



Gift Business Success INSIDER

Strategies for Creating a Profitable Gift Business
Without Spending a Fortune

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Are you taking advantage of this windfall on your taxes? If not, you should be talking to your accountant. Most of us are eligible for it but there are limitations. Read more on page 7.

If you haven't already begun marketing Valentine's Day, you are way behind. So roll up your sleeves and get started. Page 8 has some marketing tips and ideas for Valentine's Day and other February events.



Lost your passion for your business? Feel like a hamster on a rapidly-turning wheel? Don't feel like being the CEO that you have become? You aren't alone. Get some ideas on how to revive your passion on page 3.



Getting to know you... A new feature that will help us get to know each other as individuals with hopes, dreams, and problems. This is what transforms a group from names to a magical community that helps and supports each other. Guess who our featured member is this month and then go to page 13 to see if you were right. Who knows? You may be next!



You could have 99 things
not work and one thing
that worked really well
and that's all you need!

Insights from the Inside

Joyce Reid
Editor/Publisher



The magazine you are reading is the
official publication
of Gift Basket Network
<https://www.giftbasketnetwork.com>
Editor/Publisher
Joyce Reid

Contact Information

GiftBasketNetwork@gmail.com
928-774-7629

**A special thank you to Cindy Schoonover
of Distinct Impressions for the gift basket
photo on the cover.**

Gift Business Success INSIDER Magazine,
Volume 12 Issue 2 February 2021.

Published as a pdf file 12 times per year by
Creative Gifts To Go LLC,
1911 E Rainier Loop, Flagstaff, AZ 86004.

Product information, photos, articles, and
comments should be sent to the editor at the
above email address. Opinions expressed by
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Unless you're a first-time recipient of our digital
magazine, you probably noticed the changes as soon
as you opened it. We've been publishing — without
missing a single issue — since March 2010. That's a
long time folks. A long time for me and a long time
for this publication. During this time, we've changed
the name a couple of times and made a few other
changes at various times.

But much has remained the same. And sameness
creates dullness and boredom. For me and probably
for the readers who have been with us for years.

This issue is the inauguration of a new and different
format, some different types of content, and a few
other changes. Businesses of all sizes and kinds need
to change and evolve or they fail to grow and realize
their full potential.

And we are no different.

This issue is just the beginning of our evolution. You'll
continue to see changes here as well as on our
websites and what we will be offering to you as
members of the gift industry.

John Wooden said, "It's the little details that are vital;
little things make big things happen." and that is
exactly what we are trying to do.

We welcome your ideas, your suggestions, your
expectations of what you would like to see and what
you feel is missing in our industry. Email me at
giftbasketnetwork@gmail.com and I'll see what I can
do. Your Friend and Mentor, Joyce Reid

It's not my work It's my passion

By Joyce Reid

Revive Your Business Passion And Make It Fun Again!

We've already spent the first month of 2021 and where are we? If you're at all like me, you pulled out those goals and plans that you set in January and realized that you still have a long way to go — and yet you're feeling overwhelmed already. Some days, I feel just plain burnt out with it all.

But wait!

I **LOVE** my business. I **ENJOY** my work. What the heck is going on here?! I asked myself that question, and came up with some good answers...

It's easy to **lose your focus** when you're lost in a never-ending list of mundane tasks. Or to **lose sight of the things that excite and motivate you** when

you're in the thick of the daily running of your business.

There are phases in your business where you feel totally unstoppable and on top of the world, and the **creative inspiration** seems to have a never ending flow.

Then there are other phases where you're mindlessly drudging through the tasks to maintain that same business. Sound familiar?

When those phases of drudgery, dispassion, overwhelm or frustration drag on... you absolutely **MUST stop - and do something about it.**

Here are some ideas that work for me when I get into that funky mood and need to revive that business passion:

1. *Take a day to work on something fun that used to motive and excite you.*

Think back to the early days of your business and remember why you started it. What were you doing then that you're NOT doing now? What has changed? For me, it was the joy of creating. It wasn't the mundane day to day chores of accounting, paying bills, or even working on websites. So when I need to revive that passion, I take a day to do what I loved way back then and work on creating some new designs.

