

# giftBEAT™

## Tracking the Pulse of the Gift Industry

### marketBEAT

#### The Industry's Top-Selling Lines



A variety of on-trend home decor accessories contributed to **Gerson** landing a spot on the home decor chart. Pictured here is a 43-inch beige lighted pampas grass branch. ([www.gersoncompany.com](http://www.gersoncompany.com))

#### TABLETOP ACCESSORIES

Last ran in November 2022

- #1 **NORA FLEMING:** minis, bases
- #2 **MUD PIE:** various
- #3 **CREATIVE CO-OP:** various
- #4 **MICHEL DESIGN WORKS:** foaming soap, various
- #5 **KAY DEE DESIGNS:** tea towels, various
- #6 **DEMDACO:** various
- #7 **C&F HOME:** tea towels, placemats\*
- #8 **TERVIS:** tumblers, water bottles
- #9 **PRIMITIVES BY KATHY:** tea towels, mugs, various
- #10 **TOTALLY BAMBOO:** cutting boards, various\*

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Capital Earth Rugs, Park Designs

#### \*OF NOTE!

**TOTALLY BAMBOO** ([www.totallybamboo.com](http://www.totallybamboo.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **C&F HOME** ([www.cnfei.com](http://www.cnfei.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

*"Blue and white canvas bags and all things blue and white from Two's Company are selling."*

— South Carolina retailer

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Beautiful state-themed cutting boards from **Totally Bamboo** were in part responsible for the company earning a new ranking on the tabletop accessories chart. The boards come in a variety of styles and retail from \$29.99 to \$39.99. ([www.totallybamboo.com](http://www.totallybamboo.com))

#### HOME DECOR

Last ran in December 2022

- #1 **NORA FLEMING:** bases, minis
- #2 **CREATIVE CO-OP:** various
- #3 **MUD PIE:** serving pieces, various
- #4 **GANZ:** wall art, various
- #5 **PRIMITIVES BY KATHY:** signs, pillows, various
- #6 **P. GRAHAM DUNN:** signs, wall art
- #7 **DEMDACO:** Sharon Nowlan, various
- #8 **GERSON:** various
- #9 **RAZ IMPORTS:** florals\*
- #10 **EVERGREEN:** flags, mats\*

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** My Word!, Rustic Marlin

#### \*OF NOTE!

**RAZ IMPORTS** ([www.razimports.com](http://www.razimports.com)) and **EVERGREEN** ([www.myeverygreenonline.com](http://www.myeverygreenonline.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran.

#### MESSAGE & INSPIRATIONAL

Last ran in September 2022

- #1 **DEMDACO:** Giving collection, Willow Tree, various
- #2 **GANZ:** pocket tokens, various
- #3 **SCOUT CURATED WEARS:** bracelets, various
- #4 **PRIMITIVES BY KATHY:** signs, tea towels
- #5 **SINCERE SURROUNDINGS:** signs\*
- #6 **BLUE MOUNTAIN ARTS:** greeting cards\*
- #7 **CARSON:** windchimes, sympathy gifts
- #8 **ROMAN:** Alexa's Angels, bracelets, various
- #9 **MANTRABAND:** bracelets
- #10 **COCO & CARMEN:** My Salvation bracelets\*

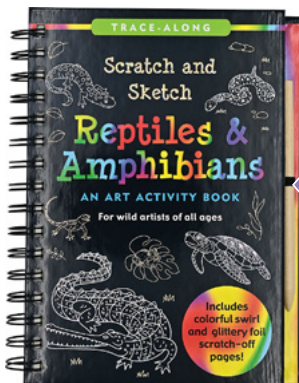
**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Christian Art, Ronaldo

#### \*OF NOTE!

**SINCERE SURROUNDINGS** ([www.sinceresurroundings.com](http://www.sinceresurroundings.com)) and **COCO & CARMEN** ([www.cococarmen.com](http://www.cococarmen.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **BLUE MOUNTAIN ARTS** ([www.sps.com](http://www.sps.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

**FAST FACT**  
Retail sales declined year-over-year in March for 55% of store owners

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



Strong sales of Scratch and Sketch books from **Peter Pauper Press** earned the company a spot on this issue's children's gifts and toys chart, up from an honorable mention in 2022. The books retail for \$14.99. The style shown here will debut in May. ([www.peterpauper.com](http://www.peterpauper.com))

