

giftBEAT

Tracking the Pulse of the Gift Industry

marketBEAT

The Industry's Top-Selling Lines



A variety of new gourmet food launches from outdoor entertaining chart topper **Stonewall Kitchen**. Store owners across the country noted strong sales of the company's products for the summer outdoor entertaining season. (www.stonewallkitchen.com).

T-SHIRTS

Last ran in May 2023

- #1 **LIFE IS GOOD**: various
- #2 **SIMPLY SOUTHERN**: various
- #3 **KERUSSO**: various
- #4 **LUBA**: custom
- #5 **UNSALTED COAST**: various
- #6 **SOUTHERN COUTURE**: various*
- #7 **LAKESHIRTS**: custom
- #8 **OLD GUYS RULE**: various
- #9 **DM**: Hello Mello
- #10 **LONE ROCK**: various*

*OF NOTE!

SOUTHERN COUTURE (www.coutureteecompany.com) and **LONE ROCK** (www.lonerockclothing.com) did not rank when this chart last ran.

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Faith-based t-shirts from **Kerusso** were strong sellers in July, landing the company the third spot on the list of top-selling t-shirt suppliers. The shirts retail for \$19.99 to \$23.99. (wholesale.kerusso.com)

"New Beanie Babies from Ty sell out the day they're received."

— Michigan retailer

CHILDREN'S GIFTS & TOYS

Last ran in May 2023

- #1 **JELLYCAT**: Amuseables, plush with books
- #2 **INTELEX**: Warmies
- #3 **TY**: plush
- #4 **SCHYLLING**: NeeDoh, various
- #5 **MUD PIE**: apparel, books, various
- #6 **DOUGLAS**: plush
- #7 **GANZ**: small toys, plush*
- #8 **KELLY TOY**: Squishmallows
- #9 **MARY MEYER**: Taggies, various
- #10 **DEMDACO**: plush, frames, various

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Bella Tunno, Toy Network, Aurora, Peter Pauper Press

*OF NOTE!

GANZ (www.ganz.com) did not rank when this chart last ran.

OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING

Last ran in September 2022

- #1 **NORA FLEMING**: melamine, minis
- #2 **BRUMATE**: insulated drinkware
- #3 **CORKCICLE**: insulated drinkware
- #4 **MUD PIE**: serveware, tabletop
- #5 **STONEWALL KITCHEN**: sauces, rubs, jams
- #6 **SWIG**: insulated drinkware
- #7 **YETI**: insulated drinkware
- #8 **DESIGN DESIGN**: cocktail napkins*
- #9 **EVERGREEN**: flags, insulated drinkware
- #10 **KATYDID**: insulated drinkware*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Tervis, Caspari, Demdaco

*OF NOTE!

KATYDID (www.katydid.com) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **DESIGN DESIGN** (www.designdesign.us) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

FAST FACT:
Retail sales declined year-over-year in July for **57%** of independent gift retailers

NOTE: Rankings are based on July 2023 sales from Giftbeat's reporting stores.



Tonal colors are playfully mixed with rhinestone charms and tiny semi-precious stones in **Scout Curated Wear's** reimagined Miyuki bracelet trio. Consumer purchases of the company's popular wrap bracelets led Scout to claim the top spot in the give-back category. (www.scoutcuratedwears.com)

“Demdaco boxed jewelry continues to sell as a great gift item because of the presentation and messages on the boxes.”
— Indiana retailer



Vintage inspired mugs featuring inspirational sayings are some of the latest giftable items on offer from **Carson**, the number two top-selling supplier on this month's message and inspirational gifts chart. (www.carsongifts.com)

GIVE-BACK Last ran in September 2022

#1 SCOUT CURATED WEARS: wrap bracelets, bracelets

#2 INIS: perfume, cologne, lotion

#3 THE NAKED BEE: lip balm, lotion

#4 PURA VIDA: bracelets

#5 CHALA: crossbodies, various

#6 FAHLO: animal-tracking bracelets*

#7 VERA BRADLEY: various

#8 BLUE Q: socks, gum, various

#9 DM: various

#10 NATURAL LIFE: Boho Bandeaux, various*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Simply Southern, Bridgewater

***OF NOTE!**

FAHLO (www.myfahlo.com) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **NATURAL LIFE** (www.naturallifewholesale.com) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