2. *Make time for brainstorming.*

It was exciting to brainstorm and plan my business in the early days but I find that now I need to schedule a time for brainstorming or it doesn't happen. I make it a part of my routine for a little while each morning while having that cup of coffee. I think of (and write down) new projects, new ideas for the magazine as well as for my websites. I come up with some of my best ideas during these brainstorming sessions. Of course, I also write down ideas as I have them at other times during the day.

I operate three blogs — one for GiftBasket-Network, one for GiftBusinessOwners and one for my e-commerce business. I will be combining the first two blogs into one this year which will make it easier. But when I come up with ideas for a new blog post, I

open WordPress for that website, create a new post with just the thoughts I have for that post and save it as a draft. Then when I need to write a new post, I can just pick one that is saved in draft and start writing.

3. *Deal with clutter*

One of the things that makes me feel overwhelmed is clutter. If I don't deal with it, I spend all too much time searching for things and feeling frustrated. So I take a few moments each day to deal with the little pieces of paper and printouts that I have scattered on my desk.

4. *Do more of what is working and less of what is not.*

It's all too easy to get caught up in doing things that aren't really producing great results (like reading Facebook and that new ebook that I downloaded) while neglecting things that would. There are times that I feel exactly like this little hamster running around on a wheel.



Yep, that is me when I get caught up in what feels like a hamster wheel of tasks in my business. And, it doesn't help that I operate more than one business.

You can probably relate. Jump out of that rapidly turning wheel, STOP, and get back to doing the things that MATTER in your business. I find it helps to analyze my books and revenue sources for ideas on "what's working" - or what has over the last year - and get back to THOSE things.

5. Focus on ONE thing: the thing in your business that is highest priority.

What can you do in your business that will make the biggest difference? Consider what will serve your market best, what will make

YOU feel most fulfilled, and what will grow your business the fastest.

Focus on that ONE priority to the point of exclusion and MAKE it happen. Figure out what that ONE thing is, get back to it, and pour ALL of your energy into it.

These are the things that work for me, so I hope you found some ideas you can use. Motivation and inspiration are the top ingredients for a successful online business. When you're at your best, excited about what you do and doing what you do best, everything just falls into place... and becomes FUN again.

I would love to hear your thoughts, and any tips you've found helpful in reviving your business or your passion & motivation.



Instagram announced the launch of Instagram Shop in the US, a new e-commerce hub that lets merchants sell products and take payments via Facebook Pay. A new Shop tab will also appear in the navigation tab this year.
<https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/instagram-shop-discover-and-buyproducts-you-love-all-in-one-place/>

The Latest on Facebook Pages: Facebook launched a redesigned Pages layout. The "Like" button has disappeared from the main Page...but the "Follow" button became way more prominent.

Shipping Discounts are available to you today: If shipping via UPS, create an online account and use EASY discount code to receive a discount. Prefer to use USPS which is usually cheaper for smaller packages? Create an account at pirateship.com (which is totally free) and receive discounts on shipping via the post office. If you have a discount code for FEDEX, let me know and I will share it next month.

blogging

TIPS & TRICKS

Are you blogging on a regular basis but feel that you are just wasting your time?

If you aren't fully optimizing each and every post, you are most likely like that hamster running on that rapidly-turning wheel.

Don't give up. You can use a blog effectively to bring traffic to your website and to increase your ranking in the search engines.