"The new books to match the smaller Warmies have been a huge hit. They make a great gift."  
— Ohio retailer



A variety of sweet seasonal decor for Easter and spring earned **Transpac** a spot on the top 10 list of bestselling Easter and spring vendors. New for summer the company is introducing a plethora of cute decor including these adorable salt and pepper shakers. ([www.shoptii.com](http://www.shoptii.com))

### CHILDREN'S GIFTS & TOYS Last ran in Sept 2022

- #1 **JELLYCAT:** bunnies, books, books with plush
- #2 **INTELEX:** Warmies, slippers, various
- #3 **DOUGLAS:** plush
- #4 **TY:** plush
- #5 **MUD PIE:** apparel, toys, various
- #6 **SCHYLLING:** Needoh, novelty toys, various\*
- #7 **MARY MEYER:** Wubbanub, plush\*
- #8 **PETER PAUPER PRESS:** Scratch and Sketch books, various\*

- #9 **KELLY TOY:** Squishmallows
- #10 **DEMDACO:** plush, various

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Toysmith, Aurora, Melissa & Doug

#### \*OF NOTE!

**SCHYLLING** ([www.schylling.com](http://www.schylling.com)) and **MARY MEYER** ([www.marymeyer.com](http://www.marymeyer.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **PETER PAUPER PRESS** ([www.peterpauper.com](http://www.peterpauper.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

### MESSAGE JEWELRY Last ran in December 2022

- #1 **DEMDACO:** various
- #2 **SCOUT CURATED WEARS:** various
- #3 **KATIE LOXTON:** bracelets, kid's bracelets
- #4 **BRIGHTON:** various
- #5 **ROMAN:** various
- #6 **CENTER COURT:** Embracelets, various
- #7 **MULBERRY STUDIOS:** Lumiela, various
- #8 **MANTRABAND:** bracelets\*
- #9 **PURA VIDA:** bracelets
- #10 **RONALDO:** bracelets

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Earth Angel, Spartina, Little Words Project

#### \*OF NOTE!

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

### GIFT BOOKS Last ran in May 2022

- #1 **JELLYCAT:** books with plush gift sets
- #2 **CHRONICLE:** cookbooks, various
- #3 **COMPENDIUM:** children's
- #4 **HARPERCOLLINS:** religious, various
- #5 **PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE:** children's, various
- #6 **WORKMAN:** sticker, various
- #7 **CHRISTIAN ART GIFTS:** devotionals, journals
- #8 **PETER PAUPER PRESS:** Scratch and Sketch books, various
- #9 **HACHETTE:** cookbooks, children's, various
- #10 **HARVEST HOUSE:** devotionals

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Scholastic, Thomas Nelson

#### \*OF NOTE!

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

### REGISTER AREA Last ran in November 2022

- #1 **ABDALLAH CANDIES:** chocolate, caramels
- #2 **THE NAKED BEE:** lip balm, lotion
- #3 **SILVER FOREST:** earrings
- #4 **GANZ:** pocket tokens
- #5 **DM:** various
- #6 **TELETIES:** hair ties
- #7 **ENEWTON:** bracelets
- #8 **JELLY BELLY:** jellybeans\*
- #9 **CENTER COURT:** jewelry
- #10 **PURA VIDA:** bracelets

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Brighton, Sweet Shop USA

#### \*OF NOTE!

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

### EASTER & SPRING Last ran in May 2022

- #1 **JELLYCAT:** bunnies, plush, plush with books
- #2 **EVERGREEN:** flags, mats
- #3 **MUD PIE:** tea towels, decor, serveware
- #4 **NORA FLEMING:** bases, Easter minis
- #5 **GANZ:** pocket tokens, various
- #6 **STUDIO M:** flags, mats
- #7 **TRANSPAC:** various

- #8 **GERSON:** garden decor, home decor
- #9 **RAZ IMPORTS:** florals, various\*
- #10 **TY:** plush\*

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** Custom Decor, 180 Degrees, Carson

#### \*OF NOTE!

**RAZ IMPORTS** ([www.razimports.com](http://www.razimports.com)) and **TY** ([www.ty.com](http://www.ty.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran.