MESSAGE JEWELRY Last ran in May 2023

#1 DEMDACO: My Journey, prayer, various

#2 SCOUT CURATED WEARS: bracelets, various

#3 KATIE LOXTON: bracelets, necklaces

#4 ROMAN: earrings, bracelets, necklaces

#5 CENTER COURT: various

#6 MANTRABAND: bracelets

#7 MULBERRY STUDIOS: Lumiela

#8 PURA VIDA: bracelets

#9 BRIGHTON: various

#10 RONALDO: bracelets

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Spartina, Earth Angel

***OF NOTE!**

The same vendors are listed in the top 10 this month as when the chart last ran in May 2023.

MESSAGE & INSPIRATIONAL Last ran in May 2023

#1 DEMDACO: Willow Tree, jewelry, various

#2 CARSON: windchimes, lanterns, various

#3 ROMAN: jewelry, frames, various

#4 SCOUT CURATED WEARS: wrap bracelets, bracelets

#5 PRIMITIVES BY KATHY: signs, various

#6 GANZ: memorial ornaments, signs, tokens

#7 SINCERE SURROUNDINGS: signs

#8 NATURAL LIFE: various*

#9 BLUE MOUNTAIN ARTS: greeting cards

#10 MANTRABAND: bracelets

HONORABLE MENTIONS: P. Graham Dunn, Mud Pie

***OF NOTE!**

NATURAL LIFE (www.naturallifewholesale.com) did not rank when this chart last ran.

EARRINGS Last ran in March 2023

#1 SILVER FOREST: various

#2 RAIN: various

#3 BRIGHTON: hoops, various

#4 PERIWINKLE BY BARLOW: various

#5 CENTER COURT: Layers, hoops, various

#6 ENEWTON: hoops, various

#7 SCOUT CURATED WEARS: stone, various*

#8 JUDSON & COMPANY: various

#9 HOWARD'S: various*

#10 GOLDEN STELLA: various

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Baked Beads, Ink & Alloy, Kendra Scott

***OF NOTE!**

SCOUT CURATED WEARS (www.scoutcuratedwears.com) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **HOWARD'S** (wholesale.howardsinc.com) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

SUMMER/SEASONAL Last ran in July 2023

#1 EVERGREEN: flags, mats, solar, various

#2 NORA FLEMING: melamine, platters, minis

#3 WOODSTOCK: windchimes*

#4 BOGG: bags

#5 STUDIO M: planters, various*

#6 SIMPLY SOUTHERN: t-shirts, towels, totes

#7 BRUMATE: insulated drinkware

#8 VERA BRADLEY: beach bags, towels, various

#9 MY WORD!: porch boards, various

#10 GERSON: garden stakes, various*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Regal, Mud Pie, Scout by Bungalow

***OF NOTE!**

GERSON (www.gersoncompany.com) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **WOODSTOCK** (www.woodstockchimes.com) and **STUDIO M** (wholesale.studio-m.com) moved from honorable mentions onto the chart.

TEA TOWELS Last ran in March 2023

#1 KAY DEE DESIGNS: various

#2 PRIMITIVES BY KATHY: humorous, various

#3 MUD PIE: seasonal, various

#4 WILD HARE: humorous, various

#5 C&F HOME: various

#6 MARIASCH STUDIOS: custom, various

#7 ELLEMBEE: various

#8 MICHEL DESIGNS WORKS: various*

#9 MARY LAKE-THOMPSON: various

#10 DANICA: Now Designs, various

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Wildwood Landing, Greenbox Art

***OF NOTE!**

MICHEL DESIGNS WORKS (www.stonewallkitchen.com) did not rank when this chart last ran.

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ABOUT

Giftbeat is owned and operated by Instore Magazine Inc. The newsletter was founded in 1992 and has been dedicated to reporting unbiased, factual market trends and business advice from the best and brightest independent store owners for 30 years. Giftbeat tracks the top 10 vendors in 50+ product categories, garnering this vital information from a stable of 300 reporting stores across the country. In addition, Giftbeat makes no warranty or guarantee, express or implied, regarding potential sales of any products referred to in the publication.

