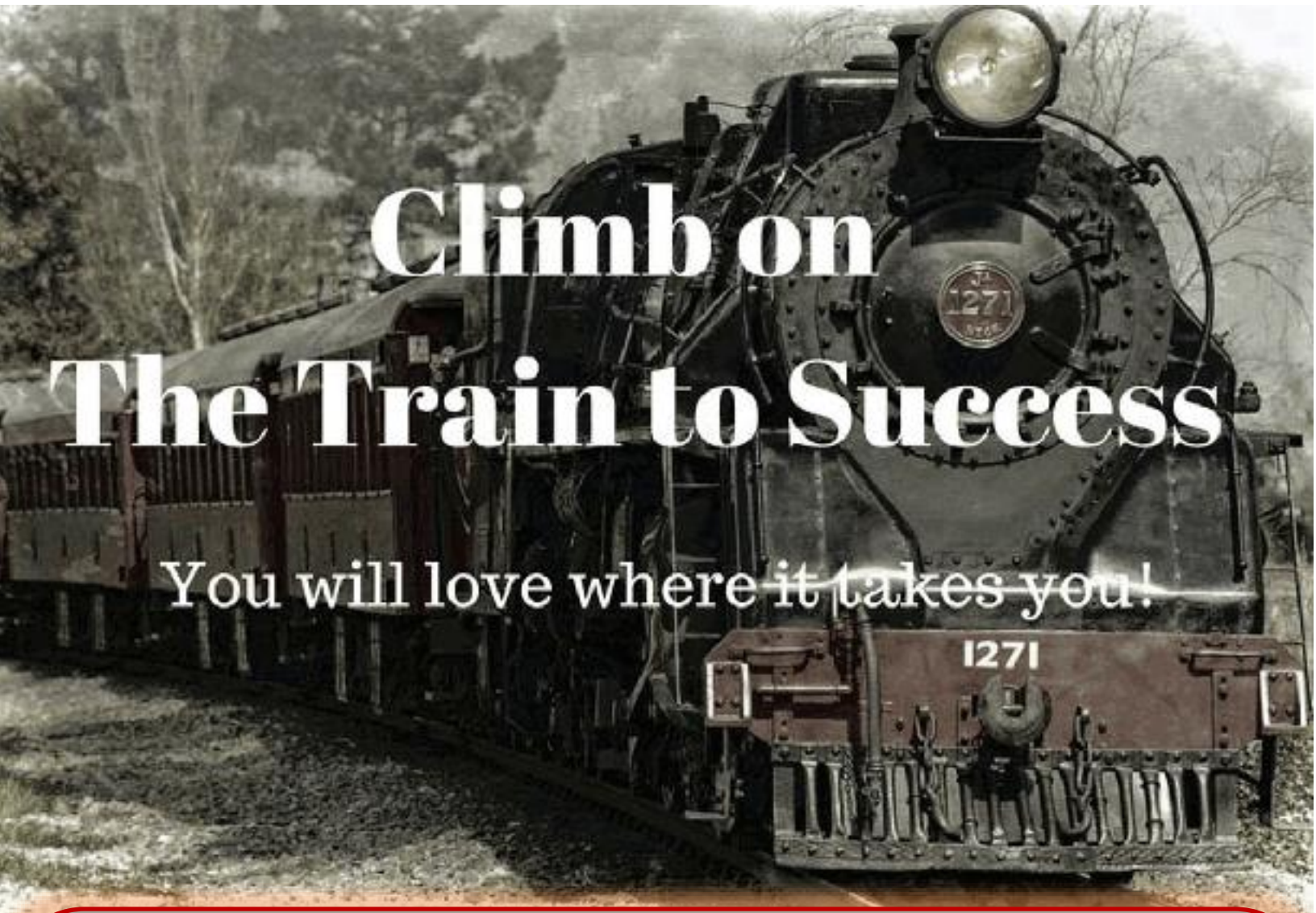


**Gift Business**

# **INSIDER**

**January 2017**

The Official Magazine of GiftBasketNetwork.com



## **Climb on The Train to Success**

**You will love where it takes you!**

**It's Time for  
A Gift Basket Business Evolution  
Celebration & Revolution**



2017

It's Time to  
Celebrate!