### T-SHIRTS Last ran in May 2022

- #1 **LIFE IS GOOD:** women's, various
- #2 **SIMPLY SOUTHERN:** various
- #3 **LAKEHIRTS:** custom\*
- #4 **LUBA:** custom
- #5 **OLD GUYS RULE:** various
- #6 **DM:** Hello Mello\*
- #7 **UNSALTED COAST:** various\*
- #8 **KERUSSO:** various
- #9 **TUMBLEWEED TEXTYLES:** various\*
- #10 **AUGUST BLEU:** various\*

**HONORABLE MENTIONS:** B Wear, Gear for Sports, Jane Marie

#### \*OF NOTE!

**DM** ([www.247dm.com](http://www.247dm.com)), **UNSALTED COAST** ([unsalted-coast.myshopify.com](http://unsalted-coast.myshopify.com)), **TUMBLEWEED TEXTYLES** ([tumbleweedtextyles.com](http://tumbleweedtextyles.com)) and **AUGUST BLEU** ([augustbleu.com](http://augustbleu.com)) did not rank when this chart last ran, while **LAKEHIRTS** ([www.lakeshirts.com](http://www.lakeshirts.com)) moved from an honorable mention onto the chart.

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# In Like a Lamb

**M**arch sales compared to last year left much to be desired with just 35 percent of independent gift store owners reporting annual gains. The majority (55 percent) reported sales declines. Most concernedly, 23 percent noted those declines were in the area of 10 percent or more. The remaining 10 percent managed to maintain sales year-over-year. Not surprisingly these

underwhelming results have some retailers on edge – pinching their pennies and worried about what the future holds. When it comes to purchasing plans for the remainder of the year, 42 percent of boutique owners are planning to reign things in and spend less than they did last year. The worrying sales results have not, however, put a damper on summer travel plans. Exactly 50 percent of



**ERICA KIRKLAND**  
PUBLISHER & EDITOR

retailers indicate they plan to attend a show this season, slightly up from last year's 49 percent. **ER**

## chartMOVERS

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

### CHILDREN'S GIFTS & TOYS

A variety of new Needoh skus has reignited interest in this product line from **SCHYLLING** ([www.schylling.com](http://www.schylling.com)) earning the company a new spot on the chart. Also new to the chart is **MARY MEYER** ([www.marymeyer.com](http://www.marymeyer.com)) who listed based on sales of its popular soother plush Wubbanubs. Interestingly, **SQUISHMALLOWS** ([www.squishmallows.com](http://www.squishmallows.com)) dropped from third to ninth place.

### EASTER & SPRING

**RAZ IMPORTS** ([www.razimports.com](http://www.razimports.com)) and **TY** ([www.ty.com](http://www.ty.com)) were new additions to the chart this year, earning their place based on sales of florals and plush respectively. **JELLYCAT** ([www.jellycat.com](http://www.jellycat.com)) rose to number one from number three based on sales of its bunnies and popular book-with-plush gift sets – apparently store owners and their clients couldn't get enough of the cute and cuddly creatures. A big hit for **MUD PIE** ([mud-pie.com](http://mud-pie.com)) this season were the company's tea towels, mentioned by many store owners as the company's number-one selling sku in this category this spring.

### MESSAGE & INSPIRATIONAL

Sign supplier **SINCERE SURROUNDINGS** ([www.sinceresurroundings.com](http://www.sinceresurroundings.com)) made an impressive appearance on the charts at number five while **COCO & CARMEN** ([www.cococarmen.com](http://www.cococarmen.com)) came in at number 10. The apparel company's new My Salvation bracelets are selling well for store owners leading to their chart appearance. Also of note was that **BLUE MOUNTAIN ARTS** ([www.sps.com](http://www.sps.com)) jumped from an honorable mention to number six based on the strength of their greeting card sales.

### T-SHIRTS

Every time we run this chart the suppliers change greatly owing to the plethora of suppliers in the industry and the regional saleability of certain lines. The few constants through the years include **LIFE IS GOOD** ([lifeisgood.com](http://lifeisgood.com)) and **SIMPLY SOUTHERN** ([www.simplysouthern.com](http://www.simplysouthern.com)). New to the chart this issue are **DM** ([www.247dm.com](http://www.247dm.com)), **UNSALTED COAST** ([unsalted-coast.myshopify.com](http://unsalted-coast.myshopify.com)), **TUMBLEWEED TEXTYLES** ([tumbleweedtextyles.com](http://tumbleweedtextyles.com)) and **AUGUST BLEU** ([augustbleu.com](http://augustbleu.com)).



