Cindy Jones Assoc.



12-Month Action Plan

for

Hospital Gift Shops

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GiftTalk.org

A 12-Month Action Plan

For Hospital Gift Shop Managers and Buyers

Make managing your shop easy! This 12-Month Action Plan is for hospital gift shop managers and buyers. It takes the guesswork out of developing your shop's annual marketing plan. The guide will help you stay on schedule and not let anything slip through the cracks.

- It will help you operate your shop at a higher management level
- It lists things-to-do throughout each month.
- It reminds you to prepare monthly financial reports and set goals and objectives
- It helps you plan and schedule shop activities, holiday sales, special events and fundraisers.
- It helps you determine the types and amounts of merchandise needed for holidays
- It reminds you when to schedule buying trips, order and display seasonal and holiday merchandise
- It reminds you when to submit information to the hospital e-blast, bulletin or paper announcing holidays, special events, sales and just-arrived merchandise.

The 12-Month Action Plan will help you operate your shop at a higher management level. It's just like following a *yellow brick road* to success. It lists all the things you need to do throughout each month.

- Advance planning will help you with the entire merchandising process, from ordering to delivery to display.
- Advance planning reduces error and emergencies. Life as a hospital gift shop manager is full enough of emergencies without adding to it.

Post it in the shop office for your key personnel to view regularly.



Now is the time to make a fresh start. Ask yourself, "What is my hope for my future as a manager and for the shop?" Resolve to take a leap of faith and believe that great things can happen to you and your shop.

The only limits are those of vision. Managers and volunteer leaders must envision the future of the shop and motivate and inspire people to work toward that vision. It is important to gradually forge a collective vision for change and success. The synergy of everyone working together, focusing on the success of a common endeavor, can maximize positive results. Managers and volunteers working collaboratively toward a mutually agreed upon outcome will result in a win-win solution. This vision can be a powerful force to keep everyone motivated and unified.

Sometimes the creation of a hospital gift shop happens like a ship in a bottle. When you build a ship in a bottle, there's a point when the chaos of sticks and lines



suddenly emerges into clarity. The masts are slid into the bottle on end and the sails and rigging are laid in with the masts horizontal. Then a final thread is pulled, the masts stand up with all the sails, and suddenly it's done. The years of labor suddenly takes shape in what seems to be an instant. And the results can be as improbable as a ship in a bottle. "How did you do that?" people will ask.

By contrast, a hospital gift shop is never really completed. It's a living, growing, everchanging creation that requires constant updating, fiddling and adjusting. A hospital gift shop manager must be disciplined to continually try new ideas, tinker with the layout and display, and market new products to their customers. That requires planning. Continually setting goals and objectives will help you achieve new levels of success and satisfaction for all who help make it possible.



January Action Plan

Buy

- Buy Easter merchandise that focuses on garden,
 pick-up gifts and collectibles with spring motifs.
- Buy remaining Easter and Mother's Day merchandise.
- Order lots of gifts items appropriate for upcoming Mother's Day, Administrative Professionals Day, and Nurses' Day.
- Make sure to reorder fast selling merchandise before you run out.

Holidays

January

New Year's Day [1st]
Martin Luther King Day [3rd Monday]

upcoming..

February

Groundhog Day [2nd]
Super Bowl Sunday
Valentine's Day [14th]
President's Day [3rd Monday]
Black History Month

Mark Down

— Put all Christmas merchandise on sale at 40% off. Hallmark did a study and found customers did not purchase differently whether the discount is 40% versus 50% off on after Christmas sales. So, just do 40% off for the first week after Christmas, and then go down from there. Make judgment calls on certain lines whether or not to discount further after the first week.

Then pack leftovers away or donate. Try not to hold over any product. If it didn't sell this year, chances are it won't sell next year. However, you might hold over items that sold well but perhaps you were a little too optimistic in your ordering.

Display

- Begin displaying Valentine cards and merchandise in early January so hospital employees can be thinking about their purchases. Valentine's Day is the shortest major gift-selling season of the year. The majority of purchases occur one to three days before the holiday itself. For some gift shop managers, it can be a nightmare. For those that do it right, it's worth every effort.
- It's a new year! Place calendars and date books in the cash register area for quick sales.

- Give your customers a wonderful feeling with fresh spring merchandise and displays. Brighten up your shop with flowers and plants. Fresh products will get employees into your shop. Sentiment sells. 🧩 🎘 🎇

Plan

FEBRUARY 14: VALENTINE'S DAY

Sell roses and make a bundle! This works every year! No one loses! People are busy. Time is valuable.

Your gift shop can be a great resource for hospital employees. Customers love the convenience of getting their flowers at work, eliminating the extra stop on the way home.

First, plan quantities with your local wholesale florist for doing a pre-order promotion. Give them a few suggestions, then let them price and package a couple deals for you. Research to ensure your retail prices are competitive. Plan now to include a free Valentine's Day chocolate truffle with purchases over a certain amount.

Three weeks prior, distribute flyers advertising your sale (with pre-order forms attached) throughout the hospital. Use the fliers as shopping bag stuffers. Submit a Valentine merchandise announcement in the hospital newsletter for an early February issue.

Highlight that there are no delivery fees and employees have the option of paying by way of payroll deduction. Include that you offer premium roses at the best prices in town.

Offer several options; 1 dozen, half dozen, three, or single roses with baby's breath and a bow.

Set up tables in the lobby outside your shop to sell arrangements all day and on Valentine's Day. Open your shop from 7am to midnight on the 13th so the late shift employees can shop. You won't believe the happy employees and visitors in your hospital!

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VALENTINE'S DAY

FEBRUARY 14th

PRE-ORDER ROSES!



Gift boxed, Ribbon and bow. Garnished with fern and baby breath. Chocolate and gift card. Guaranteed freshness! Carefully placed in a water tube.

Honey Deal \$____ (3 stems) Sweet Heart Box \$ (12 stems)

Name			
Dhana			

Honey Deal (3 stems) \$ Sweet Heart Box (12 stems) \$

Cash, credit card, or payroll deduction.

Order by 2:00PM Monday February 11.

EASY PICK UP at the Hospital Gift Shop on Valentine's Day

Make a plan for the next twelve months, now. Mark all sales and events for the coming year on your calendar. Mark the event date as well as the pre-planning date, so you're not rushing last minute.

🎉 FIFTH FRIDAY \$5 OFF SALE

Mark the months with five Fridays and hold a "FIFTH FRIDAY \$5 OFF SALE". Qualify it by taking \$5 off any purchase totaling \$25 or more. That way you are only giving a 20% discount at the most, but usually it is less than 20% off because they often spend more than the \$25. It is also a good incentive to add on to a sale that might only be \$20 initially. It helps to have a '\$ off' button setup on your POS register which prorates the discount off each item purchased. If a customer returns just one item, the sale price is listed by item on the receipt. Be sure to advertise this event with emails to all hospital employees.

SPEND \$13 & GET 13% OFF

Mark every Friday the 13th with a "SPEND \$13 | GET 13% OFF" sale.

FIRST WEDNESDAY

As a method of moving merchandise and increasing revenue, hold a FIRST WEDNESDAY sale. Open at 6:30am on the first Wednesday of each month. The early hours enable the late shift to participate. Offer 20% OFF most gift items with the exception of fresh flowers, magazines, candy, and books. This sale can double if not increase your average daily sales. Better yet, the day before and the day after will be higher in sales as well. You will have customers waiting at the door ready to shop. The sale helps turn merchandise and helps to keep the product on the floor fresh.