Here is a quick ten-step snapshot of how to do it:

1. Choose one primary keyphrase and (depending on the length of your post) also choose two or three secondary keywords.
2. Insert your primary keyphrase into your blog post title using an H1 tag.
3. Enter the full keyphrase into the slug of the blog post URL using dashes to separate each word. (The slug is the portion of the page link after the .com.) For example <https://MarketingWords.com/enter-each-word-individually/>
4. Add your primary keyphrase in the first paragraph. Include secondary keywords if you have room.
5. Include primary and/or secondary keyphrases in your sub-headlines using H2, H3, etc. tags.
6. Create a strong call-to-action and insert a keyphrase there using an H2 or other H tag.
7. Include links to other relevant posts on your blog.
8. Include ALT image tags with keyphrases that are descriptive of the photo/graphic.
9. Write a meta description tag that is engaging and will want to make someone searching for your keyphrase want to click through to your post.
10. Ask for comments and shares when you publish your blog post.



Finances and Taxes

Are You Taking Advantage of This Windfall?

If you aren't already aware of a generous provision in the tax law that can give you a 20% deduction on your business income, talk to your accountant about it.

This article outlines the benefit but is not to be taken as tax information that you should use without consulting with a qualified professional.

This deduction isn't new. Called Section 199A, it was part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. It could be used for the first time for your 2018 taxes which you filed in 2019. But it can be particularly valuable this year if you are struggling as a result of the economic decline. There are limitations, however, so make sure to discuss it with a professional who is familiar with the deduction.

Basically, if you pay individual tax rates rather than corporate rates and pass through your business profits or losses to Schedule C of your individual tax return, you may be eligible to use this deduction.

You don't have to itemize to claim this tax break. The deduction won't reduce your adjusted gross income nor will it reduce your earnings for purposes of calculating taxes for Social Security and Medicare. If you are self-employed (which most of us are), you must pay 15.3% self employment taxes. You can then deduct half of that amount from your adjusted gross income.



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Your Marketing Calendar

FEBRUARY 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Valentine's Day	15 Presidents' Day	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

Holidays You Can Use in Your Marketing This Month

- Black History Month
- Creative Romance Month
- Great American Pie Month
- National Bird Feeding Month
- National Cherry Month
- National Grapefruit Month
- National Weddings Month
- Spunky Old Broads Month

February: If you haven't already begun marketing Valentine's Day, you are way behind. So roll up your sleeves and get started. Adding a few hearts to your product photos and blog posts is a cheap and easy way to make your marketing more festive. Showcase vintage love stories or, better yet, ask your customers to submit their love story to be featured on your website or in your Newsletter.

Send Valentine's Day cards to customers in your email marketing list. After all, they are the object of your affection. You love them for choosing and supporting your business. Don't be tempted, however to use this as a way to market. Keep it informal with a simple message like "Customers like you are the HEART of our business!" If you like, you could encourage them to continue supporting your business by including a coupon for a special offer (such as free delivery) or a discount .

2/2 Groundhog Day

2/7 Super Bowl LV

2/12 Chinese New Year

2/14 Valentine's Day

2/15 President's Day in USA

2/17 Random Acts of Kindness Day

2/20 Love Your Pet Day

Encourage your followers and other customers to commit Random Acts of Kindness and share them on your social media. These don't have to be big things. They can be as simple as buying coffee for a stranger. Ask your readers to vote on the one, two, or three that they think are the best and award prizes on Random Acts of Kindness Day. Or give everyone who participated a discount or small gift.



Start a Birthday Club

Wake up your customers during 2021 with a birthday club promotion. Collect names, addresses, and birthdays from all your customers and then send out postcards on the first day of the month for those whose birthday falls during the next 30 days. Offer them a discount (make it large enough to be worthwhile) or better yet a free gift.

To make your Birthday Club even larger, go back through all the birthday gift orders you received during the past year, create a birthday list, and send out a reminder to the person who placed that order that someone's special day is just around the corner.

Small Gestures Bring Big Returns

Everyone loves free gifts and your customers are no exception. *The* next time you deliver a gift basket to the customer who ordered it, take a little something to him or her as well. It doesn't have to be big or expensive to impress them. When you ship a gift that has been ordered by a customer, take the time to drop the customer a hand-written thank you note and include a packet of chocolate drink mix, a new tea, or anything else that will easily fit into an envelope. Don't have time to write those thank-you notes but have teenagers. Pay them to do it for you!