### SALESBEAT

#### March Sales Decline for Majority

By Erica Kirkland

Over half (55 percent) of independent gift retailers noted March sales were down year-over-year. Surprisingly, the biggest subgroup among those with sales declines were stores with drops of 10 percent or more, with 23 percent of store owners noting their shops fit into that lackluster group.

Easter falling in early April, the impact of inflation and bad weather were mentioned by multiple store owners as a cause for the shortfall while a Wisconsin retailer summed up the month the way a lot of retailers did when she wrote, "A lot of slow sales days, no large holidays and the rising costs of everyday living equaled less 'fun' money" for consumers to spend.

In Ohio, a store owner put things into a different perspective with, "We had a normal volume for March, but we were up against an unusually big March last year."

#### MARCH 2023 SALES (vs. March 2022)

↑ 10%+	18%
↑ 5-9%	3%
↑ 1-4%	14%
↔	10%
↓ 1-4%	11%
↓ 5-9%	21%
↓ 10%+	23%

### SHOW TRAVEL

Half of Store Owners Will Attend a Show This Summer

Exactly 50 percent of independent gift retailers have indicated they definitely intend to travel to a summer trade show this season. The show most plan to attend is Atlanta with 30 percent of respondents indicating this was one of the shows they intended to visit. Beyond the major markets, one quarter of store owners are also planning to attend a regional show this summer.

Getting away during the busy

tourist months of the summer is a struggle for many store owners including a retailer from Illinois who writes, "I don't typically attend in summer but might go to a couple of small local shows in Chicago." An Ohio retailer writes, "Summer is tourist season, but I hope to go to the Las Vegas apparel shows in August." A North Carolina retailer has the same plans, saying "We are going to the August apparel show instead of the gift show this time."

Another retailer from Ohio was headed to the Magic show in April last month in place of going to Atlanta in July.

### SHOW ATTENDANCE

The markets retailers plan to attend

Atlanta	30%
Dallas	23%
Las Vegas	22%
NY Now	8%

### PURCHASING PLANS

Store Owners Staying the Course

When it comes to their buying plans for the remainder of the year, independent gift store owners are staying the course with exactly 50 percent planning to spend the same amount as they did last year. The other major cohort, representing 42 percent of boutique owners, plan to cut back on spending while eight percent intend to spend more.

An Ohio retailer writes that, "I overspent last year and sales were down a little." As such she plans to spend less than she did last year. In Illinois a retailer is also planning to spend less, saying, "I'm trying to keep spending down to must-haves and brand new trendy items."

Another Illinois retailer writes, "We don't want to spend a lot more money than last year, but we want to spend more of what we have on new items that will catch peoples' attention and give us extra-long markups."

#### PROCURING NEW VS. BESTSELLERS

A Michigan retailer with multiple locations writes, "I'm going to be cautious, but continue to bring in new products. I'll be doing lots of research for new lines, and then reordering as needed. I have found over the last year that I can get product when I need it, it just might not always be the same vendor. Instead of stocking it deep and hoping it sells, I am going lean."

A North Carolina retailer is on a slightly similar path but plans to buy deeper. "I'd like to pair down, thin out and focus on doing bigger and better with my top sellers." In Michigan, another store owner has the same plans, saying, "I'm narrowing down lines and going deeper on bestsellers."





"I don't think you can survive without new lines," says a Wyoming

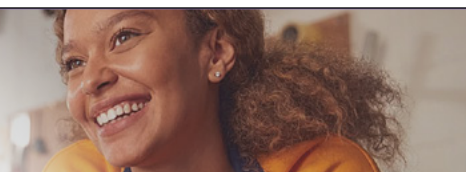
store owner, "But we are being very cautious with our buys!"

A New Hampshire store owner summed up the sentiments of many saying, "We're always looking for new but not jumping on every bandwagon that comes to town. We're being selective."