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Brief Respite

This spring, store owners experienced a string of months with year-over-year sales declines. Then came June, bringing a ray of sunshine in the form of sales increases for 52 percent. Retailers were buoyed by the surge only to be disappointed again in July as sales dropped, once again, year-over-year.

Many shop owners told *Giftbeat* that excessively hot temperatures kept shoppers at home, inside climate-

controlled environments, and that in part led to 57 percent of retailers recording year-over-year sales declines for the month.

Come August, the situation was somewhat improved with 42 percent of stores racking up moderate sales, 28 percent recording slow sales and 30 percent noting strong sales.

Summer is typically a slower sales period for many store owners, so we're eager to see what September's sales season will bring. Stay tuned



ERICA KIRKLAND
PUBLISHER & EDITOR

to *Giftbeat* to find out! Until next time, happy selling. 📧

chartMOVERS

A deep dive into the companies trending up and down in this issue's charts

EARRINGS

SILVER FOREST (www.silverforest.com) remains the top-selling earring supplier. As a Utah retailer reports, "I've had an earring rack right by the front door and it's sold great for over 10 years." Other items of note include **ENEWTON** (www.ewentondesign.com) climbing three spots from number eight to number five with store owners indicating strong sales of the company's hoops. **GOLDEN STELLA** (www.goldenstella.com) dropped from number four to number 10 while **SCOUT CURATED WEARS** (www.scoutcuratedwears.com) was new. Long noted as a top-selling vendor of bracelets, retailers are now stocking and selling through with earrings from this brand.

GIVE-BACK

SCOUT CURATED WEARS (www.scoutcuratedwears.com) usurped **THE NAKED BEE** (www.nakedbee.com) to become the top-selling give-back line in the market. Last year they placed fourth on the list. **FAHLO** (www.myfahlo.com) is a newcomer to the list with their animal-tracking bracelet. Each bracelet tracks one animal and the company donates money to charity with each bracelet sold. The company declined to be featured in *Giftbeat*, indicating their focus was on selling directly to consumers rather than the wholesale market. Regardless, if you can get this line in your store, it appears to be worth the hassle. "This is a top re-order line," says a retailer from California while a New Hampshire retailer reports, "I can't keep them in stock."

MESSAGE & INSPIRATIONAL

DEMDACO (www.demdaco.com) maintained its top spot as the best-performing supplier in this category based on sales of jewelry and Willow Tree figurines. **CARSON** (www.carsongifts.com) climbed five spots from number seven to number two with stores noting brisk sales of windchimes and lanterns. **NATURAL LIFE** (www.naturallifewholesale.com) was a newcomer to the chart with store owners listing trinket dishes, car accessories and t-shirts as top sellers in this category.

MESSAGE JEWELRY

DEMDACO (www.demdaco.com) remains the top-selling supplier in this category, a position the company has held for a full year as sales of its relatively new prayer bracelet collection remain strong. The number two and three spots belonging to **SCOUT CURATED WEARS** (www.scoutcuratedwears.com) and **KATIE LOXTON** (www.katieloxton.com) also remained unchanged. The carded bracelets and necklaces with messages from Scout were mentioned by numerous stores as a top-selling item while bracelets from Katie Loxton are that company's most popular message jewelry item.

SALESBEAT

July Sales Drop After June Highs

By Erica Kirkland

Year-over-year retail sales in July were down for 57 percent of independent gift retailers. Numerous store owners across the country noted miserable weather led to decreased traffic whether it was extremely hot temperatures or rainy environments. “July started out really strong, but the heat impacted our sales,” writes a Maryland store owner while a retailer from South Carolina says, “The heat was terrible this July – that always keeps the locals in their houses.”

“We were down 24 percent,” says a Rhode Island retailer. “I’ve never seen such year-to-year decreases. Inflation, national debt and hurricanes are all big negatives affecting consumer spending.”

“Customers are watching their spending,” a California retailer concurs. “Inflation is still an issue, and concern about the economy keeps people from spending.”

“People are being more careful, and discounts are more important,” says a Massachusetts retailer. “It’s a different climate than the past few years.”

Among those that reported gains were retailers who recorded strong tourist numbers including an Ohio retailer who says, “We are a destination. People like to travel to our area and we’re a popular stop.” Another retailer from the state reports, “July is tourist season and our biggest month of the year. We were so busy, especially the first two weeks of the month.”