- It's time to take a deep breath and pat yourself on the back for the great job you did over the holidays!
- If December 31 is the end of your shop's fiscal year, take an Annual Physical Inventory now. Get the guide A How to Conduct a Physical Inventory to walk you through the steps and print templates.
- If you haven't developed a yearlong budget for the shop, the time is now! Project expected sales for each month. Estimate your shop's operating costs for each month. \$
- Prepare a holiday merchandise report to record your successes and failures. What sold well and what did not? Don't repeat mistakes. This information will be important when buying for next Christmas. Record what was packed away to sell the following year.
- Create your own buying and planning calendar. Know where you're going. Know when to buy.
- Attend a major market for holiday merchandise buying with August delivery. Get special discounts and Christmas dating.
- Make a resolution to keep the register counter free of clutter throughout the year.
- Give the shop a thorough cleaning and fix-up after the busy holidays.
- Clean and reorganize stockroom while inventory is down.
- Ensure that you prepare accurate financial statements (at least quarterly). \$



- Check bags, boxes, and wrapping supplies. You may need to reorder after the holiday rush.
- Vow to make cashier training a priority. There is only one thing worse than training your volunteers and having them leave, not training them and having them stay!
- Keep a "Brainstorm Book" at the checkout counter so cashiers can jot down customer's requests. Invite everyone to write down their ideas on how to revamp displays or other suggests they thought of while they were working their shift.
- Invest in your volunteers and staff by giving them a 20-30% discount on shop merchandise. This won't hurt your bottom line in the least. On the contrary, since they wear, use and give as gifts just about everything in the shop, they are walking billboards for the merchandise. Volunteer discounts are also an excellent recruiting tool.
- Rearrange and freshen up your inventory. Mix new merchandise with old to spruce it up. This has to be done carefully so as not to devalue your new merchandise.
- Keep volunteers and staff aware of each month's sales goals and new products.



- Attend an apparel market for summer and early fall buying. imes
- Survey hospital employees annually. Discover how they perceive the shop and its merchandise. Work to improve areas or categories that are weak.
- When you first arrive in the morning, do a daily "walk-about." Visually scan each display. Remove tired or worn products. Which items need to be restocked, reordered or re-merchandised? Are your product faces turned forward? What products need signage? Take notes when necessary.
- Non-seasonal sales can be tricky because you don't want to train customers to wait for monthly sales. First, identify slow sellers on a quarterly basis and move them out as necessary. Better yet, create a permanent clearance corner and add products as you see fit to move them out.
- Keep your inventory lean, your cash flow positive, merchandise fresh, and your displays and merchandising new and inviting. Don't get emotionally attached to products that just don't sell. Another 60 to 90 days usually makes no difference.

The last thing you want is to have your shop become one of those where discounted goods and clearance events are the status quo. A great way to avoid this is by strategically planning clearance events. These are not the twice-a-year markdown sales when you place all the season's leftover items on a table with a "Reduced" sign. Instead, you need a specially orchestrated promotion that can have a significant impact on product demand and sales. By planning several of these exciting events each year, you're giving customers a reason to return to the shop on a regular basis.

- Focus on your strategy before rushing into a price-cutting extravaganza, which could hurt your bottom line in the long run. Also, carefully consider how low you can reasonably go on your pricing. You want to go low enough to draw customers, but still make money.
- Markdowns must be significant and well signed. Depending upon the number of sales, the initial price reductions will vary. Mark 30% off if the product is still selling but slowly. If the product is not selling take 40% off at the first markdown. Lastly, take a second markdown to 50% off or more. Create a sense of urgency; "Buy now!" signage helps.

Buy right, buy often, and keep your inventory fresh.



February Action Plan

Buy

Begin buying and planning for:

Easter

Candy, cards, flowers

Administrative Professionals Day

Appointment books, plaques of gratitude, pen/ pencil sets, mugs, flowers

National Nurses' Day May 6

Mugs, figurines, flowers, pocket calendars, pens on a rope, address books

Mother's Day

Fresh flowers, plants, frames, jewelry, candles, fragrances, soaps, candy, crystal, bowls, birdhouses

Father's Day

Neckties, travel items, desk items, sports related, western, novelties, gadgets

Graduation

Albums, clocks, frames, desk accessories, mugs, plush, figurines

% Mark Down

FEBRUARY 15: Mark down all leftover Valentine merchandises.





- FEBRUARY 1: All Valentine merchandise should all be out in the shop. Seventy percent of Valentine's Day sales occur from February 1 until Valentine's Day. 💘
- Depending on when Easter falls, display Easter merchandise now. Greeting cards and higher priced items should go out first. 🐱



Administrative Professionals Week is always the last full week of April. 6

Holidays

February

Groundhog Day [2nd]

Super Bowl Sunday

Valentine's Day [14th]

President's Day [3rd Monday]

Black History Month

March

St. Patrick's Day [17th] Doctor's Day [30th]

- Arrange with your florist to deliver a large tub of fresh, long-stemmed roses, and fern to sell on Valentine's Day. Increase plant and flower deliveries for February 13 and 14.
- February 6 is National Pay a Compliment Day. Provide a sincere compliment to the important people in your shop. Compliments help people focus on the positive. They help build a higher level of trust. Everyone feels great after a compliment.
- If you didn't attend a major gift market in January, make plans now for the Atlanta show in March. Buy holiday merchandise now to get good discounts and terms. Before buying Christmas merchandise, review your previous year's Christmas report. Discuss it with your buyers. Use the information from last year to make seasonal ordering decisions for this year.
- By now you should have completed your final financial reports for the previous year. Now, what do you do with them? Evaluate your shop's annual performance. This requires an in-depth analysis of sales performance and critical evaluation of space utilization. If you had a good year, pat yourself on the back! If there is room for improvement, it's time to set specific goals and act on them.
- If sales have reached \$400,000, consider
 purchasing a second cash register.
- This is a good time of the year to evaluate your greeting card category. Select cards that appeal to the majority of hospital employees. Cards directed at the largest group of consumers will provide the greatest potential for sales. The shop's everyday, basic card line should be strong in Thinking of You, Friendship, Get Well, Wedding, Baby and Sympathy. Don't carry baptism, christening, new home, nephew, etc., instead stick with the basics.

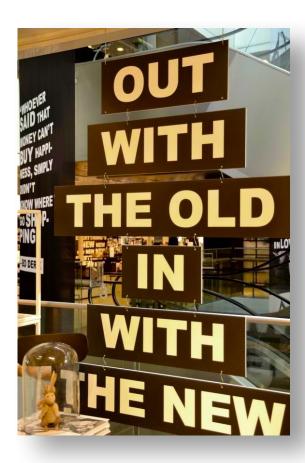
Employees want cards for co-workers, such as farewell, Bosses' Day, congratulations (for promotions), thank you, inspirational



and humorous.

Depending on your hospital's location and ethnic environment, carry a good selection of African-American and Hispanic American cards. Hispanics, African-Americans and Asians now account for 35% of the US population.

 Recognize and manage obsolescence and damaged merchandise. See your inventory for what it is: cash in another form. Then decide to keep, cut, adjust, purge, recycle - just move it out.



 Are you willing to let go of "what could be?" Think outdated policies, negative staff members and old assumptions that no longer serve you or your shop.

> Knowledge is power. Continue to be a passionate learner. Read a lot and attend educational webinars and seminars.

March Action Plan

Buy

- Purchase fall women's sportswear, baby apparel, and accessories.
- Begin promoting golf, baseball and other sport-like
 merchandise.

Display

- Display Easter merchandise. Greeting cards and higher priced items should go out first.
- MARCH 1: Display St. Patrick's Day cards and merchandise.

Holidays

March

St. Patrick's Day [17th]
Doctor's Day [30th]

upcoming..

