

giftBEAT™

Tracking the Pulse of the Gift Industry

marketBEAT

The Industry's Top-Selling Lines



Every piece of **Ronaldo Jewelry** is thoughtfully designed to tell a story – and they're made in the United States, earning the company the eighth spot on our chart of bestselling Made in the USA items. (www.ronaldojewelry.com)

MADE IN THE USA

Last ran in December 2022

- =====
- #1 **SILVER FOREST:** earrings
 - #2 **THE NAKED BEE:** lip balm, body lotion, various
 - #3 **STONEWALL KITCHEN:** mixes, jams, various
 - #4 **SWAN CREEK:** candles
 - #5 **TYLER CANDLE:** candles, Glamorous Wash
 - #6 **P. GRAHAM DUNN:** signs, wall art
 - #7 **LEANIN' TREE:** greeting cards*
 - #8 **RONALDO:** bracelets
 - #9 **DOWN TO EARTH POTTERY:** mini dishes*
 - #10 **STUDIO M:** Art Pots, flags*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Duke Cannon, Jess & Jane, Enewton

*OF NOTE!

STUDIO M (wholesale.studio-m.com) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **LEANIN' TREE** (www.leanintree.com) and **DOWN TO EARTH POTTERY** (719-634-1465) moved from honorable mentions onto the chart.

PET-THEMED

Last ran in October 2022

- =====
- #1 **E&S:** socks, tumblers, tea towels
 - #2 **PRIMITIVES BY KATHY:** signs, tea towels
 - #3 **TALL TAILS:** toys, various
 - #4 **MUD PIE:** toys, pillows, various
 - #5 **DEMDACO:** Willow Tree, frames, various
 - #6 **ENESCO:** mugs, various
 - #7 **GANZ:** signs, frames, various
 - #8 **KIKKERLAND:** toys, various
 - #9 **CARSON:** memorial, sympathy gifts
 - #10 **CHALA:** bags*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Simply Southern, Kay Dee Designs

*OF NOTE!

CHALA (www.chalagroup.com) did not rank when this chart last ran.

"The corn relish, blueberry jam and bar mixed nuts are top sellers from Stonewall Kitchen."
— Kansas retailer

WINE & ALCOHOL-RELATED

Last ran in October 2022

- =====
- #1 **CORKCICLE:** insulated drinkware
 - #2 **BRUMATE:** insulated drinkware
 - #3 **DRINKS ON ME:** coasters, napkins
 - #4 **ENESCO:** Lolita wine glasses, various
 - #5 **MUD PIE:** drinkware, barware, various
 - #6 **STONEWALL KITCHEN:** drink mixes
 - #7 **SWIG:** insulated drinkware
 - #8 **WILD HARE:** tea towels
 - #9 **YETI:** insulated drinkware
 - #10 **PRIMITIVES BY KATHY:** wine glasses, signs, tea towels

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Design Design, Capabunga, Susquehanna Glass

*OF NOTE!

The same vendors are listed in the top 10 this month as when the chart last ran in October 2022.

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Retailers are currently loving the pet-themed purse styles from **Chala**, earning the company a new ranking on the pet-themed gifts chart. (www.chalagroup.com)

FAST FACT
Retail sales declined year-over-year in April for 69% of store owners

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



Retailers are loving the bold and bright styles from **Rain**, earning the company a top spot on our chart of bestselling jewelry items. (www.rainjewelrycollection.com)

“Teens come into the store in groups to buy matching Hope Unwritten bracelets from Enewton.”

— Tennessee retailer



Bath and body care products from **Capri Blue** are trending, earning the company a new spot on the personal care chart. (www.capri-blue.com)

JEWELRY Last ran in February 2023

- #1 **SILVER FOREST:** earrings
- #2 **BRIGHTON:** earrings, necklaces
- #3 **ENEWTON:** bracelets, various
- #4 **CENTER COURT:** Layers, Stacks, various
- #5 **RAIN:** earrings, anklets, various
- #6 **SCOUT CURATED WEARS:** wrap bracelets, earrings, various
- #7 **MULBERRY STUDIOS:** Lumiela, various
- #8 **PERIWINKLE BY BARLOW:** earrings
- #9 **RONALDO:** bracelets, various*
- #10 **KENDRA SCOTT:** necklaces*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Lola & Company, Pandora, Howard's, Spartina

*OF NOTE!