### NEW PRODUCT PURCHASES

Plans for the Remainder of the Year

	SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVE 53%
	SOMEWHAT AGGRESSIVE 23%
	VERY CONSERVATIVE 20%
	VERY AGGRESSIVE 4%



## CLEARING OUT INVENTORY

Expert Says Choose Clearance Over Big Sales

By Natalie Hammer Noblitt

Sales may help clear some slow inventory, but too many sales — or putting the whole store on discount — is bad for business according to expert Bob Phibbs, The Retail Doctor. He says understanding the difference between sales and clearance is key to clearing out excess inventory effectively. Clearance is typically the best way for gift retailers to move stale merchandise and keep profits solid in the rest of the store, he says.

### Q. Why do clearances get more attention than sales?

A. Immediacy is the power of the word clearance. It lets people know this is their chance to buy. If it's a great price, a thrifty shopper will love the idea of getting a fantastic bargain even if they don't really need the item. They know they can't watch and wait; they must buy it now. It sparks the fear of missing out.

A sale is more like frosting on the cake for a shopper who already came to make a purchase. It works best set as a targeted promotion for one category or brand. A clearance display is more likely to make a shopper buy something they didn't consider before they arrived. Clearance functions to get some of your product investment back before it becomes totally worthless.

### Q. How does a store owner know when it's time to clearance an item rather than put it on sale?

A. Don't be intimidated to get rid of slow movers or feel you must get every penny you can for them. If you order a dozen of an item, employees might buy four of them and there are another eight to sell. It may seem in your POS system that the item is selling, but is it really?

If by the first six weeks you're not able to move it, check to see if you

should display the merchandise in a better location. By three months, the stock should be at least half sold. If not, that means you've grown bored of it and your staff is no longer talking about it. If moving it or trying a different display style hasn't worked, it may be time to clearance.

### Q. When changing a display for a slow item, what should stores consider?

A. Retailers often buy items at trade shows because the vendor did a fantastic job of merchandising it in the showroom. Remember not to buy anything you won't be able to give that same great attention. If you bring back this item and put it on the cheapest shelving in your store, chances are it's not going to look as great to your shoppers as it did to you. If you're struggling with display ideas, ask the vendor how to successfully merchandise that item or type of product.

Make sure your staff know how to sell it. Spell out the features of the product, and don't assume shoppers know what it is or what it does. Don't rely on a discount to sell it.

### Q. Why is it better to go the clearance route than hosting a sale?

A. Moving out old merchandise and bringing in fresh just feels better to you and your shoppers. Cut your losses and clear out what's no longer exciting. Holding on to an item too long just hurts your cash flow. Be honest with yourself and recognize that long-sitting items aren't going to become more attractive with time.

Clearance items should be displayed together at the back of the store so bargain shoppers can find them in one place. Mixing full price items with discount ones confuses shoppers. And putting clearance up

front stops shoppers from coming all the way in to see what's fresh and full price.

If someone has committed to driving to your store and coming inside, they're already likely to make a purchase. Clearance sales can be add-ons rather than replacing what they sought out in the first place. Shoppers don't usually look at the original price of a clearance item as much as they pay attention to the discount you're offering. They love to see how much they saved.

Storewide sales won't help you with slow-moving items. In most cases, you'd need to offer 20 to 30 percent off to get real shopper attention. There's no reason to give up profit on everything in your store when it's only specific items that need to really move. Also, hosting storewide sales usually means making exceptions that won't be discounted. No shopper likes to hear the whole store is on sale except for that one item they really wanted. It feels like a trick.

### Q. Do I need to let shoppers know about clearance deals?

A. Yes, promote it on social media, through emails and any way you normally tell shoppers about sales. If you want to host a big event and create some hype around the deals, promote it and make it special. Set it for a day where traffic is usually slow in your store. Don't make it on a Saturday when you are likely to have your best sales volume naturally.