April

April Fool's Day [1st]
Easter Sunday [varies]
Tax Day [15th]
Administrative Professionals Day [4th
Wednesday]
Earth Day [22nd]

– MARCH 15: display spring and garden merchandise. 🎸 🎇 🕹 🍄



- FAT TUESDAY: Plan a Mardi Gras sale for Fat Tuesday. Hand out beads to each customer and give them the opportunity to receive a discount of anywhere from 20% 50%.
- Place an announcement in the hospital newsletter about your shop's
 Administrative Professionals Day and Easter merchandise for April.
- Nurse's Day is coming up on May 12. 🎯 🍏
- March 2: National Salesperson's Day. Honor your volunteers and sales staff for their hard work and accomplishments.
- Order a bucket of green carnations and ferns from your florist to sell by the stem on March 16 and 17.
- In honor of St. Patrick's Day, offer a 20% OFF GREEN discount on anything with green on it. Customers will love hunting for items with green!

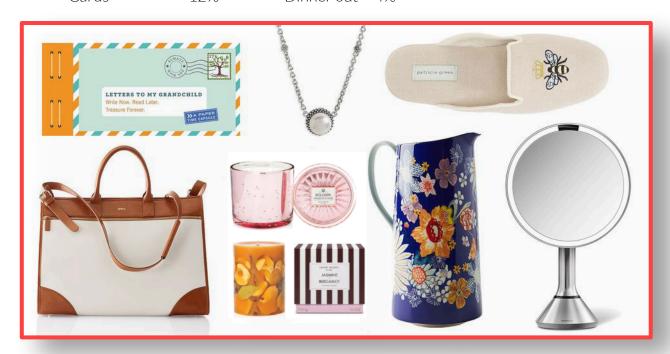
- Everyone on your staff should be wearing green on March 16 and
 March 17. **
- Begin planning Administrative Professionals Day displays. It is always the fourth Wednesday in April.
- Mid-March: Arrange with your shop's florist to increase the flower orders for Easter and Mother's Day. Ask them to prepare some special blooming bulb plants in baskets for those two important special occasions. Order containers of cut daffodils and tulips (to sell by the stem).
- Stir up excitement! Begin a raffle for a large plush Easter bunny.

You're the doctor that always gives more. Visit the Gift Shop for candy, gifts, and more.

HAPPY DOCTOR'S DAY 30% OFF COUPON

- MARCH 30: DOCTOR'S DAY. Show appreciation to doctors with a complimentary chocolate bar and a coupon. Send an email to each department's Chair or HR
 Director asking if they would please forward to their doctors.
- Remember to keep your merchandise out and available for the customer to touch. If it's in a glass display case, don't expect it to sell very fast. People want to touch and examine the merchandise! Ensure that your shoplifting surveillance equipment is adequate.

Flowers, plants 31% Jewelry 8% Clothing 13% Fragrance 4% Cards 12% Dinner out 4%



- Evaluate all departments/categories with regard to the revenue they create. The higher the sales, the more shelf-space assigned.
- Stockroom doors work only one way-out! When merchandise arrives, check it in, price it and get it into the shop. Hopefully, it will never return to the stockroom, because there's no cash register in there.
- Clean out and cancel old orders.
- Ensure that the shop has a "panic button" in the cash register area that is linked to the Security Department for emergency purposes.
- Hold a END-OF-MONTH SALE, if needed.



April Action Plan

Buy

Meet with your florist to plan fresh roses and mixed bouquets for Mother's Day next month. It's is one of the biggest floral holidays of the year.

& Display

Create a Spring gardening display. Be creative! Bring in a small wheelbarrow for display.

Plan

- National Candy Month is coming up in June. Begin planning a candy special or event to stir up excitement.
- Around mid-April, start planning your Mother's Day display for next month. Include candy, flowers, plants, jewelry, candles, soaps, vases and other appropriate gifts.

Holidays

April

April Fool's Day [1st]
Easter Sunday [varies]
Tax Day [15th]
Administrative Professionals Day [4th
Wednesday]
Earth Day [22nd]

upcoming..

May

Cinco de Mayo [5th]
Kentucky Derby [1st Sat]
Nurses Day [6th]
Mother's Day [2nd Sunday]
Memorial Day [last Monday]
Graduation Season Begins

- Arrange with your florist to have containers of pale pink and yellow carnations and ferns to sell for Administrative Professionals Day.
- It's April Fool's Day! Share a laugh! Kick back. Put a smile on! It takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 to smile. April is also National Humor Month!
- Hold a TAX FREE SALE day on April 15. Pay all the sales tax for your customers that shop on April 15th. Do not discount anything. You will end up paying a small amount out of your proceeds which will be less than if you were to discount the items. Good news is this event will stir up traffic in your shop.
- April and May are big selling months with Administrative Professional's Day, Easter, Nurses Day, Mother's Day and graduation. Be prepared with a steady stream of exciting merchandise.
- Administrative Professional's Day is always the fourth Wednesday in April. Create an inviting display of appropriate merchandise from around the shop; appointment books,

gratitude plaques, address books, pens, etc. Schedule additional cashier to work on Administrative Professionals Day.

- Begin laying plans for a NURSE'S DAY SALE with 30% off any one item on May 6.
- National Volunteer Week is mid-April. Honor your volunteers with something special! Nothing beats a personalized, hand-written thank-you note. While it may be challenging to come up with something unique and personal about each of them, it is well worth the time. It will energize and inspire them to perform even better. Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.
 - Other things you can do; a \$5 gift certificate, small potted spring flower, or tote bags. Volunteers want to feel valued and important. Encourage "pride of ownership" by empowering them to initiate shop decisions that best serve the customers' needs.
- Train cashiers to do suggestive selling to customers looking for graduation gifts, such as;
 frames, desk accessories, mugs, figurines, etc.
- Take a critical look at how your gift shop looks. Does it need a renovation or facelift? Is your cash register outdated? Would new fixtures update the shop? Is the lighting poor? Begin planning now for improvements during the slow summer months.
- Take a close look at your cashier counter. Is it full of visual clutter? Decide what's
 necessary and remove the rest. Make sure that the impulse items stand out as musthaves. If the counter is so crowded that nothing stands out, then you've defeated your
 purpose.
- As you buy, remember that merchandise directed at the largest group of customers will provide the greatest potential for sales. Consider buying less strictly holiday merchandise. Instead opt for versatile, year-round gifts.
- Rotate stock frequently. Change departments around, move impulse items to the back and slow movers to the front for a change.
- Earn travel dollars fast! Charge your shop merchandise orders on a gift shop credit card
 and earn frequent flyer miles for free air travel to the gift marts.



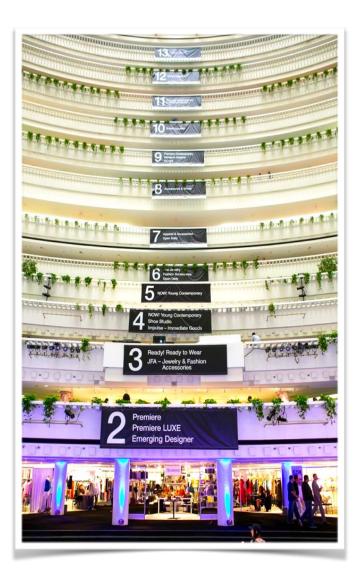
- Remember to give volunteers meaningful jobs/tasks and then give them a pat on the back when they've done a good job.
- Be a lifelong learner. Register now to take a computer course during the slow summer months. Look for and accept challenges to grow professionally and personally.
- Make plans and reservations for attending the summer gift marts.
- Hospitals are very prestigious environments. Make sure that your shop matches and lives up to the environment. Ensure that the inside of the shop reinforces customer expectations.

Customers today want merchandise not just to own. They want to buy it because it

reinforces some sort of status or image that they have of themselves. They relate the merchandise to their activities and to their lifestyle.

Your shop's merchandise must be current and meet today's customer needs in terms of style, design, and function.

Eliminate the MISC key on your cash register. The MISC key is just a place where lazy cashiers ring up items. It tells you nothing about what you are selling!



