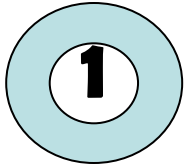


10 Practical Lessons Learned about Choosing Business Gifts

By Jennifer Katus, PMP



As a business gift company, we have the chance to collect a bunch of lessons learned about choosing the best business gifts and giveaways. There are many tips we can offer for selecting business gifts for specific occasions. The following ten tips apply to most business gift situations.



Blue is the Most Common Favorite Color

Blue – in all its shades – is the most common favorite color in America. So when in doubt about the color of your gift, if blue is one of the color options, go for it! (For an interesting article on the Pantone organization's annual color survey, click [here](#).)



Seek a Few Opinions...But Not Too Many

We've seen teams and committees get all twisted up over the gift selection process. The bottom line: it's impossible to please everyone. Instead, try seeking the opinion of a few key players. If you put the gift selection to a vote, you'll define clear winners and losers. If the losers are also the gift recipients, the gift will remind them of their loss instead of the reason for their reward. Even if the voters are not the intended recipients, a team-wide poll will sap your time and may end in an impasse!



Classics are Classics for a Reason

Some times customers ask for the latest and greatest new gift. But more frequently they opt to order an old classic: a pen, a portfolio, or a shirt, for example. And that's just fine! Classics become classic because people like to receive them and they find them useful. If you want to order the latest gift on the scene, that's great! But you should never feel boring for ordering a classic. They're classics for a reason!



Some Gifts and Logos Don't Mesh Well

If you want a logo or sentiment imprinted on your business gift, consider the orientation of your artwork and the gift. If your logo is wider than it is tall, it is best to select a gift that is wider than it is tall. Unless a gift has a super big imprint area, it's typically best if the orientation of the imprint area matches the orientation of your logo. Still not sure which to choose? These gifts typically have large imprint areas that can accommodate most logos:

- Travel mugs with a full wrap-around imprint area
- Portfolios
- Blankets (winter) and beach towels (summer)
- Bags – lunch bags, tote bags, computer bags
- Mouse pads



Honor the Corporate/Organization Norm

Whether you are selecting a gift for external customers, or an internal gift for employees, it's important to consider the nature of gifts given in the past. The amount spent, the quality, and the tone (humorous, decorative, personal, traditional) of past gifts should all influence your gift selection process. If you give something extravagant this year, can you afford to give the same caliber of gift next year? If you typically give serious gifts and you opt for something humorous, will people understand the joke without much explanation? Will your gift inappropriately upstage anyone? These are all important points to consider.

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Timeliness Matters

If you are selecting a holiday gift, it is best to deliver it during the last 'full' work week before holiday vacations start. If you are selecting a reward gift for a completed project, try to deliver the gift while the project is still fresh in people's minds. To have your gifts in time, plan to order 3-4 weeks before you need them. More on this in lesson #9.



Order a Few Extra

Order a few extra gifts...especially if you aren't sure of the exact quantity you need, or if new employees or customers will be coming on board. It's much easier to find a use for a leftover gift than it is to order just 1 more reprint.



Request a Sample

It's best to see a sample if you will be ordering an expensive item – or ordering a new gift that's unfamiliar to you. You may need to pay a small amount for the sample and shipping charges, but most companies will credit that amount towards your order.



The Worst Time to Order

The worst time to order is a week (or less!) before you need to give out your gifts. Most custom-imprinted gifts take 2-3 weeks for a proof, imprinting, and shipping. Some take only a week. Others take over a month. If you wait to order, your selection may be limited by the timeframe. You may not have time to receive a sample. Or you may need to pay rush order charges or expedited shipping charges. For most items, ordering 3-4 weeks before your 'Need By' date will give you a comfortable timeframe.



The Best Time to Order

Business gifts have a seasonality just like consumer products. The end of the season is the best time to get close-out prices. (Inventories may be limited, so make sure you have a back-up gift in mind.) The start of the season is the 2nd best time to order, as companies try to get a jump start on their sales results. Here are some suggestions for the best times to buy a handful of popular business gifts:

- Pens: October – December (for inventory clearance specials)
- Summer styled apparel: August (season end)
- Winter styled apparel: April (season end)
- Blankets: October (jump start) or April (season end)
- Beach towels: April (jump start) or August (season end)
- Water bottles: February – March (jump start) or September (season end)
- Office products: June & July (manufacturers offer discounts during slow summer vacation months)

Need help selecting a business gift? We carry a full line of incentive and reward gifts – too many to feature them all on our website and in our catalogs. Contact us for unique ideas and quotes.