Invite your loyalty club shoppers to come in an hour before you open and to bring along a friend in order to make the event something to look forward to. These shoppers will feel they've gotten special access and you'll be on your way to making room for fresh merchandise. ☐

## TOP TIPS

## HOW TO MOVE MERCHANDISE

- Six weeks after it hits your shelves, half of an item's original inventory should be sold. If not, something must change to help it sell.
- Try new placement or display styles, but don't let it sit too long if it's still not selling.
- Start your clearance with 30 percent off marked prices for one week. Alert customers via social media or email about the great bargains on their favorite brands, noting selections are limited.
- Mark down whatever is left at 60 percent off to sell for another week. Again, send out alerts, maybe even running a paid Facebook ad.
- Another strategy can be to host an event when many items are ready to be cleared with a big discount. This can help move them quickly and get attention.
- Donate items to charity if hefty discounts aren't working. If it can't be donated, don't keep it. Write it off as a loss and throw it out. Do not let it stay in your store or backroom.
- Once you aggressively clear out what's not selling, do a physical inventory. This way you'll get an accurate picture of what new products you need to buy.

— Bob Phibbs, The Retail Doctor



# Historic Shop Continues to Inspire

By Jessica Harlan

**C**hristina Schwab is the fourth person to own the historic building housing her shop, Inspired. The building, on New Ulm's charming main street, was constructed in the late 1890s as a saddle and harness shop and has been in continuous business since then, in various incarnations. Christina acquired the store in 2017 when its owner retired and has updated the shop with expanded offerings and a new look and name.

## *What makes your store unique?*

I think it's unique that we do custom floral arrangements and have even hosted workshops to teach our customers how to make them. We also offer free gift wrap, which is something that a lot of places don't do anymore.

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

I strive to keep a warm and inviting atmosphere. I try to make sure the displays aren't too overloaded, so you can see through the store,

which is on two floors of two adjacent buildings. There are several rooms to explore, and we encourage customers to wind their way through. Our fixtures are eclectic: some old furniture, some shelving, and a mix of freestanding fixtures and slat wall shelves. We have an old tin ceiling and on the second floor, there's original woodwork and transom windows above some of the doorways.

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

I think a lot of it has to do with the staff. They're great at helping customers find what they're looking for, problem solving, or knowing where to send them if we can't help them. We love to encourage customers to shop in the rest of the town, too.

## *How do you promote your store?*

We have a part-time social media manager. She does a lot of our







## PROFILE

**STORE:** *Inspired*

**LOCATION:** *New Ulm, Minn.*

**SQUARE FOOTAGE:** *8000*

**EMPLOYEES:** *One full-time,  
23 part-time*

**WEBSITE:** *www.inspirednewulm.com*

**TOP LINES:** *Tribal, Slimsation, Parsley  
and Sage, Mud Pie, Demdaco, Gerson,  
Creative Co-Op*

Instagram and Facebook content. We use it to show off our products, or sometimes our staff will be featured in videos and photos. We also do a little advertising in our local papers and radio.

***What has been your most successful recent event?***

During the COVID-19 pandemic we got started with virtual fashion shows, and we've continued to do those twice a year. Our staff are the models, which people can relate to because they're real bodies of all shapes and sizes. We usually do two to three runs featuring nine staffers per show, with the shows lasting 30 to 35

minutes. Customers can watch the show live and comment, or they can watch the recording afterwards. We'll often offer a coupon or an incentive for them to come into the store. The shows are done right in the store, so it doesn't cost us anything but time.

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

We brought in the Drinks on Me line late last year. The company makes coasters and napkins with funny sayings on them. Everyone gets a kick out of listening to customers laugh over them.

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

There's been so many — I had no background in retail! The hardest part for me has been just knowing when to sale-price things, and that it's ok to mark them down and let them go. That was a hard lesson, and I'm still learning how to do it effectively.

***Finally, how do you stay inspired?***

For me, it's just getting out in nature. That's where I refresh and regroup. Planning those trips is always inspirational. 🌲





# Hot Finds & New Releases

## Hot Dog Toys

If you haven't jumped on the **Haute Diggity Dog** bandwagon you might want to give these sassy dog toys another look. Haute Diggity Dog is the original designer of parody plush. Dogs and their owners love the company's fun and unique designer parody plush which is safe for dogs and fun for humans. From \$12.95 to \$47.95 retail. ([www.hautediggitydog.com](http://www.hautediggitydog.com))



## Sweeping Trend

Super soft, absorbent microfiber Aunt Deloris slippers from **DM's Two Left Feet** collection are flying off the shelves right now. Featuring non-slip soles and four colorful styles: Fineapple, Feline Frisky, Ready To Flamingle and Wild Mama, the slippers are available in two sizes, retailing from \$20.95. ([www.247dm.com](http://www.247dm.com))



