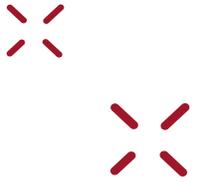




M&S
CORPORATE GIFTS

**The rules of promotional
gifts for customers
this Christmas**



Powerful presents

Christmas is sneaking up on us yet again, and whilst you're busy tying the final bows in December deals and wrapping up business for the year, it's important to remember the value of customer gift giving.

70% of brands and businesses think promotional items are still relevant, effective, and a sure-fire way to reach marketing goals, and if you're not a part of this group, we think you will be once you've seen the facts.ⁱ

The Christmas period offers the perfect opportunity to give your customers a little something extra – and ensure your business stays on their mind well into the New Year. And, given that 85% of customers who receive promotional products go on to do business with the company, it's certainly a worthwhile investment.

But, with so many options available to your business in the world of corporate gifts, working out the nuances of selecting an effective and memorable present for your customers can be quite a challenge. That's where we're here to help. This guide will cover everything from the presentation, timing and practicality of giving a great gift, to getting personalisation perfect - so you can keep every one of your customers happy this Christmas, and maximise your business' potential for 2019.



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Proper presentation

First impressions count, and this is doubly true when it comes to the consumer-brand relationship. Giving a thoughtful present is a fantastic way to create a lasting positive association with your brand in the mind of your customers. The right gift demonstrates how much you value your recipient, and demonstrates that you're a mindful and generous business. However, if you've ever been sat around the Christmas tree with your family, only to be gifted a carrier bag containing an old bottle of ouzo, you'll likely be aware of the negative perception a poorly selected and presented gift can create...

88%

of people can remember the advertiser that gave them a promotional product.ⁱⁱⁱ

So, to create the right memories in the minds of your customers, it's essential to master the art of gift presentation, and here's how...





Thoughtful timing

After receiving a birthday card two weeks too late, it's difficult not to acknowledge that your sender forgot about you. This is a disastrous message to send out to your customers. Not only can a badly-timed present give your prospects the impression that you don't care about their experience, but it can also leave your business looking disorganised and incompetent. If you can't send a gift on time, why should your customers trust you to provide a punctual and proficient service?

To ensure you time your gift-giving correctly this Christmas, there's a few things we recommend taking into consideration...

- Select and buy your customer gifts early to avoid panicked purchasing in mid-December, when prices are likely to rise.
- Do the majority of your customers go away over the holidays? If so, pre-empt their departure to ensure they receive their gift before they set off.
- Over the Christmas period, the postal service can get very busy. Ensure your mail reaches customers on time by sending everything out before Tuesday 18th December, to avoid the festive rush.^{iv}



Wonderful wrapping



It's Secret Santa at the office, and you've been so busy with work that you've forgotten to buy a present, and are forced to purchase a bottle of wine and a box of chocolates from the local shop – we've all been there. But, should you bother spending that extra bit of cash on wrapping paper and a gift bag?

When confronted with this dilemma, many of us are tempted to ditch the gift-wrapping at checkout to avoid an awkward ten minutes in the back of the car trying (and failing) to find the end of the cello tape. But, whilst at times a frustrating task, there's a reason for the ritual of wrapping up our presents...



Consumer studies have found that gift-wrapped presents are, on average, rated more highly than their non-wrapped counterparts!

And we think this makes a lot of sense. After all, a well-wrapped gift is suggestive. It prompts the recipient to consider the thought, time and care that went into the entire gift-giving process. So, when sending out presents to your customers this year, we recommend spending a little more time and a few extra pennies to present their gifts in a carefully wrapped box, or a fun and festive envelope. It could be the difference between a new customer choosing your business, instead of your competitor.





Better budgeting

The amount of money you can afford to set aside for your customer gifts will depend largely on your company's finances. But regardless of how much you spend, even a small gesture can do wonders in making your customers feel valued and appreciated, and this will make them more likely to engage with your business in the future...

If you're struggling to decide on the budget for your customer gifts, consider how much your prospect's business is worth to your company. Sometimes, it can be more beneficial to dedicate a larger amount of your budget to a few high-quality gifts, sent to specific decision-makers. Carefully allocating your budget in this way ensures that the people who matter most to your business will know how much you value their custom.

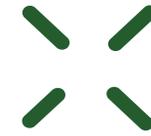


**of customers who
receive promotional
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the company.^{vi}**



Purposeful practicality

Novelty gifts were made to fill up your family and friend's stockings – whilst they're fantastic for creating giggles around the Christmas dinner table, they don't make great gifts in the business space. After all, when was the last time you actually used those stick-on moustaches or your drinking-straw glasses in your day-to-day life? It's important to note that 63% of consumers will pass on promotional products if they don't deem them useful anymore.