The Evolution of the  
Gift Basket Industry

And

**Gift Basket Network**

Established January 2005

**Gift BusinessInsider Magazine**

Established March 2010

And Introducing

**The Success Express**

## The Evolution of the Gift Basket Industry

Gift-giving, one of the world's oldest social traditions, has evolved through the ages. From the apple Eve gave to Adam to the gifts brought to worship the Christ child to the turkey presented by Scrooge to the Cratchit family after a night of restless dreaming, gifts have been a part of life.

Gift giving has come a long way since Harry & David graduated from selling fruit at a roadside stand into mail order back in 1948. A lot of new products have been introduced, tried, and then discarded as suitable gifts.

Chocolate-covered ants, introduced at the 1963 International Fancy Food Show, are a good example. A few years ago, chocolate-covered pasta received rave reviews and has now almost disappeared from lack of interest.

Like fashions, gifts have a cycle. The kinds of gifts as well as the giving patterns change over the years.

Bottles of alcohol were once considered the gift of choice. Then popcorn tins became the gift of the time. I remember when I was a Realtor, the office received so many Christmas popcorn tin gifts that we were snacking on stale popcorn in July.

Gift baskets have been a part of the huge gift industry in some form or other for years. In



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the 1980's, florists started adding gift baskets to their floral offerings and the trend continued building through that decade.

In 1990, Debra Paulk started Gift Basket Review, the first publication for the industry. She added other booklets and publications to her growing information business as well as conventions (called Jubilee) held twice a year, in December and in the summer.

I attended my first Jubilee convention in the mid 1990's in Sacramento, California. It was a combination of gift baskets, balloons, and florals. The Internet was new and I had made many gift basket friends on the AOL and Prodigy bulletin boards. It was wonderful to meet and network with them at this and later Jubilees.

The industry continued growing throughout the 1990s and early part of the 2000's. Cherie Reagor, who had been a two-time Designer of the Year winner, held her first convention and followed with a print magazine "Rave Reviews" which thrived for six years. These magazines and conventions shaped the direction in which the industry went as well as the designs and even the products used in the gift baskets.

The gift basket industry thrived and grew. Promises of "start your gift basket business with just \$500" encouraged many new business owners. Retail stores of all kinds jumped on the bandwagon creating gift baskets with their products to sell in their stores.

The peak in the industry came just before the bubble burst in the real estate and banking industries during 2007—2009 and the economic conditions were the worst since the depression of the 1930's. As a result, many of the major vendors as well as many gift basket and gift companies closed their doors.

Those who were nimble enough to make quick changes and had the capital to hang on survived and created the core of the industry that we have today.

Ever since the gift basket industry began, it has fluctuated and evolved and continues to do so.

Design trends changed as customer's needs changed. The first conventions that I attended focused on creating themed baskets with enhancements such as tissue puffs and not as much product. Cherie Reagor introduced beautiful floral enhancements and more upscale gift products into the designs. This trend, too, evolved as people began looking for value for their dollar and most designers cut back on the florals and upscale gifts.

Food baskets have since surpassed the themed ones in popularity. The change made by UPS and Fedex to calculate shipping charges based on the size of the package rather than by weight resulted in more changes in designs that had to be shipped.

Even though many don't wish to admit it, the gift basket industry is very different than it was in its heyday.

As the world has evolved, customer needs have changed, creating new demands for new types of products and services -- and opening up new areas of opportunity for companies to meet those needs.

The way people feel about giving gifts shifts through the year. And there is always the ever changing Internet which, probably more than anything, has affected the way many of us do business. Competition comes, goes, and returns, oftentimes in a different costume, but it is always there. And the biggest competition that affects our industry today is the wide-ranging tentacles of the Amazon monster.