May Action Plan

Buy

 Buy lines where you can take a higher markup. Don't dabble when buying. Buy enough to make a statement.

& Display

- Display all Mother's Day related merchandise and a large display of potted plants.
- Promote and display garden and home decorating.
- Promote and display graduation and Father's Day. 👗



Plan

 Meet to discuss and write out your summer display plans.

Holidays

May

Graduation Season
Cinco de Mayo [5th]
Nurses Day [6th]
Kentucky Derby [1st Sat]
Mother's Day [2nd Sunday]
Senior Citizens' Day [19th]
Memorial Day [last Monday]

upcoming..

June

Graduation Season Flag Day [14th] Father's Day [16th]

- Mother's Day is the fourth-largest sales holiday for cards after Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter.
- SENIOR CITIZENS DAY: May 19 6
- Many parents give "teacher gifts" at the end of the school year as well as at Christmas time. Display appropriately themed items and you will be surprised at how much you will sell in May and early June for teachers.
- Remember that hospital employees are busy people! If they frequent the gift shop for candy bars, they will also seek you out for other purchases - but you have to carry the merchandise they want. Work to create a destination shop for them!
- The best managers are on the floor always fine-tuning their shop, mingling with customers, and re-stocking the merchandise.
- $-\hspace{0.1cm}$ Make travel arrangements to attend a major gift market in June and July. leph

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Nurses Day is May 6. A few days prior, offer a 30% OFF NURSES DAY SALE just for nurses! Send an email to the nursing department Chair or HR Director asking if they would email the sale to their nurses.



- Many state auxiliary conferences are held in May. Most of them have gift shop seminars. Try to attend one. While there, take advantage of the many networking opportunities. χ
- Begin planning a summer "refresher" for your shop. This includes a thorough cleaning but goes well beyond general clean up. Here's where to start; replace scratched glass on the jewelry case, clean shop windows, clean vents and grills, dust top-to-bottom fixtures and spinners, replace burned-out light bulbs, re-do signage if necessary, organize and stock cashier station. Be like Spiderman; give your shop a once-over, looking for areas that need upgrading.

You have the same customer day in and day out - change displays often.

- To maintain adequate staffing over the summer, request that volunteer and paid staff submits vacation dates now. 🚀
- Buy what your customer will like not what you like! Base buying decisions on research, past performance, price points and budget allowance. Not on impulse or instinct. Learn about today's hot sellers from other managers in Ocindy's Newsletter. Free, forever.
- Remember that reorders increase turns, which increases overall profitability.



- Are you selling music in your shop? In There are a lot of music vendors, so do your research first. Ask other managers what music lines they are having success with. Submit the question in O Cindy's Newsletter. Then, keep it stocked! Customers will be frustrated if they can't purchase music they can hear.
- Do cashiers balance their cash register drawer at the end of their shift? Do they use a tally sheet to record transactions? If not, consider that each shift be responsible for all sales activities during their shift. This is just a good business practice to keep everyone accountable. 🚀
- If asked at a meeting or conference, could you state your shop's sales, net profit, sales per square foot and average inventory? These are basic shop statistics that you should commit to memory. \$

Total Sales \$ _____ Net Profit \$ _____ Sale per Sq Ft. \$ _____ Average Inventory \$ _____

Find the formulas in the OGuide to Calculate Shop Profitability

If an invoice comes in before the merchandise, don't pay it! Only pay after you have checked in all the merchandise.

— If a manufacturer sends your order in two shipments, don't pay the shipping on the second shipment. It was not your fault that they couldn't ship your order all at once. Why should the shop have to pay the extra shipping that two shipments entail? Many shops are just not paying the shipping on the second invoice.

CINDY'S NEWSLETTER for HOSPITAL GIFT SHOP MANAGERS



brought to you by: Cindy Jones Associates

Are you reading Cindy's Newsletter for Gift Shop Managers? Get it FREE TODAY!

June Action Plan

Buy

- Order holiday cards. Remember to include crosscultural cards that appeal to people of all ethnic backgrounds.
- Purchase holiday women's sportswear.
- Order Halloween at end of June.

% Mark Down

Mark down remaining graduation merchandise.

Display

- All Father's Day merchandise should be on the floor.
- Create an exciting 4th of July display.
- Promote and display graduation and Father's Day.

Plan

- Begin planning a CHRISTMAS IN JULY sale for the last few weeks of July. Display and promote your pricier holiday items. This will add much needed revenue to a typically slow month. 🎄
- JUNE 10: This is the week to sell Father's Day merchandise.
- Have a 4TH OF JULY CLEARANCE sale the last week of June.
- Finalize staff and volunteer vacation schedules for the summer.
- Make final plans now to attend a July gift show.
- Display and promote outdoor living, picnic, and gardening.
- If your shop's fiscal year ends June 30, begin preparations for taking a physical inventory. \$

Holidays

June

Graduation Season Flag Day [14th] Father's Day [16th]

July

Independence Day [4th]



- Collect appropriate wedding gift items from around the shop for a wedding display.
- June, July and August are typically a slow month. Hold several events throughout the summer to keep customers engaged and visiting your shop.
- Hold a few \$50 Gift Certificate drawings throughout the month.





It's NATIONAL KISSING DAY and NATIONAL CANDY MONTH. Plan a GET KISSED event Announce the event via email, the hospital newsletter, and individual department publications: "Come to the gift shop and get kissed!" Everyone will receive a Hershey kiss as they come through the door. The door person should have a huge bowl of kisses and wrangle foot traffic to "come in and get kissed". Create a sign and a "Get Kissed" t-shirt.



Give your staff "Free Kisses" t-shirts or buttons. Your traffic count will double. Ask your candy supplier to donate the chocolate kisses in appreciation for your business. If you don't ask, you won't get! *Note*: International Kissing Day or World Kiss Day is celebrated each year on July 6. Shift ahead a month if your June sales are in good shape.

— More June holidays: National Flip Flop Day, Sunglasses Day, International Yoga Day, National Doughnut Day, Herb and Spices Day, Iced Tea Day, Gay Pride Month, Flag Day, Global Wind Day, International Sushi Day, National Kissing Day, Ice Cream Soda Day. Create some funny and engaging promotions around these holidays!

— Promotion ideas:

Make it Mine Monday

Buy one, get one free.

Discount drawn from a bowl.

Email coupons.

50% discount on all clearance items.

Mystery grab bags of holiday merchandise.

Extra discounts for frequent buyers.

- Don't forget to compliment your staff when they do something right. Give compliments and thank your volunteers daily. Yes, daily! Praise pays! Positive recognition is the breakfast food of champions.
- $-\,$ Organize and make additional stockroom space for the holiday merchandise shipments arriving soon. \checkmark
- Clean out and cancel old orders.
- Remind buyers that merchandise directed at the largest group of customers provides the greatest potential for sales.
- Remind all shop workers that when merchandise arrives, check it in, price it, and get it
 into the shop. The stockroom door works only one way: OUT! Hopefully, it will never
 return to the stockroom.
- Review the after-hours security of your shop. Who has a key? Who has access to the shop? Housekeeping should not have a key to your shop.
- Prepare a customer survey. Send it to all hospital employees. The feedback will assist you
 in meeting the needs of your customers.
- Because of rotating shifts, good communication can be difficult. Make sure all volunteers are fully informed by producing and sending a shop newsletter. Feature special recognition to volunteers, the need for on-going volunteer

recruitment, shift-scheduling information, newly arrived merchandise, updates on shop policies and procedures and

other important news. 🚀



— Managers and buyers, be sure to retain a substitute to carry out your responsibilities when you are on vacation. A continuous flow of merchandise must be maintained throughout the year.



July Action Plan

Buy

- Order next year's calendars and date books. 📆
- Order a large stuffed animal for November delivery to raffle off during the Christmas holidays.

Holidays

July

Independence Day [4th]

upcoming.

