

# giftBEAT™

Tracking the Pulse of the Gift Industry

## marketBEAT

The Industry's Top-Selling Lines



Coming in at number nine on the fashion accessories chart, retailers noted that crossbodies from **Baggallini** are selling well. Shown here are styles that will be launching for the fall. ([www.baggallini.com](http://www.baggallini.com))

### HOME FRAGRANCE

Last ran in March 2023

- #1 **INIS:** candles, diffusers, various
- #2 **MICHEL DESIGN WORKS:** foaming soap, hand soap
- #3 **TYLER CANDLE:** Diva, Glamorous Wash
- #4 **BRIDGEWATER:** Sweet Grace, various\*
- #5 **CAPRI BLUE:** Volcano, various
- #6 **SWAN CREEK:** candles, Drizzle melts, various
- #7 **AROMATIQUE:** potpourri
- #8 **GREENLEAF:** sachets, various
- #9 **WOODWICK:** candles, various
- #10 **VOLUSPA:** candles, reed diffusers, various\*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Votivo, Yankee

#### \*OF NOTE!

**VOLUSPA** ([www.voluspa.com](http://www.voluspa.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran while **BRIDGEWATER** ([www.bridgewatercandles.com](http://www.bridgewatercandles.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

"Brighton continues to sell very well for us. Their new Timeless Link and Roped Heart Bandit bracelets did extremely well. We reordered both styles which have a \$48 and \$52 price point respectively."

— Ohio retailer

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Potpourri from home fragrance chart topper **Aromatique** was a popular seller for stores in May. For the fall and fourth quarter the company is offering a variety of seasonal scents including Smoked Vanilla and Santal shown here. ([www.aromatique.com](http://www.aromatique.com))

### FASHION ACCESSORIES

Last ran in February 2023

- #1 **VERA BRADLEY:** crossbodies, various
- #2 **JEN & CO.:** crossbodies, various
- #3 **MYRA BAGS:** handbags, shoulder bags, various
- #4 **CHALA:** crossbodies, various\*
- #5 **HOBO:** bags, wristlets, various
- #6 **BRIGHTON:** jewelry, handbags, sunglasses\*
- #7 **JOY SUSAN:** hobos, slings, crossbodies, various
- #8 **DM:** Fitkicks, Kedzie, various
- #9 **BAGGALLINI:** crossbodies, various\*
- #10 **WORLD'S SOFTEST SOCKS:** socks

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Corky's Footwear, Simply Southern

#### \*OF NOTE!

**BAGGALLINI** ([www.baggallini.com](http://www.baggallini.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **BRIGHTON** ([www.brighton.com](http://www.brighton.com)) and **CHALA** ([www.chalagroup.com](http://www.chalagroup.com)) moved from honorable mentions onto the chart.

### PERSONAL ACCESSORIES

Last ran in November 2022

- #1 **DM:** readers, nail files, pillowcases, various
- #2 **PEEPERS:** readers
- #3 **JEN & CO.:** wallets, crossbodies
- #4 **VERA BRADLEY:** wallets, various
- #5 **SNOOZIES:** slipper socks
- #6 **CHALA:** crossbodies, wallets, various
- #7 **95 AND SUNNY:** nail files\*
- #8 **HOBO:** wallets, handbags
- #9 **BRIGHTON:** sunglasses
- #10 **INTELEX:** eye masks, neck wraps, slippers\*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Barefoot Dreams, Fig Design

#### \*OF NOTE!

**INTELEX** ([www.intellexusa.com](http://www.intellexusa.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **95 AND SUNNY** ([www.95andsunny.com](http://www.95andsunny.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.



**Peepers** appears on the personal accessories chart frequently based on consistent sales of its popular readers and sunglasses. For fall the company is introducing a number of new and on-trend styles. ([www.peepers.com](http://www.peepers.com))

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



**Roman** made its way onto the baby chart this month with stores noting strong sales of its various baby products including wall crosses like the one pictured here. ([www.roman.com](http://www.roman.com))

### BABY GIFTS Last ran in December 2022

- #1 **JELLYCAT:** plush, books
- #2 **MUD PIE:** apparel, blankets, various
- #3 **INTELEX:** Warmies
- #4 **DEMDACO:** plush, soft books, blankets
- #5 **MARY MEYER:** Taggies, Wubbanubs
- #6 **GANZ:** plush, various\*
- #7 **COPPER PEARL:** bibs, gowns, various
- #8 **DOUGLAS:** Schlumpies, soft books, various
- #9 **ROMAN:** banks, baptism gifts, crosses, various\*
- #10 **ANGEL DEAR:** muslin outfits\*