JULY 2023 SALES (vs. July 2022)

↑ 10%+	12%
↑ 5-9%	11%
↑ 1-4%	10%
↔	10%
↓ 1-4%	13%
↓ 5-9%	20%
↓ 10%+	24%

MODERATE SALES

Tallies at the Till are Measured

Currently the greatest percentage of independent gift retailers (42 percent) are experiencing moderate sales. The remaining balance is split almost evenly with 28 percent reporting slow sales and 30 percent noting strong sales.

An Ohio retailer who noted her store is experiencing slow sales reports, “We’ve had two slow months in a row. When talking with regular customers it seems everyone is really busy.”

“Summer is a slower time for

us,” says a store owner from Massachusetts, “but we have stayed steady this summer which is great.”

A retailer in New York with slow sales shares that he’s ordering a lot less and cutting some lines out. “One calendar company changed from returnable calendars to non-returnable,” he shares. “Instead of arguing, we dropped the line after 40 years.”

“Summer is never our best time,” writes a Virginia retailer. “It’s been hot and rainy and the economy seems to be slowing.”

MARKETING MOJO

Ideas to Boost Your Bottom Line

We asked our panel of reporting stores to share what marketing ideas and promotions are new, novel and most importantly, working!

MONTHLY DISCOUNTS:

“We usually email a discount out to rewards’ customers once a month,” says a California retailer. “That always brings customers in.”

GRAB BAGS: “We are getting rid of old merch in the store and when people purchase \$25 they qualify to purchase a grab bag with \$40 worth of stuff,” shares an Indiana store owner.

ARTIST ENCOUNTERS:

An Oregon retailer has started a monthly event on the first Friday of every month called First Friday when the store features a local artist. The store owner reports the events are helping her sales. “We get couples in who have never been in before and they have money to spend.”

SWEETEN THE DEAL: A store owner in Utah distributes a coupon which out-of-state guests can redeem for a free sample of honey. “Tourists love this and locals love bringing them in to get their free honey and show them the store.”

LET’S GO PARTY: Plenty of retailers have thrown or are planning a Barbie-themed party. A store owner in Texas shares that her event included 25 percent off all pink things, photos in a Barbie box, Barbie cake and pink drinks, and that it was the “best promo ever.”

GOING POSTAL:

“We sent out 1100 post cards offering 20 percent off most items with no limit as to how many items they could purchase,” shares a New York retailer.

STYLE SWAP: “We did a one-week style swap,” explains a Michigan retailer. Customers could bring in any older apparel purchase from her store – up to five pieces – and in return received a \$10 credit per piece. The used apparel was donated to charity.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY:

“I didn’t want to lose future Christmas sales so we were very summer orientated,” says an Ohio retailer about her Christmas in July sales where there were only discounts on summer items. “Next year I will plan it for longer and maybe include more items.”

EXPERT Q&A

Friendly Fraud and Chargebacks Hit Hard

By Natalie Hammer Noblitt

HOW TO DEAL WITH CYBER SHOPLIFTING

Modern retailing requires technical savvy, yet even tech-aware store owners often aren't ready or don't put the right policies in place to properly deal with "friendly fraud" and "cyber shoplifting," says Monica Eaton, founder and CEO of Chargebacks911. Both everyday consumers and professional criminals can threaten independent retailers when these losses go unchecked. She provides context for what's happening in the retail industry along with tips for handling financial hits caused by chargebacks.



BACKGROUND ON CHARGEBACKS

Eaton explains the good intention of The Fair Credit Billing Act of 1974 is where problematic charges for retailers started. This act was designed to protect credit card users from fraud, unfair billing practices and suspicious charges. (Losses for retailers from credit card fraud in the United States are now expected to reach \$165.1 billion by 2032, she says.)

When consumers or criminals abuse the chargeback process it's known as cyber shoplifting. This form of theft comes when someone falsely claims a product they purchased was either never delivered or arrived damaged. Another avenue for this fraud is when a person asserts the transaction was unauthorized yet he or she actually did authorize the purchase.

"As online shopping continues to grow, credit card fraud follows suit," Eaton says. While the process does protect consumers from fraud and identity theft, billing errors

by merchants, inaccurate product descriptions and defective items, retailers find it concerning to see that fraudulent use of the process rose by 41 percent during the last two years.