## Putting Nurses First

**Beekman 1802** has developed a Nurses First hand cream with all proceeds donated to charities that support nurses. The company's first ceramide-infused hand cream was inspired by nurses. It's made with mineral-rich goat milk which leaves hardworking hands feeling soft and hydrated. \$11 cost for 3.4-ounce tube. ([www.beekman1802.com](http://www.beekman1802.com))

Let us know about your  
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[erica@giftbeat.com](mailto:erica@giftbeat.com)



## Sunscreen Towel

Sun protection in the form of a towel is the basis of the **Salt n Rays** collection. The UPF 50 towels not only provide protection from the sun's harmful rays but they also double as a wrap or sarong. Lightweight, absorbent and fast drying, the towels are ideal for outings such as boat and beach trips, the ball field and more. The towels pack up easily and weigh only eight ounces. Available in 30 designs with an option to customize with a 100 unit minimum. \$17.50 cost. ([www.saltnrays.com](http://www.saltnrays.com))



## Full-Flavored Pretzels

**Outsiders Kitchen** is a snack company started by Philly suburb natives that now call the beautiful Catskill Mountains of New York home. The company's mission is simple: create flavored sourdough pretzels like you haven't quite experienced before. Perfectly sweet and salty, each bag packs a flavorful punch and a satisfying crunch. There are seven different flavors to choose from including White Wine, Red Wine, Orange & Ginger, Lemon & Poppy, Berries & Cream, Sugar & Spice and Coffee & Cream. From \$8.99 retail each. ([www.outsiderskitchen.com](http://www.outsiderskitchen.com))



# Hot Finds & New Releases

## Coastal Collection

**True Ocean** is a beach-centric collection of fragrance and personal care products infused with mineral-rich purified seawater. With notes of palm leaf and bergamot, the line's signature Coastal scent imbues a carefree vibe while their handcrafted whitewashed wood packaging rounds out the beach-living lifestyle theme. The company has aligned themselves with boutiques and gift shops and offers low price points along with attractive displayers. Products range in price from \$8 to \$22 cost. ([mytrueocean.com](http://mytrueocean.com))



## Capelton Road Clothing

Hot off the presses, this brand-new line from the creators of **Hatley** features beach dresses and cover-ups for women and children. Featuring vibrant prints and beautiful fabrics, the pieces are ideal for mommy-and-me matching outfits. Girl's sizes 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10. Women's sizes XS to XL. ([www.hatley.com](http://www.hatley.com))

## Readers' Picks

### The Gourmet Goods

**Carmie's Kitchen** is home to all-natural gourmet dip mixes, soup mixes, cheesecake dips, bread dipping oil mixes and much more. Since 1988 the company has been supplying 3000 stores nationwide with their delicious creations including one of *Giftbeat's* reporting store owners who raves about the line. The mixes are beautifully packaged, great for displaying and gift-giving. Retail prices range from \$5 to \$10 per mix. ([www.carmieskitchen.com](http://www.carmieskitchen.com))





## Supplier *Spotlight*

# Driftless Studios



Driftless Studios is a family-owned and operated business located in Westby, Wis., in the driftless region. While the company hasn't yet made it onto our charts, our reporting stores certainly have plenty of positive things to say about this line of products which is entirely handmade in the USA. Products include a variety of customizable items from signs, coasters, ornaments, and magnets to tumblers, candles and tea towels. All products are sourced from quality materials and feature in-house designs. ([www.driftlessstudios.com](http://www.driftlessstudios.com))