The gift basket industry, like the rest of the world, is always changing but never as fast as now and it's not about to slow down.

And we have to change with it.



Gift baskets will continue to be popular as long as people give gifts. I'm probably going to get some throwback on this but, in my opinion, it is more and more difficult to be just a "gift basket company." Most of us discovered this a long time ago and have added products, that don't come in a basket, to our menu of gifts.

But there are other changes as well. The introduction of new ways to market that appear and disappear almost as fast as the seasons require us to be nimble and change with them.

Divisions within our industry have been a challenge but should no longer be an option. Working together to include a variety of gift possibilities that will enable us to once again become a powerful industry should be the goal.

**I challenge each member of our industry to join me in my Celebration  
and in what I am calling The Gift Basket Evolution Revolution!**

As with many things, we need to go back to our beginnings. Back to the days of the infancy of our industry when we had the AOL and Prodigy bulletin boards where we learned together by sharing what we experienced. Those were the days of all of us working together to create a successful industry that we were proud to be a part of.

We're heading into another year and wouldn't it be a shame if at the end of 2017, there were fewer companies and vendors, fewer opportunities, and a smaller industry?

It doesn't have to be that way. There is one simple thing that I've discovered that can make a difference in our own individual businesses as well as our industry that I am going to share with you. It is simply:

**To be successful, you have to have a reason.  
Something more important than yourself.**

I rarely share my "reason" for being in the information part of my business. But I'm going to share that with you now so that you can see my reason for calling for a "Gift Basket Evolution Revolution."

My “reason” has nothing to do with making lots of money from people who are struggling to succeed. I’ve made my money from my other profitable business ventures and there are others in this industry that you can pay more money to for information if you feel that you get what you pay for.

My reason is a much more personal one.

Many years ago, one of my English teachers, who did much more than just teach, was asked why she shared so much knowledge about so many things with all us students.

Her answer was that “Knowledge should never be buried in a grave.”

And I adopted her reason as my own. A reason that was more important than myself. A reason to not let my knowledge be buried with me in the grave.

That reason helped me build my own gift basket business that mushroomed into a national gift service. That reason led me to start GiftBasketNetwork and all that goes with it, including this magazine. And that reason resulted in the trial run of the Train to Success.

I wasn’t sure how something so different would be accepted but I was amazed at the response. That Train to Success has been sidetracked during the past couple of months as hopefully all of us have been busy during this busiest time of the year. But it hasn’t been forgotten as it has been repainted and given a new home station as well as a new focus.

The mail from this train will be about gift baskets, of course, since that is the core of our industry. But it will be about so much more as it has become more and more difficult to be just a “gift basket business.”

My own business has included more than just gift baskets from its conception when I chose a name that didn’t include the word baskets in it. Most other successful businesses have also added all kinds of things to their gift offerings — including candy and cookie bouquets, event planning, promotional products, bakery products, balloons, florals, fruit and nut trays, and more.

Therefore, the mail from the Train to Success, as well as this magazine, will contain tips from the trenches about starting a business, about marketing, about other opportunities to increase our income and more as it speeds down the track.

A Revolution can begin with one person but one person can never do it alone. I invite you to join me as we go back to the beginnings of our industry — back to the days when sharing was the basis. I invite your ideas and suggestions as to how we can grow this Revolution. I want to include articles, tips, and your experience from as many of you as are willing to become a part of the Revolution.

Today is the first day of 2017. The Success Express is leaving the station once again today. I invite you to climb on and take the Gift Basket Evolution Revolution around the world.

You can find it at <http://giftbusinessowners.com>

You can get your ticket for free.

As I said earlier, money is not my “reason.” Instead it is reaching as many people as possible with my knowledge before it is buried in the grave. As a result, check out the page JOIN at <http://giftbusinessowners.com> and see the changes, that will give you more for less money, that I have made.