KENDRA SCOTT (www.kendrascott.com) and **RONALDO** (www.ronaldojewelry.com) moved from honorable mentions onto the chart.

CANDLES Last ran in February 2023

- #1 **SWAN CREEK:** jars, melts, various
- #2 **TYLER CANDLE:** various
- #3 **CAPRI BLUE:** Volcano, various
- #4 **ROOT CANDLES:** tapers, various
- #5 **BRIDGEWATER:** Sweet Grace, various
- #6 **WOODWICK:** jars, various
- #7 **AROMATIQUE:** various*
- #8 **GREENLEAF:** various*
- #9 **ELLA B:** custom, various*
- #10 **VOLUSPA:** various

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Michel Design Works, Opportunities, Thymes, Yankee

*OF NOTE!

GREENLEAF (www.greenleafgifts.com) and **AROMATIQUE** (www.aromatique.com) are new to the chart while **ELLA B** (www.ellacandles.com) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

TEENS & TWEENS Last ran in March 2023

- #1 **PURA VIDA:** bracelets
- #2 **CENTER COURT:** Layers, Stacks, various
- #3 **ENEWTON:** bracelets
- #4 **VERA BRADLEY:** crossbodies, various
- #5 **DM:** Hello Mello, various
- #6 **FAHLO:** bracelets*
- #7 **NATURAL LIFE:** Boho Bandeaux, various
- #8 **TELETIES:** hair ties
- #9 **MULBERRY STUDIOS:** Lumiela, various
- #10 **SIMPLY SOUTHERN:** t-shirts, towels, various*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Kendra Scott, Kelly Toy (Squishmallows), Ty

*OF NOTE!

FAHLO (www.myfahlo.com) and **SIMPLY SOUTHERN** (www.simplysouthern.com) are new to the list.

KITCHEN-RELATED Last ran in June 2022

- #1 **NORA FLEMING:** minis, bases
- #2 **MUD PIE:** serving pieces, tabletop, barware
- #3 **MICHEL DESIGN WORKS:** foaming soap, various
- #4 **KAY DEE DESIGNS:** tea towels
- #5 **CREATIVE CO-OP:** various
- #6 **PRIMITIVES BY KATHY:** humorous tea towels
- #7 **DM:** aprons, Krumb's, various
- #8 **DEMDACO:** cutting boards, serveware, various
- #9 **C&F HOME:** tea towels, placemats, various
- #10 **EUROSCRUBBY:** dish scrubbers*

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Coton Colors, Lynn & Liana, Ganz, Totally Bamboo

*OF NOTE!

EUROSCRUBBY (www.euroscrubby.com) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

PERSONAL CARE Last ran in March 2023

- #1 **THE NAKED BEE:** lotion, various
- #2 **INIS:** cologne, lotion, various
- #3 **MICHEL DESIGN WORKS:** foaming soap, various
- #4 **GREENWICH BAY:** soap, lotion
- #5 **DM:** various
- #6 **BEEKMAN:** various
- #7 **EUROPEAN SOAPS:** soap*
- #8 **CAMILLE BECKMAN:** hand cream, various
- #9 **CAPRI BLUE:** lotion, various*
- #10 **THYMES:** travel sets, lotion, various

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Finchberry, Spongelle

*OF NOTE!

CAPRI BLUE (www.capri-blue.com) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **EUROPEAN SOAPS** (www.europeansoaps.com) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

WALL DECOR Last ran in October 2022

- #1 **P. GRAHAM DUNN:** signs, wall art, various
- #2 **SINCERE SURROUNDINGS:** various
- #3 **GANZ:** signs, various
- #4 **PRIMITIVES BY KATHY:** box signs, wood signs, various
- #5 **DEMDACO:** Sharon Nowlan, various
- #6 **GREENBOX ART:** mini canvases, various*
- #7 **MUD PIE:** frames, signs
- #8 **MY WORD!:** porch boards, Skinnies, various*
- #9 **RAZ IMPORTS:** various*
- #10 **RUSTIC MARLIN:** signs*

*OF NOTE!