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Bella Tunno, Bearington

#### \*OF NOTE!

**GANZ** ([www.ganz.com](http://www.ganz.com)) and **ROMAN** ([www.roman.com](http://www.roman.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **ANGEL DEAR** ([www.angeldear.com](http://www.angeldear.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

### MOTHER'S DAY Last ran in July 2022

- #1 **DEMDACO:** Willow Tree, various
- #2 **BRIGHTON:** necklaces, earrings
- #3 **ENEWTON:** Hope Unwritten, various
- #4 **SILVER FOREST:** earrings
- #5 **VERA BRADLEY:** various
- #6 **MICHEL DESIGN WORKS:** foaming soap, lotion
- #7 **NORA FLEMING:** bases, minis
- #8 **KATIE LOXTON:** bracelets, anklets, various\*
- #9 **SIMPLY SOUTHERN:** t-shirts, totes\*
- #10 **INIS:** cologne, perfume, lotion

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Lola & Company, Pandora, Swarovski

#### \*OF NOTE!

**SIMPLY SOUTHERN** ([www.simplysouthern.com](http://www.simplysouthern.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **KATIE LOXTON** ([www.katieloxton.com](http://www.katieloxton.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

### GARDEN DECOR Last ran in July 2022

- #1 **EVERGREEN:** flags, mats, spinners, various
- #2 **STUDIO M:** flags, mats, mailbox wraps
- #3 **CARSON:** windchimes, flags, various
- #4 **REGAL ART & GIFT:** solar items, garden stakes
- #5 **WOODSTOCK CHIMES:** windchimes
- #6 **GANZ:** windchimes, memorial stones, various
- #7 **GERSON:** garden stakes, gnomes, solar items
- #8 **WIND RIVER CHIMES:** windchimes
- #9 **CUSTOM DECOR:** flags, yard stakes, various
- #10 **OPPORTUNITIES:** windchimes, various\*

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Mr. Bird, Spinfinity, Spooontiques, Transpac

#### \*OF NOTE!

Since this chart last ran **OPPORTUNITIES** ([www.opportunitiesia.com](http://www.opportunitiesia.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

### SPA-RELATED Last ran in February 2023

- #1 **DM:** eye masks, Lemon and Lavender
- #2 **THE NAKED BEE:** lip balms, lotions, various
- #3 **INIS:** lotion, perfume, various
- #4 **INTELEX:** eye masks, neck wraps, slippers, Warmies
- #5 **MICHEL DESIGN WORKS:** foaming soaps, lotions
- #6 **SPONGELLE:** soap sponges
- #7 **MUSEE:** bath bombs\*
- #8 **BAREFOOT DREAMS:** robes, various
- #9 **HYDRA AROMATHERAPY:** Shower Bursts
- #10 **SNOOZIES:** slipper socks

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Sonoma Lavender, Camille Beckman, Candle Warmers

#### \*OF NOTE!

Since this chart last ran **MUSEE** ([www.museebath.com](http://www.museebath.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

### STATIONERY ACCESSORIES Last ran in November 2022

- #1 **PETER PAUPER PRESS:** boxed notes, journals
- #2 **PRIMITIVES BY KATHY:** notepads, journals
- #3 **LEGACY:** notebooks, coasters
- #4 **PUNCH STUDIO:** cards\*
- #5 **COMPENDIUM:** books, notecards
- #6 **LEANIN' TREE:** journals, notecards
- #7 **RIFLE PAPER CO.:** cards, journals\*
- #8 **PAPYRUS:** cards, various\*
- #9 **CASPARI:** cards, napkins
- #10 **LANG:** calendars, various

**HONORABLE MENTION:** Quilling Cards

#### \*OF NOTE!

**PUNCH STUDIO** ([www.punchstudio.com](http://www.punchstudio.com)) and **PAPYRUS** ([www.americangreetings.com](http://www.americangreetings.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **RIFLE PAPER CO.** ([www.riflepaperco.com](http://www.riflepaperco.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

### SUMMER/SEASONAL Last ran in September 2022

- #1 **EVERGREEN:** flags, mats, various
- #2 **NORA FLEMING:** minis, bases
- #3 **MUD PIE:** tabletop, decor
- #4 **BRUMATE:** insulated drinkware
- #5 **BOGG:** bags\*
- #6 **SIMPLY SOUTHERN:** totes, various
- #7 **VERA BRADLEY:** totes, towels, various\*
- #8 **CARSON:** windchimes, tumblers
- #9 **REGAL:** balloon lanterns, various\*
- #10 **MY WORD!:** porch boards\*

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Swig, Woodstock, Studio M

#### \*OF NOTE!

**BOGG** ([www.boggbag.com](http://www.boggbag.com)), **REGAL** ([www.regalgift.com](http://www.regalgift.com)), **VERA BRADLEY** ([www.verabradley.com](http://www.verabradley.com)) and **MY WORD!** ([www.mywordsigns.com](http://www.mywordsigns.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran.