August

...fill with promotions and events!

% Mark Down

 Be merciless with markdowns. Before you put your merchandise back on the shelf, consult your sales reports. Each product should have to justify its existence coming into the Fall and if it doesn't make the grade, add it to your Labor Day sale pile.

& Display

 Create some humorous and engaging displays with related merchandise for these July holidays: Dog Days of Summer, International Joke Day, National Ice Cream Month, International Kissing Day, Chocolate Day, National Picnic Month, National Apple Turnover Day, National Bikini Day, National Blueberry Month, National Hot Dog Month.

Plan

- Work on Fall merchandise and display plans.
- ONE SWEET SALE! Wrap mini candy bars in wrappers (over the original packaging) each of purchase. Give one to each customer as they walk in the shop! They will love the idea of getting a surprise discount! Triple your average daily sales and customer count!! This sale will be a huge success!
- A prosperous holiday season takes planning and time. When you have an abundance of time like during the hot months of summer, use it to put your plan in action.
- Attend a local or major gift show. 💢
- Thoroughly clean and organize the shop and stockroom while business is slow. Now is the time to take markdowns and get rid of old merchandise.

The UGLY SALE. Here is a great concept!

50% OFF TABLE

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly Until all the "ugly" stuff is gone!

- Take mid-year physical inventory to determine your *in-stock* position.
- This is also a good time to take an inventory of your wrapping supplies. Order enough tissue and bags to last through the holidays. 🦺
- Hold an EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION SALE for employees. Offer 20% off all items over \$10. This is a great way to say "thank you" to your loyal hospital employees.
- Present a customer service training seminar for all gift shop staff, both volunteer and paid. 🚀
- Ensure that all wall space is utilized. Wall décor can be a lucrative category for your shop.



- The holiday merchandise you ordered in January should begin arriving.
- July 16: Start your CHRISTMAS IN JULY sale to run through the 31st. Promote last year's left-over holiday merchandise or feature brand new holiday merchandise, particularly the pricier items.

- If you are thinking of remodeling your shop, this is a good time to begin planning for a January closing when your shop's inventory is down and business is slow. It takes about six months to plan, design, order materials and fixtures, and actually execute the remodeling project.
- Ensure that your volunteers have meaningful jobs, not just mundane tasks just to keep them busy. Give your volunteers opportunities to contribute ideas that will improve the shop. Keep a spiral notebook handy for their suggestions and ideas. Remember to recognize and give credit when one of their ideas is implemented.
- Learn by watching your customers. Spend time on the floor. Pretend you are taking inventory and observe how shoppers shop.
- Clean your shop. We're talking about down to the fixtures here. Remove every box, bag or tag. Sweep or mop every floor surface. Get your carpets cleaned. The whole goal is to look as new as possible. Repair, repaint and relight. Once everything is clean, you will notice the chipped paint, the broken furniture, the yellowed signage. Customers notice these things! They create your overall shop image and impact sales.
- Write 12-weeks of promotional emails that you'll disperse through December 31st. You won't have time to come up with these during the rush of the holiday season, so they are often forgotten until it is too late. Don't get overwhelmed, you already know when the rush comes after Thanksgiving, the week prior to Christmas, and the day after



Christmas. In addition to the emails, create your holiday Facebook posts now and schedule them to automatically run on their respective dates.

Organize your products into sections. If you can, move your store around completely so
your regular customers will notice things they may have missed before. Consider new
signage that makes those section obvious.

 Open up your floor. Include more space for customers to move in and more space around items so they stand out. Use smaller round tables nested around each other to create dramatic display areas for high-profit items throughout your shop.

Say "Thank You" a lot! People will wonder what you are up to.

— MYSTERY DISCOUNT. This event is good any time during the year. Use four different colored poker chips that represent 10%, 20%, 30% and 40% OFF. Place ten 10% OFF chips, ten 20% OFF chips, ten 30% OFF chips and ten 40% OFF chips in a bag. Customer then draw from the discount bag during checkout now, or only on their next visit to drive return shoppers. **Excludes: candy, books/mags, flowers, and some product that never are on discount.

August Action Plan

Buy

- Order tissue, boxes and bags for holidays.
- Finish Fall and holiday apparel buying (sweatshirts, sweaters, warm-ups). Begin spring ladies apparel buying.
- Make sure you've ordered a good selection of gifts for men (ties, key rings, wallets) and seniors for the holidays.

Holidays

August

...fill with promotions and events!

September

Labor Day [1st Monday]
Grandparents Day [1st Sunday]
Rosh Hashanah [varies]

% Mark Down

— Pull losers together for a DOG DAYS OF SUMMER sale. 🤘 🏶 🕹 🥗

& Display

- Begin putting new Fall merchandise out. Bring in assortments of trimmings that set the mood for fall, i.e., potpourri, votives, sprays, gift candles, ornamental pumpkins, fall flags, fall swags and artificial fall flora.
- Begin displaying your higher priced holiday items. They need time to sell at a higher price.
- Begin displaying the coming year's calendars and date books.
- Select some appropriate merchandise to create a display for Grandparents Day. Include
 a small tent with the date, which is always the first Sunday after Labor Day.

Plan

- Begin fall-into-holiday marketing and merchandise planning.
- Order your artificial Christmas tree narrow shape to conserve space to display ornaments. Order clear mini-tree lights to add sparkle.

- August can be a slow month. Here are some national holidays to build some fun events around: Work Like a Dog Day, Fresh Breath Day, Book Lovers Day, Thrift Shop Day, Middle Child Day, Tell a Joke Day, Dog Appreciation Day, Chocolate Pecan Pie Day, Left-Handers Day, Senior Citizens Day, Bow Tie Day.
- Keep the party ware and travel section well stocked; a lot of people travel the last two weeks of August. Clean out storage areas for fall and Christmas deliveries.
- Ensure that all customer policies are reviewed and in place before the busy season begins.
- Post customer policies in a prominent location in your shop.
- Reassess your shop's hours. Limited hours mean limited sales and service. Good customer service means being open at the right time. Once shop hours have been determined, maintain them. The quickest way to turn customers off is to have irregular hours.

Don't let this be said about your shop: "We are open in the morning when we get here and closed when we decide to go home."

When short on volunteers and the shop has to close, post this sign on the door.



SORRY, WE ARE CLOSED

This gift shop is staffed by volunteers.

If we are not open during the hours posted, it is because we need people to staff our shop.

PLEASE CALL ____
TO VOLUNTEER!

- Ensure that all staff is trained and knowledgeable about policies and merchandise.
 Provide 'customer service' training as the holidays approach.
- You may need to attend a local merchandise show for last minute Christmas merchandise. \nearrow
- Review buyer's job description. Meet with buyers to discuss basic job responsibilities.
 This is crucial to laying the groundwork for a successful holiday season.

- Encourage shop volunteers and staff to think in terms of total shop success rather than just their category and turf. Working harmoniously, as a team will produce more profitable results. 🚀
- As you begin pricing arriving holiday merchandise, make sure you take the markup necessary to make a good profit. Double the price and add 6-10% for shipping.
 - Formula: Cost x 2.3 to 2.5
- There is still time to implement employee payroll deductions for the holidays. Employee payroll deductions will increase sales by approximately 20-40%. How To Implement an Employee Payroll Deduction System will walk you through how to request, select, and implement an employee payroll deduction system successfully. \$
- Attend a local trade show for hot new items.
- Use small round tables nested around each other to create dramatic display areas for high-profit items throughout your store.
- To draw in customers, place a chalkboard sign outside the entrance with funny messaging. Humor is one of the most powerful sales tool.



Mercy Hospital, St. Louis, MO

September Action Plan

Buy

- Order next year's calendars and datebooks. 📆
- Order bag and wrap supplies for the holidays. Assign someone to restock the register area from now to December 25.