63%

**of consumers will pass
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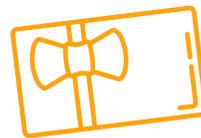
Make sure the present you purchase for your customers is both practical and pertinent. It's no good sending your customers something they can't use. This not only wastes your business' budget, but it also sends the wrong message – that you haven't taken the time to get to know your customers.



Engaging everyone

Before you send out your Christmas gifts this year, it's vital that you take the time to get to know your customers. What do they want, and need? Is there a small gift that would brighten their day in an unexpected way – and make them remember your business positively in the process? Depending on the size and scope of your audience, getting a comprehensive understanding of this collection of unique individuals will likely be an incredibly time consuming, difficult, or perhaps even impossible task – especially if you're trying to achieve it in a reasonable time frame.

To combat this problem, we recommend selecting a single gift that will appeal to a wide variety of different people of varying ages, genders and backgrounds. It's for this reason that gift cards are so effective, as they empower the receiver to choose the gift that best reflects their individual wants and needs. When you consider the power of gift cards in this way, it makes sense that they're the #1 most requested present during the festive season.



#1 most requested present during the holidays.^{viii}

Giving your customers a gift card this Christmas will provide them with the freedom to treat themselves to something they've had their eye on for a while. It's a sure-fire way to demonstrate that you respect their individuality, whilst appealing to the full spectrum of your customer's needs, wants and tastes. After all, there's no better gift than the power of self-expression.





Meaningful messages

Your choice of gift for each one of your customers is reflective of the way you view your relationship. To send a meaningful message, it's important that what you give them feels like a present – an appreciation of your customer as an individual, and not a bribe that attempts to compel them to engage in further business. To avoid this, give your customers a gift that has practical utility, instead of simply presenting them with chocolate or wine. This is a great way to demonstrate that you're thinking about their long term happiness and success, and not just their business.

When you actively look for ways to improve the lives of your customers – even with small gestures like a Christmas gift, they'll notice the difference. A thoughtful present can actually have a positive impact on their lives, as **82% of corporate gift receivers keep products that are practical.** The right gift will send the right message. It won't just position your business as a useful and thoughtful partner, it will contribute to making you one.

The message you send your customers will also be influenced by the actual messaging you include alongside your gift, and the way you present it. Will you send your present with a hand-written Christmas card, or with a gift card printed with your company's logo? If you're looking to cultivate a more personal relationship with your customers, we suggest the former.

82%

of corporate gift receivers keep products that are practical.^{ix}

There's very little that feels more genuine than a hand-written card. It shows you've taken time and care to give your customers a better experience. If your company has neither the time nor the resources to write hand-written messages this year, you can still give your customers a positive experience, so long as you ensure the printed message you send is an honest one. What does this mean? There's no need to be overly-friendly or familiar, as this can feel fabricated. But equally, this present is a celebration of your relationship, and not your business' latest offers, and you should therefore avoid promotional messaging or deals. Instead, we recommend a message that's thankful, thoughtful and truthful. Above all else, keep it simple, and remember more often than not, less is more.



Perfect personalisation

If you can spare the time to write your customers a personalised message this year, you're likely wondering what exactly you should write. Finding a careful balance between business-appropriate and memorably friendly can be a challenge, and given that 80% of people say that they can remember the printed message that was on the promotional items they received, what you write is clearly has an impact. That's where we're here to help...

- Explain why you selected the gift, including why you thought they'd appreciate it, as this will highlight the care you took when choosing the present.
- Where appropriate, reference a previous interaction – be it a small joke they made during a phone call, or a successful deal that your partnership resulted in.
- Use the name your customer expressed a preference for in your previous communications – if their name is David, but they prefer Dave, go with their preference. This shows you've taken the time and care to listen, remember and implement their requests.
- If you have the time and resources to hand-deliver your gifts, this is a nice personal touch, as it shows you're truly willing to go the extra mile.



of people say that they can remember the printed message that was on the promotional items they received*



Sensitive sharing

Remember, not every one of your customers will celebrate Christmas. Each one of your consumers is different, and will have varying cultural and religious preferences. Before sending out your gifts this year, make sure you take the time to ensure you don't send holiday gifts to people who can't accept them because of their beliefs. This is the opposite of a present, and has the potential to create unnecessary conflict. Instead, show your appreciation for these customers in other ways – like by sending a small gift during a holiday relevant to their beliefs, or after they've made a purchase with your business.





Powerful presence

Relationships are all about give and take, which is why one of the best ways to grow your customer base and develop better relationships with your customers is to give them something of value. We recommend a high-quality gift card. Put the power and control in their hands, and demonstrate that you're a thoughtful company, who cares about what each one of your customers really want.



If you give out promotional merchandise, you increase your chances of getting new customers by 83%^{xi}

Cherish your customers this Christmas

To ensure you remain on your customers minds well into 2019, show them you respect their interests.

How? Empower every one of your customers to spend it well this Christmas with an M&S gift card.

To find out more, contact
0330 0580 734.

63% ✕

of companies are seeing better customer relationships due to gift-giving^{xii}