"Wubbanubs from Mary Meyer are a constant restock!"

— Wyoming retailer



Books and notecards from **Compendium** are consistent top sellers in the stationery accessories category. Shown here are new styles for the Christmas season. ([www.live-inspired.com](http://www.live-inspired.com))

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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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# Sales Decline Trend Continues

Close to half of all independent gift retailers in the United States experienced year-over-year sales declines in May, marking the third straight month of depressed sales.

To assist readers struggling to draw traffic into their shops we asked reporting stores to share the activities and events they've held recently which have been popular. Check out *Spring Promotions* on page 5 for a wide variety of ideas.

In this issue we also help you deal with the age-old problem of disgruntled customers. Nobody likes to

see a customer walk away with a bad taste in their mouth, so we asked retail business writer Claire Sykes to give us the lowdown on how to deescalate tense situations with the goal of leaving the customer satisfied. Check out *Dealing with Dissatisfied Customers* in our *RetailBeat* section to learn how to handle these stressful situations.

If it's products you're after you'll discover not only nine charts of top-selling products, but also seven great brands and stories in this issue's *ProductBeat*. Each issue we scour social media,



**ERICA KIRKLAND**  
PUBLISHER & EDITOR

distributor's showrooms and pick the brains of our readers to compile our *ProductBeat* pages. If you know of a product that is seriously trending in your area, we'd love to hear about it and share it with others.

I hope you enjoy your July edition of *Giftbeat* and the start to what I hope will be a fruitful summer selling season. ☺

## chartMOVERS

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

### BABY GIFTS

Since we last ran this chart in December there are two newcomers to the top-10 list – **GANZ** ([www.ganz.com](http://www.ganz.com)) and **ROMAN** ([www.roman.com](http://www.roman.com)). Retailers noted strong sales of banks, baptism gifts, crib medals, crosses and frames from Roman while plush was the top-selling category for Ganz in the baby gifts category. Also of note, **ANGEL DEAR** ([www.angeldear.com](http://www.angeldear.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart on the strength of sales of its muslin baby outfits.

### FASHION ACCESSORIES

**DM** ([www.247dm.com](http://www.247dm.com)) was bumped from its top spot by **VERA BRADLEY** ([www.verabradley.com](http://www.verabradley.com)) who was in fourth place when this chart last ran in February. This time around DM placed at number eight. **MYRA BAGS** ([www.myrabag.com](http://www.myrabag.com)) jumped up three spots from number six to number three while **CHALA** ([www.chalagroup.com](http://www.chalagroup.com)) moved from an honorable mention to number four. **BRIGHTON** ([www.brighton.com](http://www.brighton.com)) also moved from an honorable mention to number six. New to the chart this time around was **BAGGALLINI** ([www.baggallini.com](http://www.baggallini.com)).

### GARDEN DECOR

**EVERGREEN** ([www.myeverygreenonline.com](http://www.myeverygreenonline.com)), **STUDIO M** ([wholesale.studio-m.com](http://wholesale.studio-m.com)) and **CARSON** ([www.carsonhomeaccents.com](http://www.carsonhomeaccents.com)) retained their number one, two and three spots respectively since this chart ran last a year ago while **OPPORTUNITIES** ([www.opportunitiesia.com](http://www.opportunitiesia.com)) moved from an honorable mention to number 10. **REGAL** ([www.regalgift.com](http://www.regalgift.com)) moved up four spots from number eight to number four while **GANZ** ([www.ganz.com](http://www.ganz.com)) climbed three spots from number nine to number six.

### HOME FRAGRANCE

**INIS** ([www.inis.com](http://www.inis.com)) bumped **SWAN CREEK** ([www.swancreekcandle.com](http://www.swancreekcandle.com)) from its poll position which it's held since March 2022. Also of note is **TYLER CANDLE** ([www.tylercandles.com](http://www.tylercandles.com)) moving up six spots from number nine to number three. **BRIDGEWATER** ([www.bridgewatercandles.com](http://www.bridgewatercandles.com)) made a big jump too from an honorable mention to number four while **AROMATIQUE** ([www.aromatique.com](http://www.aromatique.com)) makes a chart appearance at number seven.

### SALESBEAT

#### May Sales Down for Almost Half

By Erica Kirkland

May marked the third straight month where the bulk of store owners (49 percent) experienced decreased year-over-year sales. For the 39 percent who reported that year-over-year sales increased, a variety of factors played a part including brisk purchases for Mother's Day, graduations and teacher's gifts along with balmy weather in parts of the country and a fierce focus on promotion, whether social media, events, sales, direct mail or otherwise. While a tornado and a hurricane hit other parts of the country resulting in decreased sales for stores in those areas, most retailers who experienced depressed sales put it down to lack of traffic and a reluctance among consumers to part with their money.

