special people in your life and spending time with them. Create new traditions and memories that will be with you for a lifetime.

Copywrite 2004 Written by Lee–Anne Robert, owner of Cuddles `n Gifts at

Check out the new Holiday and Christmas Gift Basket selection. With gifts this beautiful and classy, you will find a gift for anyone on your list!

Online Holiday Shopping Sales Meet Record Breaking Expectations

By Robert Benson

As the dollar figures pour in and the numbers are tabulated and with business analysts predicting a record breaking online holiday shopping season, it appears the projections were right on target.

Although the final holiday shopping sales figures aren't in yet, preliminary reports from a wide spectrum of sources point to online sales that have met expectations and will make e–tailers, large and small, very satisfied with the results.

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According to comScore, the latest "2005 Online Holiday Shopping Update" reflects that non-travel spending for the first 46 days of the holiday season (November 1–December 16) totaled 15.86 billion dollars. This represents a 23% increase over the same period in 2004. In addition, comScore estimates that U.S. Internet sales will exceed 19 billion dollars (excluding travel) for the holiday season, an increase of 24% above 2004 sales figures.

What were the best selling days during this online shopping period? What were the sales for the highly anticipated "Black Monday"?

The results are in and surprisingly, Monday, November 28 (Black Monday) ranked ninth in a listing of the top ten non-travel online holiday shopping spending days among U.S. home, work and university Internet users for the holiday shopping period of November 1–December 16, 2005, with online sales estimated at 484 million dollars.

The top selling day? So far, that distinction goes to Monday, December 12, 2005, with total sales of 556 million dollars. A close second was Tuesday, December 13, 2005, with sales of 554 million dollars and astonishingly these two days combined topped 1.1 billion dollars in online retail sales.

Furthermore, according to the latest "Holiday eSpending Report", (released by Goldman Sachs, Nielsen/Net Ratings and Harris Interactive), it is estimated that online shoppers spent 18.6 billion dollars during the first six weeks of the 2005 holiday season (October 29–December 9), a 16% increase for U.S. online spending compared to the same period in 2004.

To summarize, these preliminary reports offer a positive outlook for e-tailers as the e-commerce industry continues to evolve and prosper. Internet users are taking advantage of new web sites, specialty sites and shops, virtual online shopping malls, niche marketing and the holiday sales figures reflect this phenomenon.

Robert Benson operates

a web site devoted to helping users find

unique gifts in unique places with a wide assortment of merchandise to choose from including home decor, collectibles, novelties, three stooges memorabilia, apparel, novelties and more.

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