I’ve never done this before but I am also inviting you to share this issue of the magazine with everyone that you think may be interested. The more the merrier! And the more passengers on this train, the more we will learn from each other.

The engineer is revving up the engine and the train is ready to start its journey to a Gift Basket Evolution Revolution as it speeds on its way to Success.

Are you with me?

*Joyce Reid*

Your Conductor on The Success Express





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# ARE YOU TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE CENTERPIECE AND EVENTS MARKET?

By Pam Monroe

Weddings, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, Quinceaneras, Birthdays, Reunions, Anniversaries, Christmas, New Years Eve, Easter. You name it and people celebrate it.

Now that I am retired, I can think more clearly (albeit cannot multitask like in my younger days!) about all of the coulda, shoulda, woulda opportunities that are available to gift basket designers.

Are you asking your clients if they are working on events and need centerpieces? Companies have holiday parties. Individuals celebrate life events. Your job is to convince them that rather than flowers or just balloons, your creativity can help to make their event a spectacular one.

Two years ago, my mom's cousin celebrated her 90th birthday. This woman is amazing. She walks every day, keeps very active by sewing, crocheting, knitting, making amazing fabric keepsake dolls, going out to lunch with friends and exercising.

So when her daughter Sally, a former event planner, asked if I'd help her with the centerpieces, I jumped at the chance. I might be retired but the designer in me still has the urge to create.





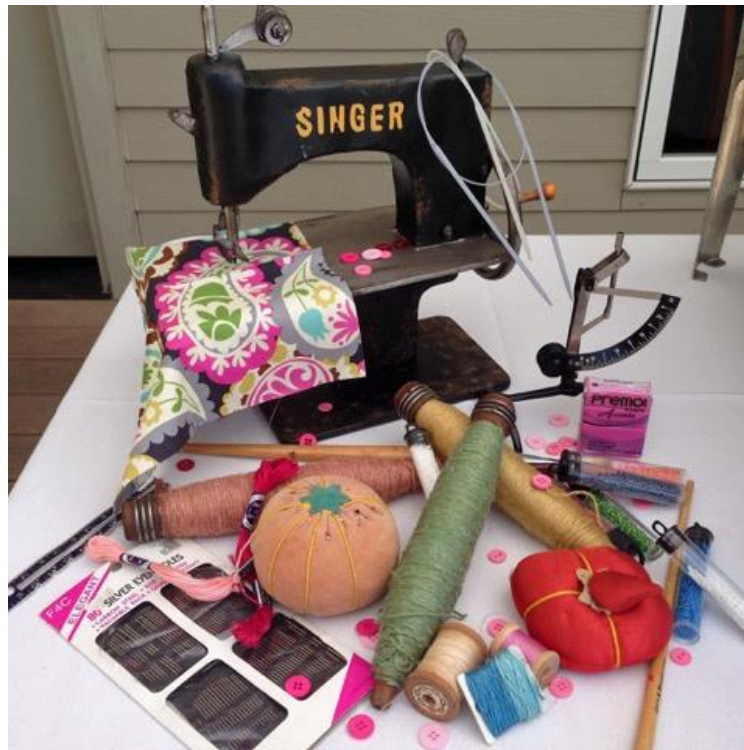
After weeks of deciding whether we wanted to do tote bags, flowers, succulents, manzanita branches, or anything else that came to mind, my cousin Sally called, very excited, to say that she had found the perfect centerpiece for her mom's tables...sewing machines!

In one of her catalogs, she found faux Singer metal sewing machines. Unbeknownst to her mom, Sally went through her mom's sewing room, grabbed patterns, fabric, and beads to use. I went through stuff I had inherited from my mom, who had died many years earlier, and pulled threads, sewing needles, crochet and knitting needles and whatever else I thought would work.

Our concept was borne.

We took scraps of fabric and tied them around the napkins. And of course we decorated the buffet table as well. I think you'll agree that they turned out adorable. Now that I'm no longer in business, everyone wanted to know if I contract out for centerpieces and decor.