MY WORD! (www.mywordsigns.com) and **RAZ** (www.razimports.com) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **GREENBOX ART** (www.greenboxart.com) and **RUSTIC MARLIN** (www.rusticmarlin.com) moved from honorable mentions onto the chart.

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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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April Was Another Slow Month

Coming off a slow March, retailers were not given any reprieve in April as sales plummeted year-over-year for 69 percent of independent gift store owners. Bad weather along with a soft economy were the main reasons given by reporting stores for low customer counts in April and subsequently decreased sales.

Speaking of customer counts, year-over-year

they've declined for the majority of store owners although average sales are up for 41 percent, a fact attributed primarily to the higher costs of products.

On the good news front, retailers aren't working themselves to the bone. They've learned to delegate their tasks and as a result 47 percent report they're working the same number of hours as last year.



ERICA KIRKLAND
PUBLISHER & EDITOR

We hope you enjoy reading about these topics and many more inside our June edition. All the best!

chartMOVERS

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

CANDLES

Of note is the introduction of **GREENLEAF** (www.greenleafgifts.com) and **AROMATIQUE** (www.aromatique.com) along with **ELLA B** (www.ellabcandles.com) who moved from an honorable mention onto the chart. Also of note is **ROOT CANDLES** (www.rootcandles.com). Currently the company's collenette dinner candles (aka five, seven and nine-inch taper candles) are selling very well for store owners in a variety of colors and sizes. The tapered base is compatible with most candle holders.

KITCHEN-RELATED

Since this chart ran one year ago, **DM** (www.247dm.com) fell from fourth place to seventh while **MICHEL DESIGN WORKS** (www.micheldesignworks.com) climbed from seventh place to third. New to the chart is **EUROSCRUBBY** (www.euroscrubby.com), moving up from an honorable mention. A store owner from Kansas tells us that all styles of Euroscrubbies are selling well at their store. While it didn't make the charts, a new line of colorful tea towels from **WERKSHOPPE** (www.werkshoppe.com) is "blowing outta here" for an Arizona store owner.

PERSONAL CARE

THE NAKED BEE (www.nakedbee.com) maintained its poll position on the strength of its lip balms and lotions while **MICHEL DESIGN WORKS** (www.micheldesignworks.com) was bumped from its number two position by **INIS** (www.inisfragrance.com). **BEEKMAN** (www.beekman1802.com) moved up two spots from number eight to number six while **EUROPEAN SOAPS** (www.europeansoaps.com) moved from an honorable mention to number seven. New to the chart was **CAPRI BLUE** (www.capri-blue.com) with store owners noting strong sales of lotion, body wash and scrubs.

TEENS & TWEENS

PURA VIDA (www.puravidabracelets.com) maintained its top spot. New to the list is **FAHLO** (www.myfahlo.com), a primarily B2C collection which is selling well for stores that can get their hands on the product. A South Carolina retailer writes about the line, "If you don't have these, get them. We are in a little town and we reordered them within three weeks of getting them the first time. The sea turtle is the number-one seller but all the styles sell well."

SALESBEAT

April Sales Decline for 69 Percent

By Erica Kirkland

April was a dismal sales month for independent retailers of gifts with 69 percent reporting year-over-year sales declines. Traffic levels were down for the majority of store owners contributing greatly to the drop in sales. Bad weather kept shoppers at home in some cases while in others low customer counts were attributed to a soft economy.

"It was warming up and sales were great!," says an Ohio retailer. "Then we got a cold snap that kept all the shoppers at home.... so sad."

"We are definitely feeling the economy soften," writes a retailer from Massachusetts who also commented that, "Spring came very late to New England. It was cold and rainy and not great weather to get out shopping. We see such a difference on a bright and sunny day; the weather definitely affects customers moods and spending."

A store owner in Illinois writes, "We started Q1 about 10 percent up, but now five months into the

year, gifts are leveling off to about even. I think the bank failings, recession talks and the federal budget deadline are weighing on consumers minds."

"April was terrible," says a New York store owner. "We are still up for the year but trying to figure out what was wrong with the month. We believe that all the talk about inflation made people feel that they should hold on to their money." ☞

APRIL 2023 SALES (vs. April 2022)

↑ 10%+	6%
↑ 5-9%	6%
↑ 1-4%	11%
↔	8%
↓ 1-4%	13%
↓ 5-9%	14%
↓ 10%+	42%

a year ago in April," reports a Wisconsin retailer who says, "Let's hope it doesn't continue."