A retailer in New York doesn't know why sales were down, saying, "It was very, very slow." Adding, "It's depressing. We have beautiful displays and new merchandise – the

shelves are full."

In Ohio a retailer writes, "The weather was cooler, but we literally did not have a Mother's Day peak at all. We lost our volume all that week and have no idea why, other than the economy is tough and maybe they went for flowers or dinner." "I had 81 more people come to the cash register this May as compared to last May," says a South Carolina retailer. "I wish I knew why, but I don't. I was down in March and April. It's always hard to figure out retail!"

"We were down 21 percent over last May," reports another retailer from Ohio. "I'm doing all sorts of things to get people in the door. The weather has been great. Honestly, I think everyone is watching their money until the government decides what they're doing."

In Michigan a retailer writes, "The cold, dark weather didn't help at the beginning of the month. We caught up and had a great second

half of the month but couldn't make up all the down we had. A big part of our success over the last weekend of the month was bringing back our annual Memorial Day weekend garage sale event. We added a VIP night and had tons of our VIPS arrive for two hours of shopping before opening it to the public the next day. We promoted the VIP event strictly via email marketing, and the event itself on signage, Facebook, Instagram and emails. It was a great event!"

"We had two events that were great marketing opportunities and resulted in some great sales and new customers," shares yet another store owner from Ohio. "We were invited to present a style show for a local church group. We handed out \$20 gift certificates that expired at the end of the month and 10 percent of them were redeemed. We had sales at the style show and sales when they came in to use their gift certificates. Our second event was a Mother's Day luncheon and vendor event at the local yacht club. We took two rolling racks of our best apparel. I had two models who walked around and engaged

with the ladies. We gained new customers, met new friends and had really good sales. Several have come into the store and shopped since the event."

"I have come to the conclusion that we really shouldn't be comparing our sales to any of the 2020 to 2022 numbers and more to the 2019 numbers," says a retailer from Wyoming. "COVID really was insanely busy for us, so if we go back and compare 2019 we are doing great!"

#### MAY 2023 SALES (vs. May 2022)

↑ 10%+	12%
↑ 5-9%	12%
↑ 1-4%	15%
↔	12%
↓ 1-4%	11%
↓ 5-9%	20%
↓ 10%+	18%

### ONLINE SELLING

#### Majority of store owners are selling online

When it comes to having an ecommerce website 48 percent of independent gift retailers are onboard while nine percent are planning to add a site soon, leaving 43 percent who don't sell via a website currently.

Some store owners shared that they used to have ecommerce sites which they have since shut down including a retailer from Oregon who said, "We closed our online store last year and haven't looked back."

"We tried it a few years ago,"

says a New York store owner. "It's two different worlds and it did not work for us."

In Wisconsin a store owner writes, "We did have a site during the pandemic but the time it took to create a page for every item did not pay. Our store can't be appreciated online either. It's about the whole experience."

"An ecommerce site is not cost effective when a store has high walk-in traffic, which we do," says a retailer from Rhode Island.

Among those who're having success selling online is a

Colorado retailer who says, "We notice that even local customers like the convenience of ordering online, even though it costs them an extra service fee."

While not necessarily a sales generator, a retailer in Ohio writes, "I use my website as marketing. There are website links to products in my weekly emails. I also link to them on our social media pages. One thing that has brought me sales from new customers is sorting my apparel and jewelry by brand. They search for the brand and my website comes up."

For a retailer in Wyoming, website sales have been growing in leaps and bounds. She says,

"Shopify is super easy to use and integrates with so many programs. Keep it simple!"

For some, selling online hasn't resulted in much uptick for their business which is the case for a retailer from Indiana who reports, "I don't sell much on my website, maybe one to two items per month."

In Michigan, a retailer with multiple locations writes, "We're doing all the things, but aren't getting enough sales to make it worth it. We sell tickets online to our in-person events and push people there via Facebook and Instagram ads and posts. When we try the same thing with product, it doesn't work."

## SPRING PROMOTIONS

*The activities and events that drew the most traffic*

**M**any store owners hosted Mother's Day events which were well attended and received, including a store owner from Oregon who writes, "We hosted a Mother's Day event! Sales were through the roof. We sent invites in the mail, had live music, food from our kitchen department and wine partnered with a local winery."

Open houses were other popular events store owners used to draw traffic including a retailer from Kansas who says, "Giveaways along with free food and drink always bring people in."

A California store owner decided to hold a generic event at the start of spring which proved successful. As she reports, "We had a Hello Spring event in March that was fantastic!"