% Mark Down

- All summer merchandise goes on clearance. 🧆 🎘 🍄
- Mark down slow selling merchandise to acquire space for just-arrived items.

Display

- Begin displaying Halloween merchandise. 🧅
- Change window or in-store displays every 3-4 weeks.
- Handbag Day is October 10th. Create a great window display and discount sign to draw in the ladies!
- GRANDPARENTS DAY is the first Sunday after Labor Day. Make a special display of appropriate gift items.
- Integrate cross-merchandising into displays.
- Display next year's calendars and datebooks. 📆
- Continue displaying higher higher-priced holiday merchandise and Christmas collectibles.

Plan

Here we go! Start planning your holiday events and promotions now.

Ideas below...

Holidays

September

Labor Day [1st Monday]
Grandparents Day [1st Sunday]
Rosh Hashanah [varies]

upcoming...

October

Handbag Day [10th]
Columbus Day [2nd Monday]
Yom Kippur [varies]
Boss's Day [16th]
Sweetest Day [3rd Saturday]

Halloween [31st]

- Schedule meetings to review job descriptions and responsibilities. Emphasize how important everyone's commitment is to the shop especially during the holidays.
- Ensure that monthly meetings are held for merchandise buying and planning.
- This is a crucial time to develop your shop's holiday marketing plan. Write and schedule submissions to the hospital's e-blast, newspaper or newsletter to run every week or so throughout the holidays announcing all your exciting holiday merchandise.
- Ensure that shop hours are consistently maintained.
- Discuss the importance of checking in, pricing, and restocking merchandise in a timely way throughout October, November and December.
- Encourage buyers to think in terms of "total shop success" instead of just their own category and turf. Working in harmony as a team will produce profitable results for your gift shop.

Retailing is like gardening.

You must plant the seeds in the Fall for blooming sales in the new year. Plan for those sales; they don't just happen by themselves.

- Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is usually celebrated in September or October corresponding to the seventh Hebrew month, Tishri. Ten days later is Yom Kippur, the most solemn day.
- Request that all staff and volunteers indicate when they will be out of town during the holidays. Ensure that their job responsibilities are covered while they are gone.
- Present a short training session on proper phone etiquette, "What Should I Say?" 🚀
- Train cashiers a procedure to follow when a shoplifter is spotted. \mathscr{J}
- Remember, credit cards sales will account for about 40% of your total sales.

Be the first to say, "Hello! Good to see you!"

— Help move your merchandise by planning several LUNCH HOUR SALES over the holidays. Create excitement! Hold a sale from 11am - 2pm one day a week for three weeks. Mark down the holiday merchandise at progressive amounts each week, but only for three hours. Turn up the music and watch them line up at the door. The defined sale time makes it exciting and customers can't look at something and then think about it. If they want it, they have to buy it right then and there for the discount.

Holiday Promotion and Events. Start planning now!

FIRST FRIDAY SALE. Present a one-day-only 20% OFF sale the 1st or 3rd Friday in December. This will entice hospital employees to visit your shop and see all the wonderful holiday merchandise there.

🎉 TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS = 12 DAYS OF SAVINGS

Offer 20% - 30% off merchandise over twelve days from varied categories or fun identifiers. There are several great variations to this event. Be creative! All Santa's, all stuffed animals with a tail, food smelling candles, snowmen items, jewelry that could pick ice with or skewer a snowball, ornaments with dogs. For example; all snowmen one day, then all reindeer another, all items with green, all items with a tree, all mugs and drinking items.

Another variation is a COLORFUL CHRISTMAS event with discounts by color: all items with Rudolph Red, then items with Grinch Green, next items with Winter White, all items with Stocking Coal Black, items with Pumpkin Orange, items with Yellow Snow, etc. Note that it must contain at least 75% of the color.

Count back 12 business days from December 23 or 24 to determine the first first day of the sale (the weekend days are the same as the preceding Friday). The sale ends on Dec. 23 or 24 with holiday items marked at 40% off until January 1. That is when they are moved to your clearance area to make way for new merchandise. Alternatively, start the event on December 1, thereby giving you the opportunity to offer 30% discount the week previous to Christmas and 50% the week following Christmas.

Prepare twelve fliers that promote only the discounted merchandise for that specific day. Do not post an advance list of sale items. Withholding the sale item will encourage shoppers to come in daily to see what's on the list.

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

continues with

GRINCH GREEN

25% off all items with green

Start hunting!

Check back tomorrow for the next discount.

Post fliers each morning on the shop door. This makes hunting through the merchandise interesting and keeps hospital employees coming back. It also keeps your buyers busy planning ahead and watching the merchandise carefully. This promotion may take a day or two to catch on, but the following year you will really see increased sales.

State exclusions upfront, such as, "In-Stock Items Only" and "No Advance Holds." They either buy it at full price or hope it will still be around on the day it was discounted.

NOTE: Some shops exclude the weekends since they do not draw enough employees and shoppers and extend all prior sales into the weekends.

🎉 12% OFF for the next twelve days. Various items throughout the store will be 12% off. Each day will be different.

NOTE: If the 12 Days of Christmas event worked for you, adapt it to a SPRING FLING DAILY DEAL during the week of spring break. Who said the concept had to be used only at Christmas? Who said it had to be 12 days long? Mother's Day, graduation, Father's Day, Back-to-School... whatever works for you!

SCRATCH-OFF DISCOUNT CARDS. Print up 2,000-5,000 small business card size coupons with various scratch-off amounts to receive discounts of 15%, 20%, and 25% on a future gift purchase over \$15.00. Think about the excitement and anticipation it will create! This can be an effective promotion any time of the year.

SPEND MORE, SAVE MORE sale:

SAVE MORE...AND MORE...AND EVEN MORE!

Spend \$25 or more = 10% OFF next purchase Spend \$50 or more = 20% OFF next purchase Spend \$100 or more = 30% OFF next purchase

Two-Day Special

Thursday - Friday 8:00am - 7:30pm

October Action Plan

Buy

- Be on the lookout for trendy items that will add zest to your holiday merchandise presentation. Act and react to what's happening in the marketplace! Read, ask your vendors, and network all you can to discover last minute best sellers as you move closer to the holidays. There's still time to buy hot items.
- Begin buying Valentine's Day merchandise. 💘
- Order male-specific gifts for the holidays: pro/collegiate paraphernalia, barbecue tools, aprons, wall clocks, auto tag frames, travel mugs, flashlights, work lights, digital tire gauges, roadside emergency kits, aluminum wallets, golfers tools, pocket screwdrivers. It's really hard to buy for men. Be the shop solves this challenge for your customers.

Holidays

October

Handbag Day [10th] Columbus Day [2nd Monday] Yom Kippur [varies] Boss's Day [16th] Sweetest Day [3rd Saturday] Halloween [31st]

November

Veterans Day [11th] Thanksgiving [4th Thursday] Black Friday [day after]

% Mark Down

 After Halloween, weed out "lemons" and put them on sale. You may make less profit, but there will be no profit if you're stuck with them. Pack away remaining Halloween for next year.

A Display

- All Halloween merchandise should be on display in the shop by early October. Be sure to check your stock rooms to ensure all items have made it to the selling floor.
- Display Thanksgiving merchandise.
- Display calendars and date books in October in order to sell through before Christmas. This is prime time to sell calendars.
- October 16: National Boss's Day. Create a display of desk accessories, candy and flowers. **©**

Sweetest Day is always held the third Saturday in October. Set up a display with cards, gifts, candy, and flowers. Sweetest Day is a strong holiday in the northeast and central states.