Oh well. Another missed opportunity. Don't let this be YOUR missed opportunity



Not only can you charge for centerpieces, but you can create floral designs, candy buffets, party favors, chocolate fountains and so much more. People are busy and don't have the time but are willing to pay someone else to do the work for them. And they want a professional look.

You can do this!

I recently attended my 50th high school reunion. Yikes! We had a huge graduating class of nearly 1100 and had 275 people actually attend our dinner reunion party.

I'm a native San Diegan so I volunteered to be in charge of centerpieces. Unfortunately, this didn't allow for my creativity because my task was to recycle the glitzy stuff from a previous reunion without spending any money and to keep the centerpieces very simple.

So I bought the glass cylinders at Dollar Tree, copied pages from our yearbook and inserted them into each cylinder. We used mirrors and votives supplied to us for free by the hotel which helped to dress up the tables. We had leftover sunglasses from previous reunions and threw Double Bubble gum on each table.

So by utilizing everything free that we could, our cost for each centerpiece was \$1. And since our colors were red, white and blue, I bought individual bags of Cracker Jacks (from Costco), something we all grew up eating, and put them at each place setting -- for an added .25 per person, they finished off the tables beautifully and everyone loved them! Check Pinterest for hundreds of ideas.



Since I'd never done a candy buffet, I figured this was my chance. In keeping with our school colors, and a tight \$200 budget, I tried to find red/white/blue candies that we all grew up eating. As luck would have it, our Reunion was Oct 15th so I was able to buy several large bags of Halloween candy minis from Costco Business Center and bought

tiny bags of Planters Peanuts (they were the first to go!) We wanted to use all wrapped candies but there are numerous online sites that sell both wrapped and unwrapped candies based on your color preference.



Our Reunion was a huge success and attendees seemed to love the centerpieces and candy buffet. So if I still had my business and wanted to offer something like this, I would have charged \$20-\$25 for each of the 26 centerpieces that took less than five minutes each to create.

I had all of the containers and display pieces for the candy buffet, but if you need to purchase those items, they can all be reused later for other events. You can include a tower of cupcakes, cookies, lollipops, or just about anything your imagination can conjure up. It all depends on your creativity and, most of all, your client's budget.

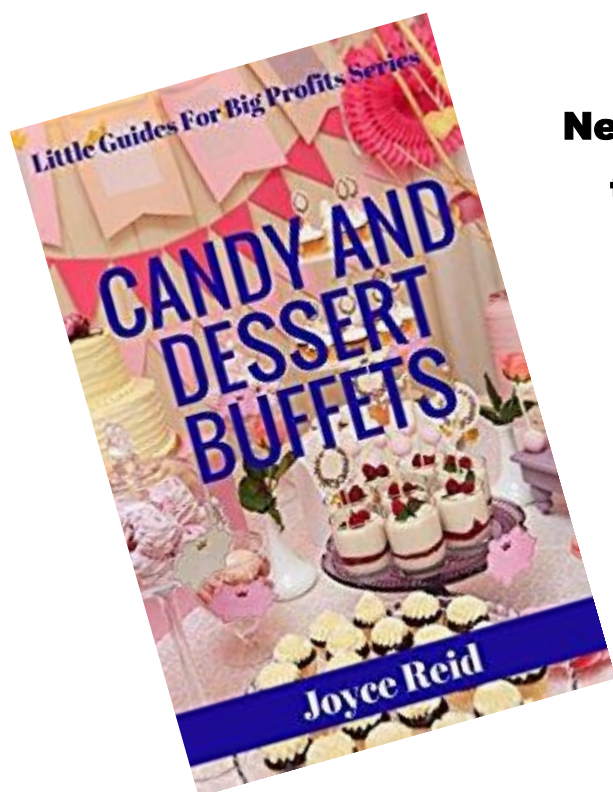
People are willing to pay several hundred to several thousands of dollars for a candy buffet!