The best promotion for a North Carolina store owner was a product-based opportunity buy. As she describes it, "We bought some very pretty freshwater pearl bracelets with magnetic closures from Janes Pearl World for a very good price - under \$2. We ran them as a promotion for \$9.99. We've sold hundreds. Talk about a markup!"

### DIRECT MAIL & ADVERTISING

"We advertise in a local women's magazine which is free to the public," reports a South Dakota store owner. "That's where we get the most traffic."

A retailer in New York sends 1000 postcards every month with a discount on most items. As he says, even if the postcards aren't redeemed it's "still good publicity."

A retailer in Minnesota also had success with a postcard mailout writing, "This year we opted to send out a postcard at the end of March that had a coupon special for April (20 percent off one regular-



priced item), May (25 percent) and June (30 percent). Our intent was to try to get customers back in several times throughout the spring season. It seems to have been well received and we're moving product. Planning to go this route again next year!"

### VENDOR-SPONSORED EVENTS

Partnering with vendors on instore events is one of the most profitable and fun ways to drive traffic.

A retailer from South Carolina held a vendor event with Tonies ([www.tonies.com](http://www.tonies.com)). "The vendor sponsored

the event so that all the free product we gave away was credited back to us. It was the best thing in a while! It was perfect grandparent bait. We had men and women spending \$100 on impulse. They will do anything for the grands!"

### SALES

A Michigan store owner with multiple locations opted to hold a Memorial Day garage sale. As she reports, "It was three days of sales and promos on last year's merchandise. I think it worked because we promoted the hell out of

it! And, it was a sale!"

"We had a flash sale for two days in early May that seemed to 'jump start' our sales after a big lull in April," writes a store owner from Arizona. "I've never had to have a sale so close to Mother's Day before, but we decided to and it paid off. Shoppers kept coming in even after the sale ended."

In Indiana, a store owner writes, "We did a big Memorial Day sale with \$5 grab bags with a certain purchase. It allowed us to clear our old stock and get people looking around the store." 

# DEALING WITH DISSATISFIED CUSTOMERS

## How to Deescalate Tense Situations

By Claire Sykes

What retailer hasn't encountered them? They're unhappy. They may even be angry or downright belligerent. At the very least, they're dissatisfied. You'd give anything to avoid them but how can you? After all, they're your customers.

What's a business owner to do? Start by viewing dissatisfied customers and their sometimes unpleasant behavior as a challenge and an opportunity — to listen carefully to their needs and offer a creative solution that leads to a happy customer. When you do, that person basks in the best customer service they may have ever received. And you enjoy the strengthened relationship, while your store reaps the profits.

Part of great customer service involves resolving problems, and

there isn't a retailer who doesn't face those. The kindest and most loyal customers can get upset sometimes. And even the most dissatisfied ones can be won over by good problem resolution and end up as some of your best customers.

But what if you've done everything you possibly can and your customer is still dissatisfied? Or what if they express their dismay angrily? Or their angry words turn into hostile behavior? If you're equipped with the right know-how and common sense, you can shape that conflict into cooperation.

It helps to know why some customers respond so indignantly when they view your service or products as not meeting their needs. Can you blame someone for feeling peeved because your sales staff is ignoring them? Or if those

tablecloths haven't arrived like they should've and the birthday party is tomorrow? Poor customer service, out-of-stock inventory and errors on special orders are common reasons for dissatisfied customers.

Oftentimes, however, someone's angry outburst has little to do with you and your store. Maybe the person feels tired or hungry, or rushed and impatient. Or they expect poorer service from you because of past negative experiences they've had at other stores. Then again, perhaps this person is just having a bad day and, unfortunately, they're taking it out on you.

Whatever the reason, when you're facing the heat of these fiery scenes, don't make a run for it. Throw water on the situation and keep your cool. However, if the customer displays disrespect or violence towards you,

your staff or your property, get out of their way and get help. No customer is worth this kind of abuse. (Refer to the sidebar for detailed instructions on how to diffuse a hostile situation.)

Everyone makes mistakes, even the most successful retailers. But it's how you deal with those errors that makes all the difference. If you acknowledge the problem and sincerely show your customer that you care and want to remedy things, most likely they'll want to work with you. You want them to remember how seriously and courteously you took their concerns and then did all you could to make it better. The good word they spread about their positive experience at your store is well worth the effort you spend to make them happy.

Remember, there's no benefit to you or your business if you see these hostile customers as in the wrong. Worst yet, the bad reviews and negative word of mouth they spread about your store is not worth the business you could lose. [☞](#)

## 12 STEPS TO DIFFUSING A HOSTILE SITUATION

In most cases, you can begin to extinguish your customer's hostility by exhibiting a calm presence. Take a few slow, deep breaths before speaking. A calm tone of voice and open body language can set the stage for resolving the situation in the most positive way.