Plan

- Plan your holiday displays for the next eight weeks.
- Meet with the flower vendor to ensure that your cooler will be well stocked with holiday plants and flowers throughout November and December.
- Plan for an EARLY BIRD SALE at the end of November.
 - 25% off from 8-9am
 - 20% off from 9-10am
 - 15% off from 10-11am
 **Excludes candy, magazines, flowers & books.
- Assign someone to restock holiday bag and wrap supplies at the register area from now to December 25.
- Assign someone the important task of checking and stocking cash every-other-day from now to December 25. This basic step keeps the day flowing smoothly and customers happier because you are more efficient with the check out process...no one likes to wait in line.
- Plan, write, and submit holiday merchandise news to the hospital newsletter. Feature something in each issue to keep your shop "top of mind" during the holiday season.
- October is BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH. Create a pink themed display with specialty items for Breast Cancer patients. Include signage or flyers on breast cancer program at your hospital. Merchandise includes: novelty socks with the pink ribbon motif, caps, t-shirts, novelty jewelry like breast cancer pin, and anything pink.
- Set and post sales goals for October, November and December, since this quarter should represent some 40-50% of your annual retail sales. This will motivate everyone to do and be his or her best during this busy period.
- Remember, you want at least eight weeks of regular price selling to maximize profits. If you wait until the day after Thanksgiving to set up, you only have about four weeks to sell your merchandise.
- Designate a central place where everyone can jot down customer requests and needs.
 Review it regularly to determine which items are worth ordering and which ones should be ignored.

- Does your merchandise excite your customers? There's more to maintaining inventory than simply buying new products and goods. Like illusionists who devise new tricks to thrill their audiences, hospital gift shop managers must continually experiment with the magic of their merchandise mix - adding new lines to engage and excite sales while ruthlessly dropping or shifting other lines to titillate the jaded sensibilities of their customers (hospital employees).
- Begin promoting Gift Certificates as co-worker holiday gifts in the hospital newsletter and at the cashier counter.
- Review all outstanding holiday merchandise orders and undelivered balances of orders. Some may need canceling.
- It's getting chilly! Promote those cozy throws and wraps. 🚏 🥒 🔮
- Hire and train part-timers for the upcoming holidays. A well-trained staff is crucial. Remember that there is no job so simple that it can't be done wrong. People always perform better when they know how to perform the job correctly.
- Meet with the person responsible for the scheduling volunteers to ensure a smooth operation of the shop. Have a list of substitute workers on hand. 🚀
- This is the beginning of a long season of "giving." It is also a season for "taking!" Present a short training session for all staff regarding what to do should a shoplifter be spotted or caught. Make sure that cashiers and sales people know how to react and what steps they should follow. Post shoplifting warnings, "We Prosecute Shoplifters". You might also check with your local law enforcement agency for tips to pass along to your staff. 🚀



- The only way to get a handle on shoplifting is to get a handle on your inventory. Bad inventory numbers make your POS system nothing more than a very expensive cash register. Remember the term "garbage in, garbage out?"
- Put up your artificial Christmas tree and display all your ornaments. Add clear mini-lights for sparkle and drama! Keep windows unobstructed and open for customers to see into your wonderful shop.
- String clear twinkle lights around shop window. Play holiday music and set the mood!
 Take pictures of your beautiful shop for the record! All decorations and display props should be priced for sale.
- All Christmas merchandise should be in the shop by mid-October. Start by displaying your more expensive holiday merchandise first. You never know how much your customer is willing to spend unless you dangle the carrot in front of them. If you leave your inventory in the stockroom, you will lose sales. And, this leads to markdowns!
- Make small cards tents with 'stocking stickers' on them saying, "\$10 and under Stocking Stuffers" and "\$5 and under Stocking Stuffers".
- Set a date and plan to take a physical inventory for the beginning of January.
- Small luxuries like candies, bath and body products, cosmetics, and candles are personal indulgences yet they are affordable. Home decor and cooking-related products are hot because. Use small tables to display home décor items help your customer visualize your merchandise in their own homes.

No matter the economy, people still spend money on their children and pets.

- Keep in mind, you can have the most attractive or delicious-yet-affordable products in your shop, but if hospital employees don't know about them, it won't help. Promote, promote, promote in whatever way works - hospital email works the best.
- Amazingly, hospital gift shops are typically not hit as hard by economic fluctuation because 75-80% of their customers (hospital employees) get a paycheck every two weeks or so. Hospital gift shop managers have a unique advantage. All you have to do is respond to that advantage and be savvy retailers.
- If you see items or categories underperforming, mark them down IMMEDIATELY! If regularly priced items are not selling, they should be marked down after 2-3 weeks. Stay on top of every item in your shop. Watch it like a hawk!!
- Purchase 'tension curtain rods' and install them between two sides of your glass cubes or in windows. Most can be cut to fit. Then hang the ornaments on hooks over the rod.
- Get fun and creative with your window displays.

November Action Plan

X Buy

- End of November; cancel all backordered holiday merchandise.
- Buy Easter plush. Include an over-sized Easter bunny for a drawing just before Easter. Remember that you have to register raffles with the state and they can cause tax issues).
- Ensure that all Valentine merchandise has been ordered. ♥

Holidays

November

Veterans Day [11th]
Thanksgiving [4th Thursday]
Black Friday [day after]

upcoming.

Cyber Monday [varies]

December

Hanukkah [varies] Christmas [25th] New Year's Eve [31st]

% Mark Down

- Mark down all leftover Halloween merchandise on November 1.
- Take markdowns on slow selling holiday merchandise. Watch what is and is not selling.



— Ensure all date books are <mark>on display NOW!</mark>



- Plan a 20% ONE-DAY-ONLY sale for the first week in December (no later). Some shops refer to this as a Hospital Employee Appreciation Day sale.
- If you haven't already, meet with your florist to ensure that the flower shelves and cooler are well stocked with holiday plants and flowers throughout November and December.

The next 8 weeks should produce the greatest profits of the year!

- Every item in your shop must have a price. Unmarked merchandise does not sell!
 Nothing frustrates customers more than waiting for a cashier finding a price.
- Good displays are going to sell the merchandise. Repetition is an easy way to make almost any product look good. Display the same picture frame in five different colors.
 Repetition allows customers to focus their attention on one or two items at a time.

- During November and December, consider opening your shop one morning a week early (7am) for those on the night shift.
- Tips for Excellence in Customer Service
 - 1. Be alert and attentive to the presence of a customer, even when you're busy with other tasks.
 - 2. Use eye contact and a pleasant smile to greet customers. Avoid clichés like "May I help you?"
 - 3. Watch for customers with too much to carry. Offer to set aside their packages so they are free to continue shopping.
 - 4. Know the features and benefits of the merchandise so you'll be comfortable discussing and making helpful suggestions about it.
 - 5. Personally, assist when a customer cannot find a particular item, rather than pointing the direction. If you cannot find the item, then suggest an alternative.
 - 6. Stay out of a customer's way when they want to shop the display that you are working on.
 - 7. Answer the phone with a simple greeting and the name of your store.
- Don't let telephone calls cause a customer to wait on you. Ask the caller if they can hold until you finish helping your customer. If it is a personal call, arrange to call back later. Remember, the live customer standing in front of you always comes first!
- The next time you face a customer, who has every right to be upset, say something like, "I don't blame you for feeling as you do. If I were you, I'd feel the same way. What would you like me to do?" These are magical words and you'll be surprised at how reasonable people become when the feel someone is on their side.
- If you haven't already, write and schedule submissions to the hospital eblast or newsletter to run every week or so throughout the holidays announcing all your exciting holiday merchandise. Submit a reminder that gift certificates are an ideal co-worker gift for the holidays They're a risk-free gift because they eliminate the decision-making process.
- Remember that a hospital gift shop is a business that buys and sells merchandise for a profit. How does your shop measure up? How is it really doing in terms of profitability? Are you doing as well as other shops of comparative size? Find out using the Guide to Calculating Shop Profitability with Industry Benchmarks.
- How does your shop's checkout counter appear to the customers? Stand in front of your counter. Is it cluttered with boxes of pick-up candy, small hand-written signs, pencils, slips of paper and marked-down items? Follow these tips:

Only 'high impulse' items at the check-out Display small seasonal items there No sale items at the checkout No tall items that block the view of the shop No items \$10 or more No permanent displays



- Operating Room Nurses' Day is November 14. Put a sign on the shop door and honor them with a special discount. 6
- The next seven weeks means an increased number of customers and register transactions. With that comes increased register errors and cash drawer discrepancies. Encourage cashiers to work efficiently to reduce errors. If they can't balance out at the end of their shift, they don't have to hang around to midnight to find the errors, but at least they should provide verbal or written explanations of discrepancies. \$
- Use air space as display space! Suspend a grid from the ceiling to hang ornaments and angels.
- Plan and schedule a buying trip to a major merchandise market for January. Make hotel reservations now!
- Take notes on "lessons learned" throughout the season for your final holiday report. You'll be happy you did next year when you begin planning for the holiday season. Jot down what's selling and what is not so you don't repeat the same mistakes next year. Record as much as you can. You'd be surprised how it will help you when you begin planning for next year's holiday season.