In Colorado a store owner reports, "I'm not sure why, but traffic is down a little. I'm hoping it will pick up, of course."

"Our town is getting smaller and my customer base is shrinking," says an Arizona retailer. "Also, prices keep going up, and customers are starting to get weary of it."

OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Majority of Retailers Working Same Number of Hours as Last Year

The last time we asked store owners how hard they were working was for our April 2021 issue. At that time, 56 percent of store owners said they were working more hours when compared to the year prior. Now, two years later, things have stabilized with the near majority of retailers (47 percent) reporting they're working about the same

as they did the year prior. Just over one third (34 percent) noted they're working more while 19 percent are working less.

"I like to think I'm working smarter," says an Illinois store owner who is "doing more from home where interruptions aren't as frequent, so I'm getting more accomplished." ☞

FINDING STAFF STILL CHALLENGING

For the one-third plus of store owners working more this year versus last year the struggle to find staff has meant they're spending more hours on the floor.

"I just can't seem to get fully staffed," says a Minnesota retailer. "I'm spending my time filling in for those roles and having to do my work at other times."

A Colorado retailer echoes

those sentiments, stating "Because of staffing issues I work more to make up for some of that shortage." ☞

HOURS WORKED

Hours Worked Year Over Year

More	34%
Same	47%
Less	19%

CUSTOMER COUNTS DOWN, AVERAGE SALE UP

Average Sales Increase While Customer Counts Drop

Customer counts and traffic levels are down for the majority of store owners, yet nobody can really pinpoint why. On the upside, 41 percent of store owners report their average sales are up.

"We've never had hours of no one coming in and it happens a couple days a week now with two to two and half hours with nobody," writes a retailer from Ohio. "Our traffic is way down from

INCREASED COST OF GOODS LEAD TO HIGHER SALES AVERAGE

"We are up, but I think this is misleading due to all the price increases," writes a Tennessee store owner. "Vendors have raised their prices over the last year and I have had to pass it on." ☞

CUSTOMER COUNTS

Traffic Levels vs. Last Year

Up	13%
Down	55%
Same	32%

AVERAGE SALES

Average Sales vs. Last Year

Up	41%
Down	27%
Same	32%

TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Ways to Use Your Time More Efficiently

We asked our reporting store owners if they had any suggestions for their colleagues on how to delegate or use their time more efficiently and they flooded our inbox with great ideas.

A North Carolina retailer writes, "I schedule one extra person to come help only me. We knock out all my work that's backed up and it's great."

In Oregon, a store owner urges others to, "Have an employee take care of donations. That way you can spend your time NOT worrying about those."

On a similar vein, a shop owner in Ohio says, "Let experienced staff call in damages and place reorders for core product."

For another Ohio retailer the following strategy works best, "I make a short list of things that need done and when we are slow the girls take an item off the list to complete. For example: add to a display, move items to make a new

display, fill out our daily calendar with stats, do an inventory for me to place an order, look through card catalogs to reorder, etc."

For other store owners relying more on technology has freed up their time. "Using our POS system to export sales history to give our sales reps to help place orders for good selling lines," has been a time saver for an Illinois shop owner while a retailer from Oregon says, "Faire is a time saver. It's so easy to buy from and I know the order will be processed quickly and correctly."

A Michigan retailer with multiple locations is using technology too, just in a slightly different way. "I'm using my earbuds and listening to the app brain.fm, especially if I'm doing a task that requires concentration. The music has no lyrics and was created to help you ultra focus, be creative or whatever you need at that moment. I'm finding that I need to tune out what's going on

around me so that I can focus at my desk. This app is amazing!"

DELEGATING YOUR DUTIES


Easier said than done, right? A lot of store owners like to keep their fingers in all parts of the pie, like an Oklahoma retailer who writes, "I'm a micro manager, and it was difficult to change my persona," he says. "I was advised to delegate, and I'm glad I did. It gave me more time to look globally for products and inspiration."

"Look at the things that you have solely had the responsibility for and see what you can transfer to someone else," suggests a South Carolina retailer who says, "I have trained others to load items on the website and have started giving some of the responsibility of phone calls to others."