## TREND *Alert*

# Fashion Forecast

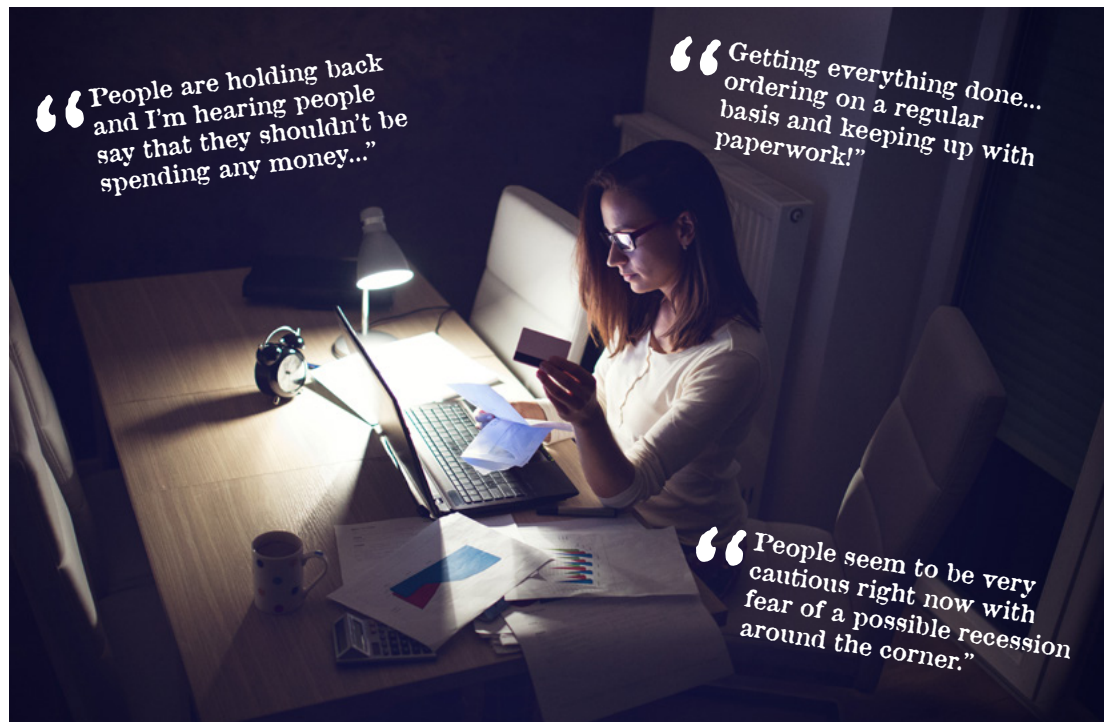
We asked store owners what's trending right now and the consensus is the following are must-buys for the summer selling season

- \* Bold print dresses
- \* Colorful earrings
- \* Wide-leg jeans
- \* Stackable bracelets
- \* Embroidered fashions and accessories
- \* Patchwork fashions and accessories
- \* Crocheted fashions and accessories

## THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

The Issues Keeping Retailers Up at Night

By Erica Kirkland



Inflation and its impact on the economy is top of mind for a lot of store owners these days. "People are holding back and I'm hearing people say that they shouldn't be spending any money..." comments a California store owner while a Massachusetts retailer says, "Things are definitely slowing down" as a result of inflation and its impact on the economy.

"People seem to be very cautious right now with fear of a possible recession around the corner," writes a store owner from Utah while in Arizona a store owner says, "Inflation is beginning to really take its toll I'm afraid." Staffing is also another major

concern. "Staffing is a big challenge right now," says a Colorado store owner. "Finding good help that will commit for the long term is questionable."

A store owner in Indiana is in a staffing bind too. "My biggest struggle is with finding someone to handle my social media and website."

"Staffing is my biggest struggle and has been for three years now," says a store owner from Ohio. "Recently, I had several quality applicants and hired two part-timers but I'm still looking for one full-time person."

Having the feeling of being pulled in too many directions has a number of retailers dizzy with exhaustion.

"Getting everything done... ordering on a regular basis and keeping up with paperwork!" are the biggest struggles for a Pennsylvania retailer.

"My biggest struggle is having time to put on all the hats I have to wear, and one of those is continuing to find ways to excite customers and keep them choosing us," says a South Carolina store owner while another retailer from Ohio writes, "It feels like the time it takes to run the admin, HR, compliance and accounting parts of the business are taking more time than ever! This is cutting into time to source new products and spend time on the secret sauce parts of the gift shop."

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### ARTICLES OF NOTE:

- Shop Profile of Inspired
- Summer Show Travel Plans
- Retailers Curb Purchasing Plans
- March Sales Declined for Majority
- How to Balance Your Inventory

### CATEGORIES TRACKED

Children's Gifts & Toys  
Easter & Spring  
Gift Books  
Home Decor  
Message & Inspirational  
Message Jewelry  
Register Area  
Tabletop Accessories  
T-shirts

### Top-selling vendors:

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

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