**1. Move away from other customers.** If your dissatisfied customer becomes angry, steer them away from other shoppers. For one, it's bad publicity. But most importantly, you want to keep it private, while giving your customer the undivided attention they deserve. This shows them that you're willing to take the time to listen and attempt to accommodate their needs.

**2. Distance yourself from the behavior.** Don't get pulled into your customer's animosity by taking their behavior personally. Their

anger is about their dissatisfaction with something at your store, not you. Stay objective and you'll be able to see the problem more clearly and deal with it effectively.

**3. Express your regret.** No matter what happened or who is really at fault, tell the customer you feel bad that they're so disappointed and that that is the last thing you want for them.

**4. Repeat the complaint, calmly.** Hear the customer out and then be silent for a few moments in case they want to add more. Then, tell the person what you heard them say so they know you get it.

**5. Empathize with them.** Put yourself in your customer's place and try to imagine how they must feel. Tell them you can understand their disappointment, anger or confusion and that you want to make things better.

**6. Listen to the customer.** This person may be angry because they feel no one cares. If you let your customer talk first, and for as long as they need (within reason), their anger will more likely dissipate.

**7. Listen to the complaint.** Strip it from its negativity and note what the problem is. This is key to dissolving the dissatisfaction. You have to hear what the person is saying, and not dwell on the negative delivery of it.

**8. Thank the customer.** They have brought a problem to your attention. That's a good thing! Let them know you appreciate this because it'll help you serve them better next time.

**9. Explain how you'll correct the problem.** Be sure your customer understands exactly what you promise you'll do. Ask them what they think will make things right

and consider their view. You may be surprised at how easy the fix truly is.

**10. Know what you've gained.** Identify to yourself what you've learned from the incident, as it relates to your store and staff, and also personally, and decide what to share with your employees.

**11. Put the lesson to work.** Apply what you've learned to improve service for all your customers. Make the necessary business and staff changes, and create store-wide procedures to uphold top-quality customer service for everyone.

**12. Follow up with the customer.** If you didn't already resolve the issue with them at the time of their complaint, then once you do, immediately contact them to make sure they're satisfied. It wouldn't hurt to give them a 10 percent-off coupon, either.

# Oregon Souvenir Shop Thrives Under New Owner

By Jessica Harlan

**W**ith a prime location on the main street in Lincoln City, Oregon, right across from one of the town's main beaches, Cap'n Gull's Gift Place has been selling souvenirs, decor and gifts to tourists and summer homeowners for four decades. In May 2022, long-time employee Kevin Fanter bought the business from the original owner, Carol Culbertson, and now runs it with his wife Danielle.

## *What makes your store special?*

Cap'n Gull's has been here for at least 40 years, and a lot of parents will bring their kids in because they remember coming here with their own parents. Carol sold the business to me because she knew I would keep it in the same spirit for our return customers.

Our product selection ranges from local artists, including glass floats that are popular for folks to collect here. We'll sell some as small

as a silver dollar to ones as large as six to seven inches. The city puts glass floats on the beach for people to find and sometimes people will come in because they can't find one and they'll buy one to put out for their kid to "discover."

## *How would you describe the atmosphere of your store?*

We get a lot of comments from people about all the different and unique stuff we carry, from souvenirs to gifts to beach decor items for the folks who have beach houses down here. We take advantage of every square inch of our building. We even use the ceiling for chimes and hanging ornaments.

## *To what do you attribute your success?*

Number one would be our location. A close second would be the name — Cap'n Gull's is an institution in this town. Another thing that's



helpful is that we have a really big variety so there's almost always something for everybody, from something that's a dollar to a \$400 windchime. Our prices are really fair as well. We're not in it to make millions of dollars; we're here to enjoy life. We'd rather sell things at a fair price and have them move out the door so we can make way for new and exciting things.

## *How do you promote your store?*

We have an established website and we're also trying to do a lot more with Facebook, building our following and boosting posts. We also do a lot of local advertising and promoting with parent groups at the schools, the chamber of commerce, the cultural center and other venues. We try to promote ourselves





a lot in the community and we feel it's important that we contribute back to our community.

***Do you have a favorite new product line?***

We just started selling these really cute little clay magnets from Clay Critters. They've turned out to be a really good seller.

***What are your most successful retail strategies?***

Don't let it sit on the shelf, and you can't sell something you don't have. That's why we use our 2000 square feet as much as we can.

***What's one thing you would want people to know about your store?***

That our products change

regularly. If you come here in June and you come back in September, you'll find a whole flock of new things that weren't here when you were in before. Also, we stay open all year round, seven days a week. We're only closed on Christmas Day and Thanksgiving.

