



HOLIDAY EDITION



DOWNTOWN BUSINESS TIPS

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER, 2011

The Business Tips Newsletter is brought to you in partnership by the Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority & the Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center.

BUSINESS BUILDING REMINDERS, [Barbara Wold](#)

The Christmas and Holiday retail season easily outshines other times of the year in sales, but it can also be the most exhausting. With proper planning and preparation, it can be not only a successful and memorable season, but in the most positive sense of the word, an enjoyable one for owners, managers, staff, and certainly customers.

LET'S START...

Having all salespeople read company ads, catalogs, literature, Facebook, Twitter and Blogs before customers come in with questions and inquiries. An uninformed salesperson is bad for business. Also check out everything about the competition.

Staying open longer hours. You want your community to shop locally -- so make it easier for your customers that have a job and are working.

Establishing dress codes for employees and enforcing these dress codes. (Even if there is a uniform -- it should be clean, neat, etc.) Employees are the representatives of the store and should project the image the store wants to convey.

Greeting everyone who walks through the door. Coming up with different greetings -- so customers don't hear the same greeting over and over when shopping in the store.

Making it comfortable for customers to shop. Adjusting the thermostat because customers may be wearing coats and the staff can wear a sweater. Perhaps a rack for customer's coats and a place to check packages.

Having employees identify themselves when answering the phone. This adds a professional

touch and provides the caller with a person to identify with on the other end of the line.

Cleaning up the cash-wrap area as-you-go and putting everything in its place. Customers are concerned about transaction accuracy and your services, i.e., shipping, if this area is a mess with clutter and food.

Listening, really listening to customers. If you don't really listen and show customers the wrong merchandise -- they will assume you don't have what they are looking for and leave.

Stocking and cleaning during hours when the store is not open. Doing these chores when the store is open is inconsiderate to shoppers and doesn't convey a professional image. Instead have the staff mingle with the customers and help with suggestions.

Having all cash registers open when the store is busy. An extra staff member can mingle with the customers in line -- making additional suggestions.

Getting everyone on board. Ensuring that everyone in the organization understands what the winning advantage is and what their role is in supporting it.

Making every customer feel special.

LET'S STOP...

Trying to get a head start on store closing times. Vacuuming while the store is still open is rude and should be done after the store closes.

Helping phone inquiries while other customers are in the store waiting to be helped. The customer in the store should take prece-

dence. Having someone besides the cashier answer the phone.

Running out of sale items or advertised specials early on the first day of the promotion. A product should not be advertised unless there is sufficient stock.

Using the store phone for personal calls.

KEY DATES!

November 26th and 27th

Visit Santa Downtown

Saturday, 1pm-6pm

Sunday, 1pm-5pm

December 2nd

Luminaries and Merchant's Open House

December 3rd

Old Fashioned Christmas Parade

Saturday, 4:30pm

December 3rd

Lighting of Tree at Visitors Center

Directly following the Parade

Trolley Tour of Downtown

Friday, November 25th - Saturday Dec 17th

Fridays 7pm & 8 pm, and Saturdays 6pm, 7pm, & 8 pm

Tickets are for sale at the Visitors Center \$5 for Adults and \$3 for Children. Ride is approx. 30 min.



Print the emailed attachments to hang on your window, door or by your cash register!

TIPS FOR REDUCING HOLIDAY STRESS

handmadesuccess.com, Contributing Author [Bettie](#)

The holidays can be stressful for anyone, but if you are running your own small business during the most hectic time of the year, you are bound to be even more susceptible to overwhelm. There are no magic tricks here, just simple ideas to keep you on track.

Start early!

Successful sellers say that by getting a jump on ordering supplies and filling inventory, the holidays will run a little smoother. It may be too late to be this ahead of the game this season, but it is never too early to start preparing for future rushes. Pay attention to what your hot items are (and which supplies you run low on) so that you can make a plan for next year.

Take care of yourself!

When we are really busy, self-care tends to fall to the bottom of the list of priorities. If you burn out or get sick, though, you are going to be less effective (and certainly more miserable). Your small business probably doesn't have paid holiday time or sick leave, so make sure you are being good to yourself!

Be Organized!

Whether you are filling increased orders from your shop or doing multiple holiday shows, you need to have a process and a plan to get things done efficiently and correctly. If being organized is not one of your natural tendencies, make sure to take the time to write everything down and check your lists!

Don't take on more than you can handle!

If you've read my previous posts, you know that I am a big fan of saying [not saying yes to every opportunity](#) that presents itself.

Stay connected and stay real!

While keeping things on track and under control is essential, perhaps the most important thing to remember is that you do not live in a vacuum. Your community, your friends and family, and even your customers, are a great resource and support when you are feeling overwhelmed.

With the holidays quickly approaching, what are the things you do to keep yourself from becoming overwhelmed?