Q. How have chargebacks changed in recent years?

A. The challenge continues to grow for most retailers as a result of shoppers having multiple buying options, including mobile apps, curbside pickup, third-party providers, etc. Other factors include advancing technology, changes in chargeback rules and processes, and shifts in consumer behavior. More than ever, it's important for retailers to have access to their

data, investigate each case and apply lessons to prevent repeat occurrences.

Q. What can retailers do to curb chargeback abuse?

A. Utilizing chargeback management software can help streamline this process and is highly recommended for those who receive regular chargebacks. Retailers who see an increasing number of disputes can experience near immediate relief through enrolling in chargeback prevention tools, such as Verifi and Ethoca. These tools work best when coupled with a solid chargeback management strategy. Understanding the sources of your chargebacks needs to be an

important priority. It is especially important for those operating in industries more prone to disputes.

Q. Who is committing these types of crimes?

A. Professional cyber shoplifters are rare. Most perpetrators were, at one time, legitimate customers. Banks make the chargeback process so straightforward that consumers are inclined to contact their banks directly to file a dispute. Fifty eight percent of consumers do not contact merchants before filing chargebacks with their banks and 40 percent of consumers who commit cyber shoplifting are likely to do it again within 60 days.

Not so friendly fraud can also

happen when consumers realize they can profit from the transaction. Some cyber shoplifters try to double dip by contacting the merchant for a refund and filing a chargeback with their bank at the same time. The person then receives two refunds for one purchase.

I don't want to give the impression that third-party criminal fraud isn't a problem. Criminal activity costs merchants and financial institutions billions of dollars every year.

However, the financial impact of friendly fraud has outweighed that of cybercrime for years now. In our recent Chargeback Field Report, most respondents said fewer than 10 percent of their chargebacks came from criminal fraud. That's in line with data from Visa, which found 75 percent of chargebacks issued last year were cases of first-party misuse.

Education can help consumers understand why chargebacks should only be used for legitimate reasons, learning not to exploit the chargeback law. Some shoppers may not realize they should contact retailers first to work out any issues before filing disputes with their banks.

If a store's policies won't easily allow consumers to report issues, examine that as the root of a chargeback problem among regular shoppers.

Q. What policies or consumer education should retailers set in place?

A. Customer education is going to be a cornerstone of any long-term solution for chargebacks. However, that's going to require collaboration between merchants, financial institutions and card networks. In the meantime, merchants should start by examining chargeback data to determine the sources of their disputes. They can then deploy solutions like additional fraud screening, changes to customer service policies and optimizing fulfillment practices, just to give a few examples.

"Fraudulent use of the chargeback process has rose by 41 percent during the last two years."

It's also a good idea to engage in dispute representation to push back against clear misuse of the chargeback process. This means collecting the proper evidence to show you are fulfilling your promise to the consumer. It's also important to establish a blacklist and block purchases from known fraudsters.

Q. What are the real costs of chargebacks beyond lost merchandise?

A. Each fraudulent transaction a merchant fails to detect means lost revenue. However, the financial impact of a fraudulent transaction is much broader than just the cost of the initial sale. The merchant loses merchandise shipped, the cost of shipping, interchange and other fulfillment costs, along with the sting of a chargeback fee for every incident. If fraud becomes a persistent problem, a merchant may be forced into a fraud management program, which means incurring other costly fees. All totaled, retail and e-commerce merchants in the U.S. will lose \$3.75 for every \$1 of fraud, according to data from LexisNexis Risk Solutions.

Q. Can retailers manage fraud and still preserve customer relationships?

A. There are certainly cases in which merchants can preserve their relationships with customers.

Tools like Consumer Clarity and Order Insight let merchants provide additional information about transactions to customers, helping buyers identify charges and potentially avoid a dispute.

Even once a dispute progresses to the chargeback stage, different opportunities exist to help rehabilitate and educate customers.

This provides valuable feedback that not only reverses the chargeback error, but also helps communicate to customers that calling the bank should not be their first recourse in the future.

As an overarching rule, being proactive, empathetic and consistent are winning strategies for mitigating chargebacks and loss. It goes without saying that if there's an opportunity to prevent a chargeback this is always the best course of action to pursue!