Walk through your shop every morning before the doors open to see what has sold and where restocking is needed.

- As manager you wear many different hats retailer, financial wizard, public relation expert, maintenance supervisor, referee, flower-delivery service, motivator, and counselor - to name just a few. Plus, you work extra hours during the holidays. So, take care of yourself! Eat healthy foods and get eight hours sleep each night. Maintain a sense of humor throughout the upcoming hectic weeks.
- Keep everyone at a positive and high energy level by providing ongoing recognition and positive reinforcement.
- The four days prior to Thanksgiving are very big for hospital <employees purchasing gifts to take home during the Thanksgiving weekend. Keep the shop well stocked at all times.
- Set next year's sales goals. If your fiscal year begins in January, create a sales forecast and a budget for the coming year. Use past months' sales as a guide to future sales. \$
- If your fiscal year ends December 31, plan and schedule your shop's annual physical inventory. \$



December Action Plan

Buy

Review Valentine orders to ensure timely deliveries.

% Mark Down

- December 19: Mark down slow-moving items.
- Watch that the merchandise is selling. It is crucial at this point to take selective markdowns on slow moving items.

Display

 Put calendars and date books in a prime selling space for fast sales. There are only five to six weeks left to sell them.

Holidays

December

Hanukkah [varies] Christmas [25th]

New Year's Eve [31st]

upcoming..

January

New Year's Day [1st]
Martin Luther King Day [3rd Monday]

Plan

- Ensure that the shop's physical inventory process is organized and in place for the beginning of the fiscal year.
- If all your preparatory work was done in advance, nothing should prevent you from being on the floor helping customers and selling merchandise.
- Stock and restock!
- Schedule additional staffing to work from 10am-2pm to handle the increased business during the last busy weeks before Christmas.
- Ensure that shop hours are consistently maintained during these busy times.
- Limit vacation days by mid-December everyone is needed from now until Christmas.

Say a special thank you to all workers in your gift shop. Serve Honey Buns under a sign reading "Thanks for working your buns off!"

Give lots of 'pats on the back', words of thanks and showings of gratitude to all the workers in the shop (volunteer and paid). 40% of annual sales are in November and December.

 Train cashiers to suggest GIFT CERTIFICATES to hospital employees. Promote them as the perfect co-worker gift. **

35% of candle sales are in December.

Gift Certificates generate immediate cash. They represent an interest-free loan, don't require floor space, and customers often purchase more than the face amount of the certificate.

For the customer, they are a risk-free gift and eliminate the decision-making process.

Gift certificates should include who authorized the gift certificate, whom it is from and whom it's for. Include name, address, expiration date, and additional conditions, such as being non-redeemable for cash. Gift certificates are like money, so good record keeping is essential.

- KWANZA is December 26 January 1. 6
- Confirm plans to attend a major January merchandise market show.

7 Ways to Grow Your Retail Sales the Week After Christmas

After Christmas sales can make the difference between a profitable holiday season or a bust.

- 1. Mark it down. Aggressively get rid of the laggards from last year. 50% OFF! Not sure what to clear out? Ideally start the markdowns on Christmas Eve so all you have to do is open your doors the day after.
- 2. Get customers in the door. Make sure to send out a reminder on Friday to promote the last weekend of the year to save big.
- 3. Train your cashiers to always ask the customer if they would like to look around for an exchange first, in order to minimize customer returns.
- Tag returns ASAP. Make sure every return is immediately priced. You don't want to lose sales because someone threw it into a big pile to deal with at the end of the day. Price it and get it back on the sales floor with the rest of the items quickly.
- 5. Give in. Don't plant your feet and refuse to give a refund if a customer has a receipt - especially if they paid with a credit card. They will get their money back either in front of you with a smile or behind your back with a chargeback. It isn't worth the aggravation - give them a refund if there is any way possible.
- 6. Greet customers when they come in, and again as they browse, to let them know

what is on sale.

- 7. For this week only, neatness does not count. You will get a different customer after Christmas the customer who enjoys the hunt for a bargain. However, cleanliness does count throughout the rest of the year. There is no excuse for a sales floor looking like a herd of elephants just ran through the place.
- December 27, take a well-deserved rest. Soak your feet, read a good book, and relax!
- Create a SALE CORNER in your shop that is up year-round, except for the period between Halloween and Christmas when you don't have the space. If it goes to the sale area you want it out of the shop so start with a 50% off discount. If you find it's not selling at 50% off, go even lower. If a product has a flaw, sell it "as is", but generally keep your sale products clean and in original packaging. Sale items are also a final sale, no returns, exchanges or credits.

Refresh and Renew Your Shop

Yippee! It's New Years Eve! Its a brand new year! Look for ways to improve your shop. This pays off by improving your value to the hospital. After a hectic December, shops often look tired and worn out. Pack away the old merchandise and bring out fresh new merchandise.

This may be the year to invest in your shop. Improve your value to the hospital. Look for ways to upgrade your shop.

Are your fixtures looking outdated and old?

Does the glass on your jewelry case need replacing?

Does your carpeting need replacing?

Are you maintaining 3' wide aisles for wheelchair access?

Retailing requires good lighting and updated floor fixtures.

January and July are the best months for a shop renovation because inventory is low and there is less to move. Traffic is slow, so sales figures are usually low. Therefore, the least amount of money and profits will be lost while the shop is closed for renovation.

Working with a qualified hospital gift shop designer will help you communicate your needs to the architects and avoid costly mistakes.

Recognize volunteer and staff. They want and deserve ongoing recognition. Everyone needs a pat on the back occasionally. People want to feel valued and important. Encourage "pride of ownership" by empowering them to initiate business decisions that best serve the customers' needs.

A good manager is someone who is out on the floor constantly in the process of fine-tuning the shop.

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Refresh and Renew You!

Change is good; constant change is even better! Shops need freshening at a much more accelerated pace in a hospital gift shop. Managers who are unwilling to commit to that effort might as well leave.

Good managers must have thick skin. Take on the criticism, don't personalize it, and don't dwell on the mistakes. Learn from them and move on.

Be patient! Encourage dialogue with staff and volunteers. Focus on the priorities; establish a list of five achievable goals per year. Build upon your successes.

Good managers leave their troubles at the door. Balancing personal life with your gift shop goals is a formidable challenge. Time constraints, constant change, volunteer and staff management, and ever-changing technology are just some of the issues that must be juggled in today's shop.

 Would you like to leave the gift shop each day with less stress - and feeling good about the day? Allot 10 to 15 minutes at the end of each day to do something positive. For example, send hand-written thank-you notes to volunteers and/or staff for providing extraordinary service/hard work. When you're finished, you'll be in a much more positive frame of mind. 🏝