February is the month of love and marketing genius Jay Abraham puts it this way, "The secret to success is to fall out of love with your product, service, or store, and fall in love with your customers." The result is that all your business decisions suddenly revolve around what's best for your customers, not what's most convenient for you

It's not your customer's responsibility to remember you; it's your responsibility to be remembered. You have to make a phone call, send an email, mail a postcard, or do SOMETHING to remind your customers that you're around and ask them to buy from you!

A Lesson from my Grocery Store

I went grocery shopping today at my neighborhood Fry's Market and saw something that taught me a valuable lesson.

They already had their Valentine gifts for sale in the floral department — which was smart of them. But it was one of those gifts (and they had lots and lots of this particular gift premade and ready to sell) that showed me what we as gift basket designers are missing out on.

A lot of you say that you don't get much Valentine business. But the grocery store does. So do the florists. One of the reasons, of course, is that they get these gifts prepared early and make them visible to customers who pass through while buying other things. This is an advantage that we don't have. So we have to make a special effort to let our customers know how we can make them look so much better to that special someone they are sending a gift to than one of these 'grab em and go' grocery store gifts.

The gift itself was what caught my eye in this grocery store. It was a candy bouquet that was selling for \$19.95. The gift was six candy bars on sticks stuck into a plastic vase filled with pink shred. The candy was sticking up like a whale jumping out of an ocean of cello puffs. There was no design and they were (and this is my personal opinion) ugly.

Now, what can we learn from this one gift? These six candy bars can be bought in bulk at Sam's Club for 64 cents each for a total of 3.84. I'm sure the grocery store gets even better prices. The plastic vase was perhaps \$1. A little cello and a few cello puffs — I'll be generous and say \$1.00. That's a total cost of \$5.84 for a gift that they are selling for \$19.95. Figure out that markup. It's a darn good one.

I know what I can create using these same products and I also know that it can be designed so that it is attractive and will tell the recipient that "I care about you!"

How about you? Are you going to let the grocery stores beat you at your business with these



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Getting to know you...



Are We Really a Community?

Communities have existed since people first banded together in groups as a means of protection. Traditionally, the word usually meant “a group of people living in the same place.” But technology has expanded that meaning to be more like “a group of people who share common interests and goals.” Even though they may not live in the same geographical area, everyone in these communities has something in common.

This definition is what most of us have considered a community to be when we refer to Gift Basket Network and it is probably true of most, but not all, of the members of our Facebook group.

But I feel that isn't enough. Sure, we're all in the same gift industry but I would like to see us experience the true magic of a community by making us “a group of people who care about each other.” We are real people with real lives, real stories, real dreams and real problems. When people care about each other, they develop trust which creates collaboration, sharing, support, hope and much more. This is when the magic of a community happens.

To care about each other, we have to know each other. Know who they are, why they are in business, and what they do outside their business day. In this issue, I am taking a baby step in that process by starting a “Getting To Know You” section which will be in each issue. As I revamp the website, these and other profiles of our members will be there as well. A very small step but we have to begin somewhere if we are to experience the magic.



Getting to know you...

Martha Mann Smith—Oklahoma



The start of a new business can be the result of many different things. For Martha Mann Smith, located in Oklahoma, Baskets Full of Joy began as an offshoot of gifts she and a friend made for a church bazaar.

They baked bread and added it to baskets they created with jam, coffee, and candies to be sold at the bazaar. People began asking if she would create one of these baskets for a birthday, get well, Christmas or other occasion.

Martha was at Basket Market (wholesale division of Hobby Lobby) one day when she found a flyer for a gift basket convention in Dallas. It was too late for her to attend but the flyer sparked her interest in doing some research about the industry and the possibility of a local gift basket business. She attended the convention the following year and was “hooked.”

In 2002, Baskets Full of Joy was launched. Starting a new business was a learning process for Martha and she began slowly.

She had been a stay-at-home mom until she reentered the work world in 1989 in the area of church administration. She was still working a forty-hour work week and raising three active teen-agers when starting this new business.