When I did have my gift basket company, I did centerpieces for several bar and bat mitzvahs where the moms bought toys, books, crayons, stuffed plush, etc. I provided containers, arranged all of the items, soft wrapped with a bow and the balloon decor people attached balloons to each centerpiece. All of the centerpieces were later donated to Children's Hospital.

I charged for my time, supplies and creativity. So you see where I'm going with this. If I had wanted to incorporate balloons into my business, I could have also gotten the contract for all of the balloon decor. Let's not forget party favors, out-of-town-town guests in-room welcome or amenity bags, imprinted ribbon, specialized name tags, and so much more.

So now that the Holidays are behind us, it's the perfect time to explore another avenue to grow your business...Event Amenities!



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# Valentine Pop By Gift Idea

By Priscilla Medders

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To celebrate Valentine's Day, I've made an easy Valentine Takeout Favor project using our mini Take Out Boxes, our 4" metallic twist ties, and a few sheets of colorful felt. They would make a cute "Valentines" gift to present to your customers – perhaps with a 10% off coupon tucked inside. Wedding planners or candy shops might offer them as wedding favors, with the couple's names on the fortunes and some wrapped candy placed in the box.

I found my felt at Michael's and was impressed to learn that it was made in the USA from 100% recycled plastic bottles! Their regular, non-stiffened felt worked best for this project.

After cutting out my felt circles with fabric scissors – I've made both 4 1/2" circles and 3" circles – I plugged in the hot glue gun and got ready to put the "cookies" together.

Our 4" Metallic Twist Ties are already the perfect size for the 4 1/2" circle, and I trimmed some twist ties down to 2 1/2" for the 3" circles. Leaving 1/4" of space at





either edge, I added a thin line of hot glue down the center of each felt circle and carefully pressed a twist tie on top of it.

While I let the hot glue dry, I made some paper “fortunes”. The larger fortunes were  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$ ” and the smaller fortunes were  $3 \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ ”, but you might find that another size works better.



Turning the circle into a cookie requires two folds – lengthwise, so the twist tie forms the spine, and then folding the two ends of the cookie toward each other. To add the fortune, just open up the edge of the cookie and tuck the fortune inside, allowing it to stick out a little at the ends. Felt is forgiving, so if you need to reshape or re-fold a few times, go right ahead!



If you are making the larger version, you will also be able to tuck a Hershey kiss or two inside. This size fits just perfectly inside our smallest take out box. If you are making the smaller fortune cookies, you might have room for two or three of them in one take out box and still be able to fit some wrapped candy there.

*The take-out boxes as well as the metallic ties can be purchased at [Nashville Wraps](#). Use your imagination for other creative ways to market with these unique fortune cookies.*



## **#1 Create a System for saying Thank You**

Send an email immediately after people join your email list. If you are a local retailer, send a thank you email immediately after your customer leaves the store, and follow-up after the purchase. Nothing delights customers more than this kind of special attention.

## **# 2 Get rid of your “to-do” list**

Take a good look at your “to do” list and see how long each item has been there. Ask yourself why you haven’t done the items that have been there for awhile. If it is really important to you, take it off your to do list and add it to your calendar. Then do it. If it is too big to do at one time, break it down into segments and schedule a time to do each segment.

## **#3 Talk to the Future**

Write a short letter to yourself as if it were a year from now. Write about your life and your business during the year 2017. What were your biggest challenges? What did you hope to achieve that you weren’t able to? Were the constraints time, money, family issues, or something else. When you finish this pretend letter, you’ll know what you need to start working on now so that the letter will be different when you actually reach the end of 2017.

## **#4 Reinforce Your Creativity**

Step away from your business at least once during this month and do something creative that has nothing to do with your business. Draw, paint, sew, write a short story, or design your spring garden. It doesn’t matter what. Just do something creative. During this time of year, it’s all too easy to lose your passion and feel that you’ve lost your creativity. And that is simply not true if you don’t let it be.