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

**STORE:** *Cap'n Gull's Gift Place*

LOCATION: *Lincoln City, Oregon*

SQUARE FOOTAGE: *2000*

EMPLOYEES: *Two full-time, three part-time*

WEBSITE: *capngullsgiftplace.com*

TOP LINES: *Prairie Mountain Screening, Cromer Mfg., Northern Souvenirs, Triangle Headwear, Barry-Owen, American Gift Corp, Puka Creations*

keep prices competitive and not to overprice products. We keep them low but priced at enough of a profit to keep the doors open. That's one of the biggest lessons I learned from Carol. Another thing that surprised me a little was the need to have good working relationships with the other shops in town. We like to make sure we're not selling exactly the same things as a store a few minutes from us. We have a good community of shop owners and we all know what we have so if someone wants a certain thing, we know where they can find it. ☺



# Hot Finds & New Releases

## Luminary Lanterns

**Luminary Lanterns** from Modgy are reusable, recyclable and flameless, making them ideal for a variety of uses. To use, customers fill halfway with water, place the included water-activated LED candle inside and enjoy. The durable plastic luminaries feature modern, graphic designs and are suitable for indoor and outdoor use. The lanterns will not break or chip and eliminate concerns about fire hazards due to the use of flameless candles. Each pack of luminaries comes with four lanterns and four candles. Suggested retail is \$14.95 a pack. ([www.modgy.com](http://www.modgy.com))



## Too Good to Resist

**Molly & You** is a small woman-owned brand based out of Iowa, specializing in dry beer bread, dip, mug cake and overnight oat mixes. Molly began by offering one beer bread but demand for new recipes necessitated adding 12 different varieties including gluten-free. Molly then expanded her line by adding dip mixes and microwavable mug cakes. This past year the company further expanded its offerings to include three different flavors of overnight oat mixes, a huge trend right now in the gourmet food category. All Molly & You products are made in the USA and only require one or two additional ingredients to make. Plus, the packaging includes alternative recipes customers can try with the mixes such as quiche. The company offers three different full-color corrugated displays which will help to further attract customers to this brand. ([www.molly-you.com](http://www.molly-you.com))



## Nourishing & Sanitizing Spray

**Noshinku** is the name of a new nourishing spray which promises to clean, moisturize and revitalize the skin, formulated with conditioning botanicals, pure organic alcohol and beautiful fragrances.

The product is made in the USA with 100 percent natural and organic ingredients specifically selected for their efficacy, safety and sustainability. Recently Noshinku was named best beauty product in *NYLON*'s 2023 beauty awards.

"I call Noshinku the Tesla of hand sanitizers. Small, sleek and sustainable, the compact vessel is also refillable and features the most lovely, fancy-smelling scents that make you actually look forward to using hand sanitizer," says Faith Xue, *NYLON*'s executive beauty editor. Currently there are six scents of the sanitizer available: Vetiver, Limon, Spice, Lavendula, Bergamot and Eucalyptus.

A refillable sprayer sold with one refill pouch retails from \$25. The contents in the refill pouch allow users to refill their spray up to five times for a total of six containers worth of spray. ([www.noshinku.com](http://www.noshinku.com))

### Pretty Hairbands with a Prettier Cause

The **Headbands of Hope** story begins in the most magical place on earth – Disney World. Founder Jess Ekstrom interned at the park as a photographer where she often photographed children who were guests of wish-granting organizations. The experience inspired Jess to work for such an organization which is where she noticed that children losing their hair to chemotherapy wore headbands. Soon Jess started Headbands of Hope, selling both turbans for babies and fashion-forward headbands for women. For every headband sold, the company donates one headband to a child with cancer. Currently, Headbands of Hope are sold in thousands of stores across the world and have been supported by many celebrities and media outfits. More importantly the brand has donated one million headbands to children's hospitals across America and in 22 countries. For retailers who stock the brand, the donated headbands support their local children's hospital. With tagging and signage available, this makes for a great cause-related gift item unlike many others on the market. ([www.headbandsofhope.com](http://www.headbandsofhope.com))



### On-the-Go Blender

**Blendit**, a portable blender, is quickly rising in social media fame even though it was created a few years ago. The nifty gadget is also finding its ways onto gift store shelves as various gift industry distributors have picked up the brand. While the company offers other items, the key product, Blendit, allows customers to blend whenever and wherever with the touch of a button and no cords. Ideal for mixing protein powders, chopping frozen fruit and even crushing ice, the blender has a 17-ounce capacity and gives the user 15 blends on one charge. The Blendit has had multiple national media mentions including on CNN, CBS, *The View* and *Good Morning America*. Wholesale pricing for the blender starts at \$30 with a minimum order of \$300. ([www.blendiblender.com](http://www.blendiblender.com))



### Games on the Go

During the upcoming wholesale gift markets, **Laura Kelly Designs** will launch new Games on the Go Memo Pads, 50-sheet memo pads filled with classic pen and paper games, available in eight different styles, retailing for \$6.99. This category adds to the existing product segment the company currently wholesales - weatherproof, waterproof and washable vinyl stickers.