Martha retired from her full-time job seven years ago and is now operating Baskets Full of Joy full-time. The business began with local church members who wanted her home-baked bread gift baskets but around 75% of her orders today are from her website. And, of course, she uses pre-packaged products and not home-baked ones.

Her most popular gift baskets are “Made in Oklahoma,” get-well, and birthday. Martha’s designer bows and custom imprinted ribbons, as well as personalized enclosure cards with a company’s name and logo on them, impress her corporate clients and encourage them to return for more.

The primary thing that makes her business unique is that she takes the time to talk with each and every person who places an order, asking questions that help her make a truly customized design. She makes every customer feel like he or she is Martha's top priority.

Knowledge of her business was word-of-mouth in the early days although she regrets that she didn't market to corporations from the beginning. Today, her most effective marketing is with Facebook, email marketing with Constant Contact, and her website.

As do many of us, she still operates from a home studio with help from her husband, Bill, who provides support with delivering and inventory rotation. During 4th quarter however, she uses contract "elves" and a courier.

After 18 years in business, her advice to others is:

1. Be sure you are properly licensed. If you don't have a license for alcohol **DON'T SELL IT!**
2. Be a sponge! Learn all you can from those who have been in business awhile. We have probably made the mistakes you are headed for!
3. Be professional at all times. Don't mix your FB, Instagram or website with your personal pages.



4. Keep your business finances separate from personal.
5. File all necessary tax returns on time. Hire a good accountant from the beginning.
6. Get to know fellow gift basket professionals. You can collaborate, as well as keep one another accountable.
7. Join a good networking group.
8. Don't expect to make money right away! Do your homework and market research before saying "you are a gift

basket company.”

9. Watch your inventory costs and expiration dates!

10. Don't use many “over the counter” foods. Steer clear of dollar stores as much as possible. It's okay to use a few gourmet candies that they carry, however, watch the expiration dates. Set yourself apart from the hobbyists and offer foods that can't even be bought at stores like Ross, TJ Maxx or Home Goods. It's okay to use containers that you find locally, however, using ones from a wholesaler is preferable because they are more unique. Do not reuse containers from Good Will, Salvation Army and other resale places.

Martha has a life outside of her business. She and Bill celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in August 2020 and are hoping to be able to take a long-awaited cruise in July.

The three children, who were teenagers when she opened Baskets Full of Joy, are now adults who are married. They have gifted Martha and Bill with seven grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

Even though she has retired as a church administrator, she is still active in her

church, where her family has been members since 1978, when they moved from Indiana to Oklahoma. Martha coordinates the food purchasing for the church's weekly Mobil Meals program and, before Covid, Martha purchased and helped prepare weekly meals for their homeless and indigent friends around their church.

They still have family in Indiana and are looking forward to traveling once again.

A life-changing experience for Martha has been the fact that she is also a trained Stephen Minister. These are lay church members trained to provide one-on-one care to those experiencing a difficult time in life, such as grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or relocation.





Susan Temple



Martha
Mann Smith



Judy Shapiro



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Free and cheap cloud storage is widely available, but Google Drive stands out for its 15GB of free storage for users who have a Goggle account. Google Drive can be used for storing your files or for backing up your computer or other device, but it can also be used as a workbench, allowing you to edit documents, spreadsheets and other files on the go and share them with others.

If you need more space to store large files or back up your computer's hard drive — it is still a good deal. For example, 1TB of space costs just \$10 a month.

I discovered the value of Google Drive when the operating system on my 2-year-old computer became corrupt. The only solution was to delete everything on the hard drive and reinstall Windows 10. A horror story if I had not saved most of the pictures, back issues of this magazine, documents, templates, and other valuable files on Google Drive and could restore them once the new operating system had been installed.

Free Photos You Can Use

If you write a blog, use lifestyle pictures for your e-commerce website, or send out emails or newsletters, there will be times when you need a picture that you haven't taken with your own camera.