Q. When should a retailer seek professional help for cyber security?

A. The answer will vary from one business to another. Merchants need to carefully compare how much it will cost to stop fraud on their own against how many more threats they may be able to detect with help from a third party. They need to determine what will produce the greatest net benefit for their business.

If a retailer's current chargeback management strategy is not producing consistent results, logic suggests it might be time to change.

The cost of chargebacks does not always need to mean the loss of a customer and unavoidable write-offs. Chargeback information should provide valuable business insight, opportunities to reform bad or mistaken behavior by the consumer and help fine-tune fraud rules to reduce future liabilities. ☞

PRODUCT NICHES

Add These Categories to the Mix

If you're thinking about adding a new product category to your store, check out this list of niche product groupings that *Giftbeat's* reporting stores have recently adopted with success.

"Gourmet has been doing really well," shares a store owner from Nevada while a retailer from Wisconsin says, "Items with a cause are resonating with customers. It makes them feel good to support a cause."

"Hats haven't sold well for me in the past, but now sun hats, cowboy hats, all sorts of hats are selling," says an Oregon store owner.

In Oklahoma a retailer writes, "Due to the soft economy ladies are reaching for personal items to make them feel happy – treat yourself items – unlike the pandemic when everyone was reaching for items for their homes."

A store owner in Florida concurs, reporting "We're seeing a resurgence in self-care and smaller home decor pieces. People are trying to treat themselves on a budget or revamp a room with smaller accessories without breaking the bank."

"People seem to be buying for themselves again," notes another retailer from Wisconsin. "When boxing up merchandise, we ask if it's a gift and more and more people are saying, 'It's a gift for me.'" ☞

- APPAREL
- BARBIE-THEMED ITEMS
- COASTERS
- FREEZE DRIED CANDY
- GIVE-BACK
- GOURMET FOOD
- HATS
- PERFUME
- SELF-CARE
- TABLETOP CLOCKS

Analog Rules at this Massachusetts Stationery Store

By Jessica Harlan



Kristina Burkey started her journey as an entrepreneur by creating her own product line, pencil sets that were foil-stamped with funny quips and quotes, such as references from popular TV shows and movies.

When her husband gave her an iPad she started dabbling in digital art, eventually turning her sketches into stickers, notepads and washi tape. Initially she sold her products

online, eventually opening a brick-and-mortar location in downtown Natick, Mass., where she carries additional lines of paper goods. Last year, she relocated half a block away to a larger location that could accommodate more goods and had better foot traffic.

What makes your store special?

I work hard to source artists and

to have something that's a little different. I try to find people who are local to me, I go to craft markets and look for artists who fall in line with my aesthetic and things that I think are funny. Everything I buy is something that I like and would buy myself.

How would you describe the atmosphere of your store?

Lately, my customers have been

calling my store Barbieland. My hair is pink, I love pink, the first color I pick out for anything is pink and we have a big "Welcome to Calliope" sign in pink.

In my store, everything is brightly colored and fun, and there's a lot of nostalgia for things I remember from growing up. We recently moved into a historic building that's really cool with creaky hardwood floors and very



high painted-tin ceilings. For fixtures, I use a lot of stuff from Ikea because it's simple and white, but I'll also get brightly colored accents, like yellow shelving and colorful locker fixtures.

To what do you attribute your success?

I think I've been successful just by being myself. I don't hold anything back when I buy things or when I talk to people. I'm always forthcoming with my intentions — if I do something, I always tell people why. People feel like they can relate to me because I'm so transparent. Part of this is because

I'll share bits of my life on my Instagram feed; I'll talk about my cats or what I watch on TV. That relatability is helpful.

How do you promote your store?

Instagram is pretty much it. That's where I've been since the beginning. One of my staff members volunteered to start a TikTok for me as well.

What has been your most successful recent event?

Last year I started Stationery Store Day. I thought, record stores and bookstores have a day, so we should



have one too! It's the first Saturday in August, when things are a little slow, and it's a fun way to close out the summer and get excited for the holidays. I have a website that lists every stationery store I know about. There's exclusive merchandising that comes out each year by a different artist. In my store, I got a balloon installation, had goodie bags and teamed up with a bunch of paper stores in Massachusetts to do a stationery-store crawl. We called it the Paper Trail.