"I've delegated a lot of my tasks to my administrative gal that runs the back office," shares a Colorado store owner while a Wisconsin retailer writes, "I try to give others

more work, but finding staff that are steady has been an issue." An issue that many store owners can relate to right now.

In Louisiana a store owner suggests, "Delegate at least one hard thing to each employee every month with a deadline on when they must accomplish the task," while a Utah retailer shares, "I make lists for the night shifts, so they will always have projects. I start this early in the day and add projects as I think of them, tailoring the projects to the staff that are scheduled for the night."

The benefits of delegating are plentiful as a Massachusetts retailer can attest to. "I had periods of time when staff would just be standing there with slow periods in the store," he writes. "I now have trained key staff members on how to put new orders into our POS system, how to check in inventory and how to add new items to our online website. This has resulted in more time that I can work on other parts of my business." 

NIFTY WAYS TO "DIAL UP" YOUR AVERAGE SALE

For many retailers a thorough focus on the items at checkout has been a sure-fire way to increase their average sale. A retailer in California with multiple locations to buy for writes, "Our impulse items are around \$20 and we have really good register items that change with the holidays."

This retailer has also been encouraging staff to focus on the customer always having three items in the basket. "Adding on to the sale with three being the goal has been successful so far this year."

A Florida retailer shares, "We're trying 'items of the week' at



the checkout and encouraging staff to suggest them to every customer." Encouraging employees


to increase the average sale is a technique being deployed by a New Hampshire retailer as well who writes, "We're working on training staff not to see selling as a bad thing but rather that selling is like suggesting and that making the right suggestion will make the customer's purchase complete like suggesting a card for a gift purchase or jewelry and accessories to go with a new outfit."

RETAILERS PAYING EXTRA ATTENTION TO MARGINS

"I've decided to purge the \$1 to \$10 items that take up shelf space

that I don't make as much money on," says the aforementioned retailer from Tennessee. "I'm replacing these items with higher price point items."

"Gone are the days of keystone pricing," says a Massachusetts retailer. "We offer complimentary gift wrapping and with those increased costs I've had to seriously look at retail pricing."

"We're dissecting mark-up on every item that we order," shares a Rhode Island store owner. "I'm looking at two and a half times as the minimum acceptable unless it's a well-known branded good," he says. 

Ohio Shop Serves Loyal Customers of All Ages

By Jessica Harlan

Mim's off Main is located in a rambling old farmhouse that has been home to a gift shop for 37 years. Lisa Vitek bought the gift shop nine years ago, fulfilling a lifelong dream to own her own store after spending years working for Hallmark stores and as the gift buyer for the iconic Ohio grocery store, Jungle Jim's International Market. Lisa relies on her long-time staff members who oversee buying for different departments: Cindy Rushton for baby products, Connie Choate for jewelry and accessories and Debby Cassinelli for Vera Bradley.

What makes your store unique?

We have very loyal customers. We have a lot of local customers but also people come from as far away as Cincinnati. They really believe that when you need a gift, you go to Mim's. We still do gift wrap, either in pretty boxes or a bag with tissue and a bow.

How would you describe the atmosphere of your store?

We're in an old farmhouse in downtown Mason and our gift shop is set up in six rooms. Everything squeaks! The floors are the original



hardwood, although some of them are painted to update it a little. We have a lot of rustic fixtures and displays that complement each other. For instance, we might put a Vera Bradley crossbody with Stonewall Kitchen products to make a picnic vignette. We have a candle line that we burn, there's music playing and lots of big windows so there's a lot of light.

To what do you attribute your success?

I feel like I have a passion for this, and for being a kind person. I try to treat everyone well so they want to come back. I want people to feel appreciated and to have a wonderful time when they come

PROFILE

STORE: Mim's off Main

LOCATION: Mason, Ohio

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 3200

EMPLOYEES: Five part-time

WEBSITE: www.mimsoffmain.com

TOP LINES: Nora Fleming, Coton Colors, Vera Bradley, Enewton, Copper Pearl, Haute Shore

into my store. Right now, I'm working on my sixth and seventh-grade customers; they love being



hands-on and seeing products, so I try to make sure to have products selected for them so they have a good experience. The little five-year-olds who come in with their moms call us “the sucker store” because they get a sucker.

