

Small Business News & Notes



Survey Shows A Big Opportunity For Small Businesses

(NAPSA)—According to a new survey, consumer shopping habits are showing the biggest shift since Santa Claus first slid down the chimney. The survey showed that Internet sites are more popular than ever, with more than three-quarters of those surveyed saying they plan to shop for gifts online this holiday season.

However, the survey also revealed some positive news for smaller businesses and boutique stores—and potential ways to attract more customers. For instance, customers with higher incomes and without children are more likely to shop inside small stores and boutiques.

Plus, shoppers whose annual incomes top \$100,000 visit stores in person more often than those who earn less. Seventy-five percent of parents said they're more likely to shop at major retailers, while just 60 percent of people without children preferred the big chains.

The Personal Touch

"Many shoppers prefer smaller businesses because they can cater to the needs of individuals in ways that major retailers simply cannot," said Megan Kavanaugh, executive director of Bags & Bows, a retail packaging firm.

Referring to the Deluxe survey results—which showed that 91 percent of gift-givers wrap their own presents—Kavanaugh explained, "By offering custom wrapping or providing attractive signature gift bags, small businesses can eliminate the wrapping hassle—and help the customer's gift stand out."

Many Like Real Mail

And when it comes to sending holiday cards and wrapping pres-



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ents, traditional methods still prevail. Nearly 90 percent of survey respondents said they prefer to receive traditional cards versus an electronic one. "We all like getting a card in the mail—it makes us feel special," said Dave Lessing, general manager of PsPrint, an online printing company.

Younger People Shop Online

The survey—which was conducted by the Deluxe Corporation—showed that respondents between 18 and 34 make nearly 90 percent of purchases online. While the number is lower for older shoppers, people 65 and older also shop online in large numbers (48 percent).

For more information on the survey, visit www.deluxe.com/holiday_trends_survey.