Do you have a favorite new product line?

I just started making sticker books. I came out with a few of those on Stationery Store Day.

What is your most successful retail strategy?

Always be yourself. Don't try to be anything you're not because people will sniff it out. Also, that's exhausting. If you only want to sell stationery, then sell stationery. I've tried to add different product categories, but they never seem to work.

Looking back, what's the biggest lesson you've learned?

Everyone says you only fail if you don't learn something. That's been a really important lesson. I opened a second location and closed it

in less than a year. But I don't consider it a failure because now I know that I don't want multiple locations. I wouldn't have known that if I hadn't tried.



PROFILE

STORE: Calliope Paperie

LOCATION: Natick, Mass.

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 700

EMPLOYEES: Two full-time, five part-time

WEBSITE: www.calliopepaperie.com

INSTAGRAM @calliopepaperie

TOP LINES: Smudge Ink, Hello Lucky, Slightly Stationery, Bench Pressed, Shorthand Press, Pipsticks, Stickii

Hot Finds & New Releases



Crystal-Infused Beauty Rituals

New products that speak to a desire for self-care rituals have proliferated onto the market. Speaking to this trend, **Geocentral** has added new guided facial sets to its Pure Earth Collection, a capsule assortment featuring products inspired by ancient wellness tools reimagined for current self-nourishment practices. The Pure Crystalline Facial Grid set pictured here includes 14 mini crystals, an illustrated guidebook and a cloth with a printed facial grid for practice.

According to the company, an increased interest in holistic self-care practices across multiple demographics is an important cultural shift to note, and trend forecasting shows that wellness, relaxation and rejuvenation alongside environmentally impactful practices will remain key topics of interest throughout the foreseeable future. (www.geocentral.com)

Ceramic Topper Collection

Glory Haus has added an assortment of ceramic toppers which insert into various bowls, platters and charcuterie boards to its existing Celebration collection. The initial assortment includes three patterned bowls, three white platters and two wooden charcuterie boards alongside 26 ceramic toppers which include both seasonal and everyday styles. Each ceramic topper is hand-painted by skilled artisans and retails for \$15.75. The toppers coordinate with a variety of items in the Celebrate collection including tumblers, pillows, tea towels, mugs, platters, signs and party decor. (www.gloryhaus.com)



Freezable Cooling Jewelry

If you have customers who struggle to keep cool, check out freezable cooling jewelry from **Hot Girls Pearls**. We already know that when we're hot or overheated, the most important pulse points to cool down are our wrists and the back of our necks. The patented jewelry in this collection is designed to hit those pulse points. The pieces are lightweight, fashionable and easy to wear with no clasps or fasteners to fiddle with. Beyond hot flashes, the jewelry is also great to wear while sightseeing or golfing. They even have a bridal collection. Necklaces wholesale from \$37.50 to \$47.50 while bracelets are \$27 to \$32.50. (www.hotgirlspearls.com)



Beach Blessings

Periwinkle by Barlow hit it out of the park this past show season with the launch of their Beach Blessings collection. The beach-inspired necklaces boast delicate beach icons and come packaged with inspirational and heartfelt sentiments on cards that include room to add a personal message. The hypoallergenic necklaces are 18 inches long with a two-inch extender, which makes them perfect for layering. Available in 16 styles in both silver and gold, the opening assortment includes two of each style for a total of 64 units. \$28 retail. (www.periwinklebybarlow.com)

Custom Candles

The custom candle market is competitive with plenty of options up for grabs. It's hard to stand out among a sea of choices but the program from **Sincere Surroundings** managed to catch our editors' eyes. Launched in January, response from retailers and consumers alike has been extremely positive according to company founder and owner Michelle Leuthold who says their biggest problem is keeping up with demand. "Our customers love receiving a quality candle, beautiful art and meaningful inspiration in one affordable piece," says Leuthold of the collection which includes 16 scents. Each candle comes in a glass jar with a label that can be personalized with over 250 designs to choose from. The Sincere Surroundings team can also create a custom label for your store. The candles are two-wick, soy based and made in America. \$9.90 wholesale each. (www.sinceresurroundings.com)