## **#5 Celebrate 2016**

It’s all too easy to remember the challenges and failures of the past year, but when we take the time to look back at all the wonderful things that have happened, we can see how beautiful our journey has been even with its ups and downs.

So pour yourself a cup of your favorite beverage, get out a pad of paper and pen and write down all the good things that happened in your life in 2016. Include new friends that you made, surprises that amazed you, new discoveries, and anything else you can think of. List them all — both big and small — and tell yourself that even with the downs that happen, life is good.

## Valentine's Day is Almost Here. Are you ready for it?

By Joyce Reid

In our industry, we think of Christmas as the busiest and most profitable time of the year. Some businesses build their whole marketing program around this one holiday.

But the savvy business owners understand that having year-round sales is what keeps that balance sheet in the red.

Some say they never have much business for Valentine's Day but fail to ask themselves why. The reason is simple. They don't plan for it. They don't market it.

**And, equally as important is that they don't believe it can be profitable.**

Valentine's Day isn't just a time for lovers. Although, we create gifts for this particular target group, there are



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so many others who have money and are willing to spend if for Valentine's Day.

“Someone Special” can be a mom's child, a sister or brother, your mom and dad, a teacher, employees, clients and customers, a favorite neighbor or just about anyone else you can think of.

This gift shown below was created for a diabetic teenager. The buyer wasn't going to find a suitable gift on the shelf at his local WalMart or Costco. The market is wide open for gifts for those who are gluten-free, carb-free, fat-free, and other health-related issues as well as for those who just prefer to eat healthy.



Two of my regular customers are a lawyer who deals in estate-planning and a financial services advisor. With a gentle hint from me, they both now order “You are

Special” Valentine gifts for their widowed customers who are alone on this day of love.

All it took was an idea and a little marketing.

Apartment complexes will often remember their residents with small gifts or even a large one that will be given through a drawing or contest to one resident on Valentine’s Day. Offer to create these gifts for them.

Check with your local assisted centers and ask for a list (or number if privacy is an issue) of seniors living there who have no one to remember them on this special day. There is no way you could provide gifts for each of them as the numbers will probably be large. But this is a great time to create an “Adopt a Grandparent” day. And draw your customers, friends, and even potential new customers into the idea.

Create a sample gift and then advertise locally that they can order this gift and you will deliver it to one of the seniors who have no one to remember them. I would keep the price relatively low for these. If you market this correctly, it can be an ideal way to benefit your business, those who buy the gift, and the senior who receives it.

**Imperial Foods** has a wide assortment of food products that you can use in just about any kind of gift for Valentine’s Day. This heart-shaped chocolate pretzel pizza with its own mallet for \$7.90 each is a great stand alone gift.



Or these adorable Chocolate Valentine Hearts, also from Imperial, would make a great addition to a gift basket or as a drop-by gift.



And for those gift baskets for healthy-eaters, a 70% dark chocolate bar would be appreciated. And, of course, Imperial Foods has all the decadent foods as well as themed gift boxes, shred, and just about anything you need to create gifts that your customers will thank you for.

And don't forget [Northwoods Cheese](#). The Cranberry cheese and cranberry sausage makes any Valentine's gift special and they taste good, too! These are ideal additions to the health related gift baskets as well as for those not-so-healthy ones. In addition, Northwoods offers Cranberry Decadence Cookies and chocolate covered cranberries — both uniquely different products that your customers will love.



[Nashville Wraps](#) is the favorite all-around packaging supplier in our industry. They carry just about anything you need or can think you need and with a very low minimum order. Their heart candy boxes are ideal for creating candy gifts either for an individual presentation or to add to a gift basket. Or how about filling up this Love Bug with yummy goodies for a special gift?





When you need marketing gifts that impress your clients, you can't beat the small gifts at [Maple Ridge Farms](#). Of course, you have to order in quantity, but they come custom imprinted and I always get rave reviews about the food itself. And best of all, if you register as a distributor, the commission that you keep for your own orders is 40%.