How do you promote your store?

We do social media — Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We’ll try to post something every day, showing something new or seasonal. For example, we posted Mother’s Day gift ideas for the few weeks leading up to Mother’s Day. We also do email newsletters with SnapRetail.

What has been your most successful recent event?

We did an event called Cinderella’s Closet. We decorated the store in a lot of mesh and shades of blue and collected prom dresses, shoes, jewelry and accessories to donate to an organization that gives prom dresses to underprivileged girls in Cincinnati. We served wine and

other drinks and had specials, discounts and raffle baskets.


Do you have a favorite new product line?

We just brought in torn paper products from Sugarboo & Co (<https://sugarbooandco.com>). They’re inspirational signs that can be paired with rustic framing and magnet clips. They come in several sizes and customers can put together their own combinations of signs and frames.

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

Just to be nice to people. I just want to help in any way. If they’re looking for a gift, I want to help them find the perfect thing, and to touch their lives.

How do you stay inspired?

I love feedback from the customers and how much they love and support us and appreciate everything we do. I just have this wonderful feeling when I work in the store. It’s just magical! 



Hot Finds & New Releases

Give-Back Bracelets

Every bracelet purchased from **Virtu Made** removes one pound of trash from rivers, canals and oceans through the company's partnership with TerraCycle Global Foundation. The company's goal is to remove and recycle 10,000,000 pounds of water waste. Their adjustable bracelets are handmade from a cotton/polyester blend and include a stainless-steel charm. Currently there are 10 different styles to choose from along with a displayer. (www.virtumade.com)



Fashionable Personal Care

Offering products for the face, eyes, lips, hands and feet, **Patchology** was formed around the idea that truly effective delivery of the best ingredients in a patch form would be a game changer. Beginning a decade ago, the company's founding team started by developing innovative patch technologies for the medical field. Today, they've expanded that expertise to develop products for the gift and lifestyle market with effective skin care products that do more, work faster and deliver better results. They've also got an outstanding array of mouth-watering imagery for sharing on social media feeds. (www.patchology.com)



Chef Inspired Spices

Spicewalla offers chefs and home cooks 250-plus spices and exclusive blends which are all roasted, ground and packed by hand. The company is the brainchild of Meherwan Irani, a five-time James Beard-nominated chef. Irani founded Spicewalla after opening his first restaurant, Chai Pani, in Asheville, NC. The restaurant is touted as changing the

perception of Indian food in America. With Spicewalla, he and his team of chefs, creators and enthusiasts are on a quest to help consumers harness the power of fresh and high-quality spices to become better cooks. (www.spicewallabrand.com)

Let us know about your
fave new product finds!

Email
erica@giftbeat.com

Sun Protection

Farmers Defense has sold hundreds of thousands of its sun protection sleeves via their website during the past three years. Now, the company is moving their distribution strategy into the business-to-business marketplace by partnering with select sales agencies across the country. Currently the company's protection sleeves and sun hats aren't being sold at retail, offering store owners a fantastic opportunity to get in on the ground floor with a product that hasn't been seen at brick-and-mortar locations - yet. The sleeves combine a UPF 50+ protection in a fabric that's moisture wicking, cooling, breathable and scratch-resistant, and which is made from recycled plastic bottles. The number-one selling pattern is Tropical which is pictured here with a cream sun hat. (www.farmersdefense.com)



Works of Art

Puzzles from **Jiggy** inspire the recipient to unplug and experience art in a whole new way - in pieces. Each puzzle features a work by an emerging female artist from around the world with a percentage of each sale going directly to the artist. Store owners and consumers can learn more about each artist on the company's website. Beyond supporting female artists, what really sets this puzzle line apart is the presentation from start to finish. Each puzzle is beautiful in all its forms. Packaged in an eye-catching cork-topped container which is itself boxed, the puzzles also include all the materials required to glue and preserve the puzzle artwork. (www.jiggy puzzles.com)



Frosty Pops Lip Gloss

One of the sweetest new lip gloss collections on the market is from personal care innovator **Garb2Art**. Handmade with jojoba gel and grapeseed oil, Frosty Pops lip glosses come with a twist-out wand for easy application. For added fun, inside each package customers will discover colorful and edible sprinkles. \$3.50 cost. (www.garb2art.com)

Readers' Picks

Grasshopper's Mermaid

Grasshopper's Mermaid was referred to us by one of our reporting stores who has had great success selling the company's souvenir range of stickers, postcards, magnets, keychains and apparel. The woman-owned and operated company is based out of Colorado, and all their products are made in the United States. In addition, the company donates 10 percent of its profits to animal, forest and ocean conservation programs and funds a scholarship each year for students studying abroad, majoring in journalism or environmental sciences.