Funny & Functional Coasters

Judging by the number of new introductions on the market, humorous coaster lines are a hot commodity at the moment. During the Atlanta market in July, *Giftbeat* editors spotted at least a half a dozen lines if not more. The funny and functional coasters from **Topsy Coasters and Gifts** stood out for their funny sayings and the number of options they offer – over 350 in the natural limestone collection alone, not to mention the paper collection and car coasters. The company got its start in 2008 wholesaling to local retailers. Now it produces products for stores across the country in its 4000 square foot facility in Largo, Fla. (www.tipsycoasters.com)

Dual-Purpose Stationery

Snifty came to market this past summer with armfuls of innovative new product launches. Playing mostly in the stationery space, the company got its beginning by focusing on scented products. Emphasizing fun and function, Snifty's first product, the Snifty Scented Pen, was introduced to the retail market in 2009. Since then, the company has continued to grow and has branched out to include non-scented items. Offering high quality products for an affordable price is one of the company's key missions alongside introducing nifty new products to market. One of their coolest new launches are watercolor pencil crayons with built-in brushes. The blendable watercolor pencil allows the user to draw, sketch and color with one end and paint with the other, transforming drawings into paintings in seconds. \$8 cost. (www.sniftypen.com)



Plant Care

Houseplants have seen a resurgence of late among lovers of bringing the outdoors inside our living spaces. But did you know that plants weren't meant to live in pots? That's right, to help your customers get the most out of their houseplants you should encourage them to adopt a plant care routine and there are now a number of lines on the market which are focused on plant care including **We The Wild**. The company's products are made in the United States from organic, all natural materials and are designed to take the guess work out of growing longer lasting plants. The foolproof formulas include beneficial bacteria, enzymes, fungi and nutrients that help houseplants thrive like they would in nature. A variety of stand-alone products retailing for \$14.99 each and gift sets are available. (www.wethewild.com)

Supplier Spotlight

Sophie Allport

Products from British designer Sophie Allport made a state-side splash this summer with a full collection launch at the Atlanta show. Inspired by a love of nature and the countryside, the celebrated British brand was founded in 2007 and has grown to include kitchen and dining essentials, bedding, home decor and seasonal accents. American store owners were fawning over the patterns and the wide range of gifts and practical products, noting the beauty of this line lies in its simplicity. Also, many of the patterns and stories coordinate seamlessly with each other. (www.sophieallport.com)



SUMMER SHOW TRAVEL

Just Over Half Travelled to Markets this Season

By Erica Kirkland



For many store owners, summer is their busiest time of year, a period when they simply can't afford to be away from their store. For others the expense of travelling is what keeps them home. This summer, the stats show that 53 percent of retailers travelled to trade shows, up from 49 percent last year.

"You can get a lot done quickly if you're organized and have good store inventories," says a Utah retailer. "I often go to the shows with reorders in hand so that I can get the show specials, which are getting better." This summer she travelled to the gift and home market in Las Vegas. "All of the

showrooms were moved around," she says which she found to be frustrating. "The temps were great though and I spent one full day in that building."

A Montana retailer who doesn't attend summer markets because it's her "peak season" reports she did "participate heavily in the Faire summer market, though."

"I never attend trade shows in the summer because that's our biggest time of the year," says a retailer from Michigan with multiple locations. "I also didn't attend any shows this winter and I think that's causing some of the slow down in our sales. I need to attend shows to keep the

momentum of good ideas going and to keep bringing in new, fresh goods."

"Dallas was disappointing," shares an Oregon retailer. "It was the only show that fit my schedule this summer. It was not worth the trip."

A Tennessee retailer who travelled to Atlanta was "somewhat" disappointed with the show, writing, "It wasn't as busy, there did not seem to be as many temporaries and we didn't see anything new that just wowed us. We plan to go back to Atlanta in January, but I think we will go to Vegas next year for the summer show."



ARTICLES OF NOTE:

- July Sales Drop
- New Product Niches
- Marketing Mojo
- Chargebacks Hitting Hard

CATEGORIES TRACKED

Children's Gifts & Toys
Earrings
Give-back
Message &
Inspirational
Message Jewelry
Outdoor Entertaining
Summer/Seasonal
Tea Towels
T-shirts

Top-selling vendors:

Email us for your top-selling vendor badge if you haven't received one already.

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