Heading up the company is its namesake Laura Kelly, a licensed doodle artist who also creates thematic collections for an array of industries. Her works have been licensed by PaperSalt and Ganz, among dozens and dozens of other companies. ([www.laurakellydesigns.com](http://www.laurakellydesigns.com))

## Supplier Spotlight

### Rustic Marlin Designs

**Rustic Marlin** was founded in 2012 when Brian and Melanie O'Neil were planning their wedding. Finding it hard to locate meaningful gifts for their wedding party, these DIYers used some extra wood from a home renovation project to make a few signs. They quickly found themselves fulfilling requests for personalized wooden signs, and soon a business was born from their living room. Fast forward four years and by 2016 Rustic Marlin had grown to encompass a team of over 40 talented artisans in a 50,000-square-foot production facility in coastal Massachusetts. These days the company's collection has expanded to include something for everyone, from decorative accents, soft goods and accessories to wall art and apparel. A current top performer are the latest additions to the company's Hydrangea Dreams collection pictured here. Items in this collection include wall art, blocks and trays, several of which can be personalized, all featuring watercolor artwork of vibrant blue hydrangeas with an idyllic white picket fence and coastal waters in the background. The company has received impressive media attention having had mentions on *The View*, *Oprah Daily* and *Good Morning America*. ([www.rusticmarlin.com](http://www.rusticmarlin.com))



LET US KNOW

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[erica@giftbeat.com](mailto:erica@giftbeat.com)

## EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

*Is Email Marketing Losing Its Allure?*

By Erica Kirkland

Just over one-third (36 percent) of store owners send an email newsletter to their customers, meaning the majority of store owners have never used or are no longer using email newsletters to market to and keep in touch with customers.

"I hear customers complaining all the time how they are overwhelmed with emails," says a store owner from South Dakota. "Sometimes, they won't even give their email out."

A retailer from Ohio writes that the store used to send out emails "but really couldn't tell if it had an impact" so they discontinued them.

The case was the same for an Arizona store owner who reports, "I wasn't getting much response and even some 'unsubscribe' requests. It was a lot of work for little reward. We switched to a text service instead and my customers seem to really like it! Have not had one person ask to stop getting them!"

Among the store owners who use emails with success is a Michigan retailer with multiple shop locations who sometimes sends multiple emails each week, but always at least one. She suggests the following tips for creating an engaging newsletter: "Spellcheck and review for grammatical errors, make sure you get the dates, times and days of events, etc. correct, try to focus on one thing and do it well, include photos and remember a call to action at the end!"

Including lots of photos was the advice a lot of store owners gave including a Rhode Island retailer

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who says, "Use lots of photos, and keep the text light and humorous. We send e-blasts with highlights of new merchandise and events three times each week and an eight-page newsletter at the beginning of each season."


A retailer from Nevada who emails and prints monthly newsletters for customers to pick up in store says, "Customers appreciate short updates, but know they will be limited to once a month." She adds, "We keep it clear and short enough to read on a phone."

Another retailer who sends a monthly newsletter has a gift store in Florida. Her suggestions for a successful newsletter include to offer limited promotions at the top, and showcase new arrivals along with inspirational gift ideas for upcoming holidays and events.

In Ohio a retailer writes, "I feel it's important to be yourself in your emails. Customers like the store because of you, so don't try to be

fancy if you're a down-home gal."

A retailer in New Hampshire who sends an email out about every two weeks writes, "Don't make it all about product. We include our own personal memories or things to do in our area and people always comment how much they love them."

"A subject line that sparks curiosity will get more opens and less unsubscribes," is some of the advice another Ohio retailer has to give. "I use a beautiful product photo at the top of the email. I share a short note about what's going on that week i.e., a gift with purchase, a new shipment of a certain brand, an event or a sale. Sometimes I insert products with direct links to the item on my website. Sometimes I include local events I think my customers will be interested in. Every email has links to the most popular categories on my website and at the bottom of every email I include all contact info and store hours." 

giftBEAT  
Tracking the Pulse of the Gift Industry

### ARTICLES OF NOTE:

- Dealing with Dissatisfied Customers
- Promotions That Draw Traffic
- The State of Online Selling

### CATEGORIES TRACKED

- CBaby Gifts
- Fashion Accessories
- Garden Decor
- Home Fragrance
- Mother's Day
- Personal Accessories
- Spa-Related
- Stationery Accessories
- Summer/Seasonal

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