With over 3000 designs to choose from the offerings don't stop there. Grasshopper's Mermaid encourages retailers to take advantage of its free name-drop program with no character limits. (www.grasshoppersmermaid.com)



retailBEAT

Advice from Experts & Fellow Retailers

LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

Should You Stay or Go?

By Natalie Hammer Noblitt

You've heard all the sayings about the value of location. But in retail, there are many factors a store owner must weigh when choosing a physical space — or deciding whether to relocate. Long-time retailer and consultant Cathy Donovan Wagner of Retail Mavens says miscalculations often happen that can cost store owners much more than expected. We've asked her to share important insights for retailers to consider.

Q. What sales per square foot should retailers target when choosing a location?

A. Landlords love to talk in terms


of cost per square footage, so it's easy to get into that mindset. It's better to focus on being able to pay yourself and aligning your location and marketing expenses with sales. It's never about sales per square foot. Think instead about rent/location costs as a percentage of your sales. And don't forget your total outlay of cash every month is more than just rent. A triple net lease (NNN) means paying rent and utilities, as well as property expenses like insurance, common area maintenance and taxes.

Location costs should be no more than 10 percent of sales. Adding advertising to that should

make up no more than 12 percent. If location costs can be kept lower than 10 percent, more money is available to advertise and help increase sales. Allowing more than this is dangerous because 10 percent should also be budgeted for hiring staff and creating a manageable schedule for the owner.

Q. Should new retailers start with a smaller location and scale up later?

A. I find many new store owners consider starting small with the idea they can always expand in the future. But that's often a mistake and can hinder generating enough

sales to provide an income for themselves. An owner's income should be capped at 10 percent of sales. A small location will limit what you sell and pay yourself. My advice is that 90 percent of the time a location should be no smaller than 1500 square feet. Some businesses can work in a smaller space, but most will not. Also consider your clientele. If you expect customers to shop with children or while pushing strollers, 2000 square feet makes more sense. You don't want the store to feel crowded. And when considering size, don't forget to allow space for backroom storage. 

Q. How do you predict what your sales will be in order to estimate what to spend in rent?

A. Honestly, I would never make this estimation without expert guidance. Seek out someone who has been down this path many times before. If you're just starting out, you don't know what you don't know — and you don't know what's possible. For some niches, and businesses in the right areas, opening and doing \$750,000 in the first year is possible. For others, \$300,000 might be the best they can do.

Q. When should store owners consider relocating?

A. This is a hard decision to make. Know first that growing your store by adding more square footage will not solve any current issues you have with cash flow. Have you tried maximizing cash flow in the space you have now? By that I mean your business should be profitable now before taking on more space and more debt. Increasing the size of your store isn't going to solve shortfalls in cash. In my experience, any time a retailer moves location, even a very short distance away, sales decline by 10 percent or more right away. That will need to be overcome before profits increase.

If the cost of your rent is what's making you reconsider your location, it may be time to negotiate with your landlord. It may not work, but it's worth a try. Famed hockey player Wayne Gretzky said, "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take." In this case that's true. We advise clients to keep trying. Ask nicely, but keep asking. Try asking at least seven times within seven months. It's easy for a landlord to say no in the beginning. If you're persistent, they must truly consider your request.

Q. Is a location with good foot traffic or drive-by potential worth more?

A. Over three decades, I've never seen the data given to retailers about traffic prove to be true. All that matters is the sales you can drive into your store and the community you can build. It's not just marketing, but instead about creating a loyal community. A community of great customers can totally overcome any less-than-ideal space. Looking for a certain amount of drive-by or walk-by traffic won't make up for bad marketing and a lack of community.

