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**Using Holidays To Put Some Extra Cheer In Your Cash Box**

**By Meredith Pond**

No matter your age or station in life, we all look forward to holidays. They give us a reason to decorate, celebrate, and most of all, spend.

Think back to any of last year's holidays. Did you buy some new decorations? Probably. Did you plan a party or host a dinner? Likely. Did you buy gifts or take advantage of special sales and promotions? Undoubtedly!

Well, instead of being on the spending end of this year's holidays, why not turn the tables and put on a promotion of your own? During the fall and winter holidays especially, people are jolly, joyous, and a little more willing to open their wallets.

Of course, no honest person wants to take blatant advantage of people and their money, but for those who are already ready to buy, why not take advantage of the season by giving them a special deal?

If you have a brick-and-mortar shop, why not have a holiday open house? These events are obviously more common from Halloween to New Year's, but have you ever thought of holding this kind of party at your store for the 4th of July? Advertise free refreshments, music, and giveaways, and people will come in droves, no matter what holiday it happens to be. At the very least you'll have a good time showing others a good time, and you'll probably make a lot of extra sales. If holding such a bash requires you to stay open a little later, why not? After all, 'tis always the season to please.

If your business has its only home on the Internet, put some festive touches on your web site. Try decorating it with lights, fireworks, or other festive delights. Play some holiday music, or offer free holiday sounds or screen savers for those who stop by (if you do this, you might want to register your download site with search engines to make sure people can find it). People love to decorate their home or office computers with the free stuff they find online, so why not join the club?

Another fantastic way to use holidays for marketing is to send out festive cards to your current and past customers. Wish them a happy holiday and thank them for their business. If possible, have them hand-signed for a personal touch. Be sure your company logo appears somewhere on the card.

## Using Holidays To Put Some Extra Cheer In Your Cash Box

During the Christmas season, why not buy some attractive but inexpensive tree ornaments or other decorations, and stamp them with a small version of your company logo? Offer them free to those who make purchases, or sell them at your counter (or on your site) for a ridiculously low price. People tend to keep and collect decorations over the years, so your cheap little ornament is bound to make a lasting impression.

Whether it's Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, or Ant Farm Harvest, holidays offer a great chance for your business to show its stuff. Let people see your kindler, gentler, jollier side and have a little fun with your promotions. When January rolls around again, your bottom line will be glad you did.

Meredith Pond has been writing marketing copy since 2000. She personally writes your sales copy at

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## **Holiday Sanity Savers From A Mostly-Sane Mom**

**By Nicole Dean**

The Holidays are a stressful time. Between the additional errands, the extra traffic, and the stress of spending money that you don't have - even the sanest mom will be questioning her sanity as the holidays near.

Here are a few ideas to help you keep your sanity this holiday season.

Make a list (and check it twice). Keep your shopping list in your purse to keep from being overwhelmed or worse - overspending. If you walk into a store and are bedazzled by all the shiny things, I can relate. I get so overwhelmed that I get nothing accomplished. But, as the Holidays near, I tend to switch into "SuperMarket Sweep" mode and I start throwing everything into my cart (whether I really need it or not). Having a list can help fight this urge, keep you sane - and help your budget stay sane in the process.

As soon as you start buying, start wrapping. There's nothing more stressful than tackling a mountain of unwrapped gifts two days before Christmas. Save on the cost of wrapping paper by buying it after the holiday each year and stowing it away for next year. Be sure to attach gift tags as you wrap. If you're wrapping a month in advance, there's no way you're going to remember what that funky rectangular shaped box is, let alone who it's for.

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To save time and sanity, wrap gifts that go together in all the same paper. For instance, wrap all gifts that will be going with you to your mother-in-law's on Christmas Eve in the red paper with the gingerbread men. And put all gifts for your friends and neighbors in the blue paper with the snowflakes, etc.

Cook in advance. Did you know that you can make mashed potatoes during the summer, freeze them, and have them ready for the holidays? Mashed potatoes can be kept in the freezer for months if you use a freezer-friendly recipe. Cook your mashed potatoes in advance and offer to bring them to Christmas dinner. You can skip the stress of cooking, because they'll be ready and waiting for you.

Limit your travel. The holidays are about family, but they are also about togetherness and making memories. If you're spending your holidays trapped in the car together, driving down icy roads, stressed out, consider ways to travel less.

The Holidays are a time to make memories. Oftentimes the memories we are making are of a stressed-out mom, running around missing out on all the fun because she's trying to create a perfect moment. Instead, relax and experience the holidays with your family. Between a little planning and taking some of the pressure off, you'll have a Holiday that would make Norman Rockwell sigh.

Nicole Dean is a mostly-sane mom and creator of

<http://ShowMomTheMoney.com>

- a fun and

informative site to help moms achieve success working from home. She invites you to learn more money-saving tricks at

<http://www.showmomthemoney.com/TimeSavers.asp>

and to take her free

tutorial for work at home moms at

<http://www.showmomthemoney.com/free-tutorial.htm>



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