4 ETIQUETTE TIPS FOR BUSINESS HOLIDAY CARDS

freesmallbusinessresource.com, November 9, 2011

When people send out holiday cards to family members and friends, often there isn't a lot of thought about holiday card etiquette, beyond who to keep on the Christmas list and who to cross off. When a business sends a holiday card, however, the card is a reflection on the company and can either strengthen the relationship between customer/company or can sour it. In order to make sure that any holiday cards you send are warmly received by customers or potential customers, there are a few etiquette tips that you should follow.

While etiquette rules are always in flux as people's perception of proper behavior changes (especially as the Internet changes the ways in which people communicate), there are a few basic rules you should always keep in mind if your business plans to send out holiday greeting cards.

1. **Cards should be hand-addressed if possible.** When you send a card that is not hand addressed, it lets your clients know that you didn't take the time to actually care enough to write out the envelope. The card will be looked upon as just another example of a mass mailing from a business and may never be opened or looked at.
2. **Hand signing is important too.** When the card is hand signed, this goes a long way towards making the type of personal connection that will strengthen the relationship between you and your client. This is especially im-

portant with key clients who may have given you a lot of business over the past year.

3. **Use the proper titles and last names for clients.** This means the card should always be addressed to Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr. or other title. It is also usually best to write out the full name of both people in a couple, rather than just spelling out the husband's name (i.e. Mr. John Doe and Mrs. Jane Doe is typically preferable to Mr. and Mrs. John Doe.)
4. **Good quality cards should be used.** Sending something that looks cheap is not going to help customers to have a very good perception of your business. They will be able to tell that the card was low cost and instead of feeling valued, they may just feel as if you spend a few pennies to send out cards as a cheap advertising gimmick. Likewise, you should also typically avoid handmade cards, which can also look cheap, and opt for something a bit more professional.

These tips, along with your own knowledge of your clients, should be used in making sure you follow proper etiquette and send out cards that will be appreciated, rather than a source of annoyance or displeasure.

GET READY FOR THE HOLIDAYS - 7 TIPS

microsoftbusinesshub.com, Jeff Wuorio

Beth Shaw began thinking about the Christmas and New Year's business in the sweltering heat of summer. If you run a small business, chances are good you should be doing the same. Holidays — Christmas, Hanukah, Labor Day or most any other holiday — are critical to the success of countless businesses. It's essential to map out plans to make the most of those holidays months before they occur. So no matter what time of year you begin planning, consider the advantages of being prepared. If a holiday — any holiday — is important to the well being of your business, here are seven issues to consider well in advance.

1. Got enough staff? If you assume your business is completely unaffected by holidays, consider the importance of having enough staff on hand to continue business as usual. No matter if it's a retail store having to face a crunch of customers, or an accounting firm swamped with requests for end of the year advice, make certain you have sufficient staff at the ready.

2. Make physical preparations in advance. Get your business in holiday shape well before the actual holiday itself. If you're planning on extensive decorations, have them on hand long before the holiday hits. If you need to rearrange your space to accommodate customer overload, have that on the drawing board as well.

3. Consider advertising and marketing. Magazines and other publications plan holiday issues several months before Christmas and New Year's. If you plan on advertising to boost revenue during the holidays, start thinking about your advertising well before publication deadlines.

4. Don't limit your thinking to December. Although mid- to -late December is often considered holiday prime time that may not be the case when it comes to the relationship with your business. For instance, candy stores and manufacturers inevitably target Valentine's Day as a benchmark of the year. By contrast, travel-related concerns may focus much of their attention on the fourth of July. Get to know which holidays are of genuine importance to your business and move the calendar back to plan accordingly.

5. Don't assume all will go smoothly. No matter how comprehensively you may plan for a holiday, something may still go awry. Protect yourself by having a contingency plan in place. For example, if staffing requirements exceed your expectations, contact a temp agency well in advance to make sure backup is available. If you order too much inventory, have a follow up sale at the ready to clear the shelves.

6. Don't lose a good holiday idea. A solid holiday-related brainstorm can get lost in the shuffle of the holiday itself— or, for that matter, if you're months away from giving the holiday any serious consideration. Part of being proactive in holiday planning is to make it an ongoing effort. So, set up a system to stockpile good holiday ideas when they strike.

7. Keep your personal life organized as well. The stress of the holidays from a professional standpoint can often wreak havoc on your relationships with family and friends. Don't overlook your personal life when it comes to mapping out your business for an upcoming holiday.

The "Downtown Business Tips" newsletter is intended to provide merchants with monthly information about improving their business's position in the market!

Please send your comments & suggestions to Rebecca Shirley, rebeccashirley@dahlongadda.org, 706-482-2707.

Use our website www.dahlongadda.org for business resources.

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"DAHLONEGA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MAIN STREET)"

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