

'Tis the Season for Giving

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By Caroline S. Potter

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There is a nip in the air and the Holiday season is here! It is a season full of get-togethers and gift exchanges, but when it is all over, how do you feel? For many people, this can be a big let down. You go to put everything away and realize that you didn't have any room before the holiday, so where are you going to put anything new you got. Here are some tips to help you enjoy the holiday season a little more (during and after).

Clean out your closets, drawers and toy boxes now

Spend sometime going through your closets, drawers and toy boxes before the holiday. Take the gently used items that you no longer love and share them with those who will by donating them to charitable organizations. Donate these items prior to the end of the year so that you can get the tax deduction. Throw out broken toys or well-worn clothing. If you are unsure about an item, place it in a box to put away and mark the box with the date. Mark on your calendar when to go through the box again (6 months? One year?). If you haven't needed it during that time, donate it. All this effort before the holiday arrives will help you keep that holiday cheer going a little longer after the excitement dies down and you get organized for the new year.

Make a list and check it twice

For many years, my family has made wish lists that we exchange with each other. Often when I tell people that, they think it is very greedy on our part or that we are taking the fun out of the holiday. Actually I believe it is very practical and allows everyone to enjoy the season a little more! There are certain people I will always exchange gifts with. With a list, they can be more focused with their time and enjoy shopping, which can be a gift in itself during this hectic season. I will get something I won't have to consider returning or not know what to do with and they will get to see me enjoy their gift.

So as you are cleaning out your house, make a list of the items you need. It could be a blue sweater that will go with a pair of pants hanging unworn in your closet. It could be something to finish a collection or help you display your collection. It could be something to replace a broken toy or gadget. Make sure if you put the item on the list, you really would want it and use it. Socks may not seem like a

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fun gift to give to your father, but he may appreciate them more if that is what he needs. The lists from my family have become a standard in my PDA so that as other celebrations come around, I can continue to give them something they will use and enjoy. Your list is also good for after the holidays to use as your own shopping list for the certain items that you really feel you need, but didn't get and perhaps can now get at the after-holiday sales.

Besides the tangible items, consider asking for or giving something that doesn't require permanent storage space such as:

Purchase movie or theater tickets and include an offer to baby sit or to go with them

Prepare a box of easy to make food for a college student or add a small binder with your favorite

recipes and include some of the ingredients for someone newly on their own.

Register them for a class to explore a new hobby they have been talking about

Start a new magazine subscription or renew their favorite

Establish a membership to a museum (even if it is only a short-term trial)

Offer to run an errand or do something around the home of an elderly neighbor or relative.

Bake a batch of holiday cookies for the person who never seems to get some baked

No matter what it is, come up with fun ways to package the item. You will find the gifts are more appreciated because you made the effort to think about what they would really like and enjoy.

Establish a tradition

You may be decorating your home, baking cookies and deciding what gifts to buy for the special people in your life, but there are some people who are not eagerly awaiting this special time. They are dreading telling their children they won't be getting that wanted toy and there won't be a special meal. During the holiday season many organizations are looking for donated items such as never been worn clothing (you know those items with the tags still on them hanging in your closet) or gently used items to give to those less fortunate. They are looking for food to share and people to help deliver or prepare that food. Consider starting a new tradition of giving and give a gift where you can help someone else experience the joy of the season. You may find that your wish list and that of your family begins to reflect what is truly important in the season of giving!

Packing Up

As you are taking the trimmings down after the holiday is over, weed through them and determine if you want or need them all. When they are all out, does it feel festive or cluttered? Are any of them broken? Can they be fixed? Take the time to fix them now or throw them out so that next year, you are

only putting out your favorite things. Also many stores offer colored storage bins that can help you find the right containers easily the following year.

From start to finish, don't let clutter overwhelm the season. Do your best to keep things neat by doing a quick 15–minute pick up every day. Enjoy the season and all the blessings that are around you.

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About the Author: Caroline Potter is a Professional Organizer, public speaker and freelance writer. Her work frequently appears on many Internet sites, on the organizing site Clutter Free Living (<http://www.clutterfreeliving.com>), as well as in the monthly Home Organizing Newsletter How to Be Clutter Free. Subscribe to the FREE monthly e–newsletter by sending a blank e–mail to cflnews–subscribe@topica.email–publisher.com

Promotional Freebies

By Anita DeFrank

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What's a promotional freebie? A promotional freebie is something you can give to your customers, visitors or subscribers. Giving away "freebies" is an excellent marketing tool. Who doesn't love freebies? Having something to offer your visitors or ezine/newsletter subscribers for free can be very helpful. Often giving away freebies will increase your website/ezine numbers.

1. Give free gifts to all new customers.
2. Hold a special that every customer that orders a certain dollar amount gets a free gift.
3. Offer a free gift with every order.
4. Give a free gift to anyone that refers you or your service.
5. Give a free gift to the person that was referred.
6. Offer a free gift to all website visitors. ~ Downloadable items work best for this or if you have more time and want to "track" your visitors...have them email you for their free gift.
7. Offer a free gift to all new ezine/newsletter subscribers.
8. Offer a free gift to the first 5 people that email you the title of your article in this week's newsletter. ~ This also makes sure your subscribers are reading.
9. Offer a free gift to all ezine/newsletter readers. ~ Again, downloadable items work best.

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10. Offer to sponsor contests online and offline. ~ This is also excellent exposure!

Now you have a long list of where to give your gifts, so now the question is what do you give? Here are some examples of what to give:

1. Free samples ~ Of course give samples of the products that you sell.
2. Discounts ~ Offer discounts as a free gift on the back of your business card.
3. Advertising specialty items ~ Mugs, t-shirts, magnetic business cards, hats...all with your log on them of course.
4. Free products or service ~ Give away free a few items that you sell or free demonstrations of how to use them.
5. E-books ~ These make excellent gifts but always make sure you have "legal right" to give them away.

Now you know how to increase your traffic with promotional freebies, so go start giving gifts away! 'Tis the season!



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