

This year get to know your clients and what they want.

When I was 7 years old, I hadn't quite got the concept of gift giving. The thought of spending my hard earned allowance on other people was a little scary. But I steeled myself and the first Christmas present I bought was a badge with a picture of **the Beatles**, for my grandmother. I know, what was I thinking?

Re-gifting ad infinitum

Granny was 67 and I don't think she had even heard of the Beatles. But not only did she sweetly thank me, she then gave the badge back to me. Wow! Right away my greedy little brain started plotting ahead to a long line of future Christmases, where I would buy family members gifts that I really wanted and they would simply give them back to me.

Back to the drawing board

Granny didn't have the heart to straighten me out, but my sister wasn't so gentle. She made it crystal clear that if I gave her a Hot Wheels car, rather than give it back to me, she would sooner break it over my head. What a spoilsport. For some reason she seemed to want a gift that she could appreciate.

Did you get what you wanted?

So what holiday gifts did you really appreciate? I'll bet it wasn't the most expensive ones (okay, the Ferrari was nice). Weren't the best ones those that demonstrated that the giver knew you and *what you'd* enjoy?

Generic gifts are nice but ...

Generic gifts work well for an office group but they just don't have the warm fuzzies of a personalized gift. It truly is the thought that counts, especially when it comes to gifts for individual clients. That requires a little bit more effort and familiarity with people.

How well do you know your clients?

When you really know your clients, you can set yourself apart from the crowd with small, personal touch gift ideas like these:

- A magazine subscription dealing with their favorite interests
(The gift that keeps giving and each time one arrives it reminds them of you.)
- Books and recordings are great gifts
(Especially if you know the person's likes, so ask them who and what they read or listen to.)
- Restaurant certificates, food gifts or alcohol (These taste even better when you know their tastes.)
- A donation to an organization or cause that you know they endorse
(Such as SPCA, Rotary Foundation, UNICEF, Public TV, CKUA Radio – yes, these are some of our favorites.)
- Tickets to theater, sporting events or a concert
(One year we treated some clients who enjoy world music, with tickets to a fabulous Johnny Clegg concert.)

What if you don't know what your clients like?

If you don't know, then set a goal to get to know them better. Over the phone or the next time you meet them, get to know your business contacts on a personal level. Then keep your eyes open to personalize your gifting ideas for next holiday season or special occasions and surprises throughout the year.

No more re-gifting

That way your clients will be thinking warm thoughts about you and your thoughtfulness. No more re-gifting and no more Beatles' badges for granny, unless you discover she really is a Beatles fan.

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