There are a number of different websites that have pictures you can use for free. Just be aware of whether you are allowed to use the pictures and clipart for commercial use.

You can always do a free search for “free photos,” or there is a website that has compiled a list of some of the best sites and even includes reviews of each one.





Fruit Baskets Made Easy

By Jimi Taylor and Joyce Reid

In one of our very early magazines, one of our most popular Convention workshop presenters and successful gift shop owners, Jimi Taylor, shared with us her secrets about how she produced a mega fruit gift basket order which could have been very challenging. This is information that many of us can use today so I am updating the article and sharing it again here.

We are all familiar with the single order for fruit, crackers, cheese, and perhaps some cookies or other sweets. But what happens when you receive an order from a good client who expects an elegant presentation but wants only fruit for 150 baskets with a \$30 budget for each? The problem with producing this order is labor intensity.

Here is how Jimi did it:

1. We purchased the perfect Holiday basket, shown in the photo, locally from Sims Pottery. The cost was \$1.20 based on the large amount that we purchased. We prefer the same basket in a rectangle shape as they pack easier than the round one. They were not available this year so we used the round one instead.
2. The biggest problem we've all encountered with making fruit baskets is the pesky fruit rolling around and falling out of the basket as it is wrapped. We beat that problem by dropping the empty basket inside a sturdy bag and designed inside the bag. No rolling around and no chasing fruit all over the workroom. A large chart was on the wall stating how many of each fruit was to be used in each basket and all the



- production was done in an assembly line. Approximately 7-8 lbs. of fruit was used in each basket. The best prices for good looking fruit was at our local Costco this year.
3. We did not use shred because we filled the basket from the bottom up. If we had used shred, it would not have been visible. So why spend the time and money?

4. We prepared the bows as we had extra time. My nine-year-old granddaughter pulled them for us and we hung them on the wall.
5. The entire staff stopped everything else they were doing to work on the project in the afternoon and they were delivered the next morning. Timing of the packing and delivery can be the most critical situation because the fruit should not be tied up inside the cello bag too long. We also turned off all heat. If you are in a warm climate, the room needs to be air conditioned.
6. Enough fruit to make 150 baskets is a lot and we picked it all up in a truck. Michael created a spread sheet showing all the fruit that we needed and it produced a total of the amount of each type of fruit we needed to buy. Our courier service used a large delivery van. All the 150 baskets were delivered in two loads to a location six miles away. Our total cost for delivery was \$50.
7. The end result was a very satisfied customer who has already placed an order for next year. We ended up with a very good profit margin on this order and it was a fun project to produce. This was definitely our Mega Order this year and resulted in our decision to use market more for this type of business in the future.

A critical lesson we learned this year was the need to pay more attention to the delivery and shipping details on our large orders. We shipped 60% of our baskets and delivered 30%. Ten percent were picked up at our store. Economical delivery is the result of good advance planning.

Some other practical tips that I have learned through the years that make selling and producing fruit baskets profitable are the following:

1. When selecting fruit for your basket, don't choose fruit that is fully ripe as the gases from the fruit will hasten ripening while wrapped in cello. This is particularly true if you are using both bananas and apples in a basket. Make sure that the bananas are still a little green.
2. Punch holes in the cello or leave an opening on the sides to allow the gases to escape.
3. Put the heaviest fruit in the bottom and the lighter ones on top.
4. Add a label that says something like: "Remove cello upon receipt to prevent overripening of fruit.
5. Shipping fruit can be very tricky. Be careful about doing so unless you can ensure fast delivery and that the fruit will be packed so that it will not move around and become damaged during transit.

Fruit baskets can be a very profitable addition to your line of gifts for local delivery if you plan well.



If you received a copy of this magazine as a gift and are not a subscriber, you now know what you are missing.

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or becoming a VIP member.

And there's more:

Our website GiftBasketNetwork.com is undergoing an evolution makeover
during the month of March. Watch the changes as there is more to come.

And plan to read our story in the March issue about

How We Are Going to the Dogs!

I promise you that you will be surprised.