Maple Ridge has been rated as the #1 Promotional Product company for years and there is a good reason why. They are the very best and boost my company's profits tremendously



Last, but far from least, is [Big Steer](#). They have evolved with the industry and is another company that I have been using since I began my business. And they do custom personalized labels. The only requirements for the custom labels are a small set-up fee and a minimum order of one case.





# Minding the Store

By Wanda Urie

## Store Window Displays That Work for You

Using your store windows effectively means they speak for you even if your store isn't open, that they draw customers in by engaging them and making them take notice. Don't let your windows go to waste!

### **First Things First**

Sometimes it is the simple things that make or break you.

Make sure your window glass is clean, the floor is swept and the walls are clean. Start with a good clean slate.

What is at the back of your windows? If it opens into the showroom, you can create a divider with fabric panels hung from the ceiling, wood panels made out of plywood, painted and given simple legs (can paint and repaint as needed), a folding screen and more. Creating a back wall to the display helps create a story within the window and is more appealing.

Just make sure you don't block the light that comes in through the window thereby making your showroom darker.

If you get asked to post a lot of fliers in your windows, you will want to consider carefully how they affect the look of your store. One or two can show you support the community but too many and it makes the store look junky and less upscale.

## Size Does Matter

First and foremost, when planning your windows, you need to know who your audience is. Is it pedestrian, drive-by or a mix of both? If you are in a spot where you only have folks driving by, you will definitely want to plan different windows than if your audience is mainly pedestrian.

With a motorized audience, your window displays need to use larger elements and be simpler because they will only have a couple of seconds to take it all in. Pedestrian audiences can take in more detail but you will still want to make sure the display is in proportion to the window itself. Window displays are not the place to display your small items unless you have a very special design that makes it work, a skill that takes time to develop.

## Props

Props make your windows interesting, fun, engaging and sometimes set the theme of window displays.

Keep your eyes open as you go about life outside of the store because you never know when you will find something that will work for you. Look at flea markets, antique stores, stores going out of business, garage sales, thrift stores and many other places.

Some of the items we used in our window displays include chairs, ladders, shelving, crates, columns, a large sleigh, a jumbo heart, etc.





Repetition is a trick that is used in window displays very effectively. With that in mind, you might want to buy multiple of props. Oversized picture frames can be found at thrift stores, often with ugly art in them that no one wants. You can buy three of them, remove the art and paint them the same color, hanging them in front of the items you want to highlight.

Also, you'll want to look at possible purchases for their versatility, choosing those that can be used in various ways.

### Supplies

When you do window displays you'll want to keep a variety of items on hand.

We used to use monofilament to hang items from the ceiling of the window but found out that black thread or wire is better. Chalk pens can be used on the glass of a window display to add a border to the window, whimsical touches and little accents.

Of course, you'll want to keep tape, scissors, wire cutters and other items handy. We found it helpful to have them all in one place, in a tote, that we could carry to the window when working. In addition to those items you'll also want fabrics in assorted colors, foam core and little things that will change from window to window.

### Putting It All Together

When you put your window displays together, first know the message you are sending. Is it a holiday? Is it a theme window? What is the big concept?



Once that is decided, you'll want to create a focal point for the display but you will also want to create movement through the display. This means as people view it, based on how you place items, their eyes will naturally be drawn through the display. This can be accomplished with fabric draping, color repetition, or using repeating elements in the display.

After you create the bones of your display, step outside and look at the display from the sidewalk. What do you see? You must always look at it through the eyes of your viewers! Place your large elements first and see if it is working together. Once you have that set, then start adding the details and keep checking it.

When we created a window it would take about an hour and we would check it at least half a dozen times and revise it before we were finished. With a little practice, you can become good at putting together displays that engage your audience but also help you build your business!

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*Minding the Store is written by Wanda Urie. Wanda owned and operated Distinctive Occasions, a storefront for 20 years where she offered gifts, gift baskets, balloons, and was a full-service florist.*

