

inspired RETAILER

better products for a better world

Trade Show 2009

Feature articles

- New loan options for retailers
- Sales with a soul: Fair Trade
- Tips for boosting calendar sales

Feature interview

- Cheryl Richardson

Store profile

- The Cottage Shop
in South Weymouth, Mass.

Product reviews

- Fair Trade products
- Highlights from major gift shows
across America:
Chicago
New York
Los Angeles

Online exclusives

- More giftware reviews
from Chicago, New York,
and Los Angeles
- Extra music reviews
- Plus, don't miss our new blog!





Shows Across AMERICA

Fabulous finds from the Chicago Market: Living and Giving

www.shopchicagomarket.com

by Megy Karydes

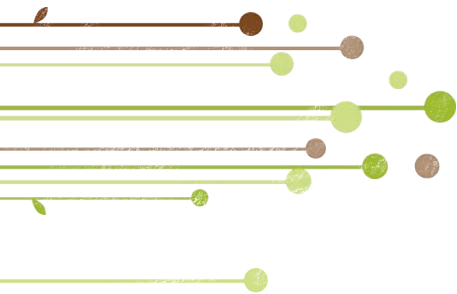
Megy Karydes is president of Chicago-based marketing/PR consulting firm Karydes Consulting (www.karydesconsulting.com). Her clients include several gift and home manufacturers and retailers.

Mona Collection Tableware

Milani Home

888/959-1112, www.milanihome.com

Handthrown and colorful, the modern Mona Collection tableware (\$12 to \$50) includes cups, bowls, vases, and even a teapot. Bright glazed interiors make a nice contrast to the black, unglazed exterior with bold white circles. The line is designed by Tammy Milani and handmade by artists in Peru using fair trade principles.



Ruffle Silk Scarf

Sévyá

303/440-4900, www.sevya.com

Showing for the first time at the Chicago show, this booth was very busy, and once you stepped inside and saw its offerings, you immediately understood why. Among the delights was this irresistibly soft, rich, cascading silk scarf (\$19.50, 21" x 75") fairly traded and handwoven by artisans in India. Available in two colors: olive with gold and magenta with black.



Q. Most of our customers are wonderful people whom we love to serve. But there are a few who are rude, impatient, or just require an exorbitant amount of time and energy to placate. Usually, they buy something, but I wonder if the sale is actually worth it. One of them even wants to bargain on price as if she were at a flea market! Any ideas on how to deal with this?

A. I know the “customer is always right,” and in this economic climate, every sale is important, but I have also wondered if the sale to a difficult customer is really worth the time and effort. You can’t allow your customers to step all over you, or your staff, just because it is a recession. Time is also money. And joy is an important factor. My only advice is to do your best and, if a customer is ever abusive or just plain rude, it’s perfectly acceptable to ask them to shop elsewhere.

As for the person who wants to haggle on price, I’d simply state, quietly and kindly, that you don’t do that. Let them know that you occasionally run sales, or have a coupon in a local publication or your newsletter, and then don’t worry if you lose a sale because you won’t bargain. They’ll probably come back, and if they don’t, you are much better off focusing your energy on serving customers who are pleasant and appreciative.

Q. We have never done a storewide sale, but I am thinking about having one. Is the cash flow worth it when the profit per item is reduced, considering that what sells then has to be reordered and received again? And does having a sale mean customers will tend to shop the sales instead of buying at regular prices?

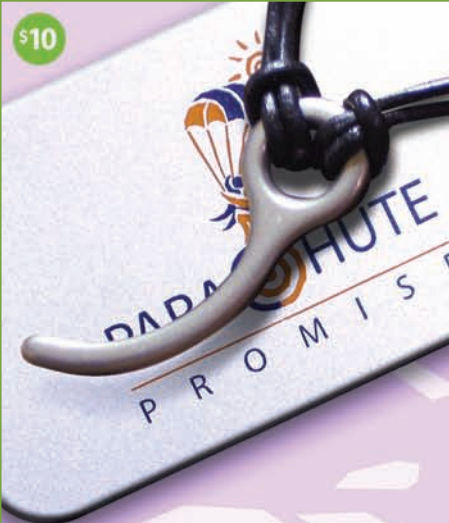
A. I do think when a store has regular sales, it encourages customers to wait for discounts. I know *I* wait for sales before *I* shop, and I think others do, too.

We don’t really have sales, with a few exceptions, most notably our annual anniversary sale. If customers ask if we have sales, we tell them about the anniversary sale, but we also explain that we make every effort to find products that have great value and are affordably priced every day. Our coupon in our monthly newsletter also gives customers some type of discount (usually 20% off one item or \$10 off a purchase of \$50 or more).

As far as cash flow and whether the sale is worth the reduced profit margin, that depends on the timing of your sale. Our annual sale is in early October because it is at the end of our slower season and right when we need extra cash for Christmas inventory. Those three days (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) can generate as much cash as our best holiday sales days, and it is well worth it to make less profit to move merchandise quickly and generate the cash flow we need at that time.

Kim Perkins is co-owner of Elysian Fields Books & Gifts for Conscious Living (www.elysianfieldsonline.com) in Sarasota, Fla. Email your business questions to kim@inspiredretailer.com.

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