If you want to maximize your location, it's essential you know who your ideal customer is and where they want to shop. Before committing to a location, spend time parking there and observing who walks by, who shops at the other businesses and whether the location will attract the people you're trying to reach. Location is important, but you can't expect to open the door and have people just walk in because of it.

I know a retailer who moved within her same neighborhood and saw a decline in sales. Her clothing boutique sold fashionable items and served college students and young professionals. The block she relocated to was near a park that attracted moms of young children. That wasn't where her ideal clientele wanted to be. Observation would have let her know this wasn't a convenient spot for her community.

Q. What should a store owner do if they feel their current location is working against them?

A. Demographics and areas can change. You don't want to be fighting against the conditions of your location, whether it's space



or the neighborhood. It may be time to try a new location. What you must make sure is that you have access to enough capital to start over as if you are new. For those who choose wisely and keep marketing, business will rise.

Although it wasn't easy to move, a toy store client I worked with found a new location that was near an ice cream shop and a daycare. The move made a world of difference in helping generate sales. But it cost a lot for the move, more than I even would have expected. For this business, it was worth it. But they observed and knew that the increased traffic from their ideal customer would generate new sales in the long run.

At the end of the day, most retailers who are looking to move locations hope that this change will be a savior to their business and that usually isn't the case. While it could happen, I know for sure we don't hear about the hundreds of stores who moved and whose sales continued to plummet.

It's hard to see owners plunk down all their hard-earned cash and wind up with a business that

still can't support them. Many people who become retailers get into it because they love something other than numbers, but paying attention to the numbers is what ultimately determines their success. There's no other magic bullet. Understanding the foundations of being profitable and being able to create sustainable sales is what will pay you and pay your team. [👉](#)

As a former retail store owner, Cathy Donovan Wagner learned how to master numbers to go from near bankrupt to owning three successful multi-million-dollar stores. Cathy went on to found RETAILMavens where she uses her cutting-edge expertise in retail and consumer behavior, along with her Profit First Professional certification, to help thousands of independent store owners increase sales and improve cash flow, using her proven Sales Breakthrough System. Together with her RETAILMavens team she guides retailers to more profit, better sleep and living a life they love, through powerful group and private coaching programs, industry speaking events and a thriving online community. (www.retailmavens.com)

SUMMER SOIREEES

Store Owners Talk About Their Plans for Hosting Special Events

By Erica Kirkland



For some the summer months are too slow for it to be beneficial to host events but for other retailers the summer season is when they draw the most traffic and events add to the energy of already great stores.

"We are trying to do a special event at least twice a month this year," writes an Illinois store owner while an Ohio retailer shares her intentions: "Constant things happening to get people through the door!"

A retailer in Oregon is planning at least one event a month, explaining, "It's our way of creating community and our customers love it."

In the summer months a New Hampshire retailer writes, "On the weekends we invite some of our local artisans to set up a tent

on our lawn," while a Michigan retailer with multiple locations is planning to host art classes in her store. "We run a fine line in the summer with events because we are soooo busy with tourist traffic," she says. As such, she's planning to potentially host the art classes under tents in her parking lots and run the events in the evenings "when it's calmer and we can focus on the event and our guests."

A store owner in Kansas isn't yet sure what events she'll run in the summer but we're certain they'll be fabulous based on her latest event. As she explains, "We hosted a three-day event leading up to Cinco de Mayo. We served food and non-alcoholic margaritas, sold locally made tortillas, held drawings, had photo ops with

props and various items on sale for \$5."

Another retailer in Ohio has found that, "In-store events like open houses do not draw customers in like they used to. Single category promotions work better for us." She also always has a rack of \$20 apparel on display. "Everyone seems to have \$20 to spare! This also gives us the opportunity to get older styles or one-offs out the door." 

SUMMER EVENTS

Intentions

Planning more	16%
Planning same	59%
Planning fewer	25%

giftBEAT
Tracking the Pulse of the Gift Industry

ARTICLES OF NOTE:

- April Sales Decline
- Location Considerations
- Time Management Techniques
- Customer Counts Decrease
- Average Sale Increases

CATEGORIES TRACKED

- Candles
- Jewelry
- Kitchen Related
- Made in the USA
- Personal Care
- Pet-themed
- Teens & Tweens
- Wall Decor
- Wine & Alcohol

Top-selling vendors:

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

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