Eight Gift Exchange Ideas for the Holidays

By TINA DIXON

Whether it’s to save money, maintain social distancing, boost the fun or create a new tradition, many corporate event planners are looking for new ways to engage in gift giving for the forthcoming holiday season.

Discover eight great holiday gift exchange ideas below:

• Drawing Names - To cut down on having to buy for many different people, a group of employees can draw names! Instead of each person having to buy for everyone in the group, now each person just buys for one other person. Be sure no one draws their own name, though!

• Secret Santa - Building on the drawing names gift exchange idea, Secret Santa keeps it a secret who each person will buy for! Many times even after the gift is given, the identity of their “Santa” is kept secret from the gift recipient.

• White Elephant via Zoom - This is a COVID-era twist on a fun holiday gift exchange idea that goes by many different names! The main idea here is that everyone provides a gift and has it sent to the person running the event (the “organizer”). For however many gifts are sent, random numbers are assigned to participants for opening order. Although they won’t know who will be opening the gift, it doesn’t have to be generic or gender neutral because others will have the opportunity to win the gift! The first person to choose a gift identifies what gift she or he wants to have opened and the organizer opens it. The second person to choose a gift has theirs opened and then has the option to keep their own gift or swap it for the first person’s gift. The organizer can place a post-it note on each gift as it is opened so everyone knows who it belongs to. Every new person who opens a gift has the option to keep their own or swap for any other. After the last person picks and opts to swap or not swap, the first person is given the opportunity to swap the gift they ended up with. It’s great fun and a very popular gift exchange idea with a modern and safe spin!

• Auction (live or silent) - Going once! Going twice! Auctions can be great fun and a terrific way to exchange gifts! Each participant provides a few gifts (or the organizer can provide all the gifts if she likes) and they are put on display and up for auction. Each party guest is given a certain number (usually 100) of points with which to bid. Once all of their points have been used to “purchase” auction items, guests can no longer bid on items. A live auction is great fun for an in-person event or via Zoom.

• Best Guess - If your party attendees are big fans of guessing games like Charades or Pictionary, you’re bound to love this fun gift exchange idea! Each person brings a gift or two. When it comes time for gift giving, each is given a turn to hold up their wrapped gift and the group guesses what might be inside. You can give clues or use charades or sketches to help them along (especially if it’s a particularly obscure gift to guess), and the first person to guess just what the gift is gets to keep it! This can also be played via Zoom.

• Charitable Giving - For those organizations passionate about philanthropy, this is a great option. Decide on a charity to donate the money you would ordinarily spend on gift giving to help others. You can all pool your money into a single charity or let each would-be gift recipient choose their own charity.

• Recycled Gifts - No, we don’t want you to go rummaging through your cardboards and plastics looking for gifts. This idea is about re-gifting! Rather than holding your holiday party before the holidays, opt for a delayed party in the New Year. The only gift requirement is that you bring a gift you have already received! We all get presents around the holidays that we don’t necessarily need or want. And as they say, one man’s trash is another man’s treasure. Recycle those unwanted gifts for a creative gift exchange idea that won’t cost anyone a single dime!

• Homemade Gifts - This is a great frugal gift exchange idea that can be just as exciting as any of the others. Have a holiday party where the only gifts exchanged are homemade gifts. From homemade cookies to original paintings to homemade ornaments, quilts, knit hats and more, discover how talented your coworkers really are!

Tina Dixon is a freelance writer.
Four Guidelines for Successful Corporate Holiday Gifting in the Age of COVID-19

By LAURA HERTZ

As we make our way into Q4, corporate holiday gifting budgets are going into effect, and business leaders across the country are reflecting on how best to express their gratitude for the relationships that drive their growth and reputation.

As the CEO of a corporate gifting company – Gifts for Good (giftsforgood.com) – I’m keenly aware that these gifting initiatives are golden opportunities for brands to enact their values and, not just proselytize, but creatively demonstrate what it means to be a part of their community.

Gifts for Good has helped over 700 businesses gift over 36,000 employees and clients with their choice of gift through our platform. We’ve handled strategic gifting campaigns for National Geographic, Google, Toyota, and many of the world’s largest brands including: McDonald’s, Amazon.

As a professional gift giver, here are my guidelines for companies looking to gift appropriately, and successfully, in the age of COVID-19:

1) Do NOT skip corporate gifting this year (you will regret it). Over the last six months, the biggest question I have gotten from business leaders is whether or not they should be sending a gift in the first place. “Is it inappropriate to send a gift when people are suffering; and when we’ve had to let go of some of our employees?” they ask. While I can understand the hesitation, this outlook from business leaders fails to recognize the great detriment that comes along with not gifting.

In times of uncertainty, you need to turn up the volume on your relationships – relationships matter now more than ever. Clients, suppliers, and employees will always remember who had their backs during times of crisis. If you want to survive a downturn and position your company to rebound and thrive in the new normal you need to continue investing in your relationships and driving loyalty. This year more than ever, companies must make a pivotal choice: to actively leverage gratitude.

2) Make sure your gifts give back. Just as companies need to leverage gratitude, they also need to leverage their pre-existing gifting budgets (for good). Money is no longer the focus of gift giving. The problem with corporate gifting is that most leaders lack the right mindset when it comes to gifting. When you focus on yourself and the benefits you’ll reap personally – while being cheap – your gift comes with negative energy. This year more than ever, the world needs positive energy. Don’t go into a gifting discussion focusing on how much the gift will ‘cost.’ Focus instead on the surprise and pleasure it can bring to others; and how much it will positively impact others.

In these times of loss and deep uncertainty, radical generosity goes a long way. Don’t overlook the power of a small gift to uplift us, spread kindness, and remind us all what we have to be grateful for this year.

In summary, if you and your family still have the gift of health, safety, and food please count your blessings – you are one of the lucky ones. There are so many around the world, and around the country, that are hurting and facing challenges in light of COVID-19.

In these times of loss and deep uncertainty, radical generosity goes a long way. Don’t overlook the power of a small gift to uplift us, spread kindness, and remind us all what we have to be grateful for this year.

Laura Hertz is the CEO of Gifts for Good. Learn more at giftsforgood.com.
Wild Gifts Support Wildlife

For those who choose to travel, the great American road trip continues to be the preferred method of getting out and exploring the United States. AAA advises these travelers to plan ahead and take precautions to be a responsible traveler.

Lower prices at the gas pump may also be motivating some would-be travelers to hit the road this fall. On average, gas prices nationally are nearly 50 cents cheaper than this time last year, and are the cheapest fall prices since 2016.

TOP ROAD TRIP DESTINATIONS

This fall, travelers are showing a preference for the great American road trip and U.S. destinations that allow for socially distanced, outdoor recreation. New additions to the list of top road trip destinations this year include Keystone, South Dakota - home to Mount Rushmore - and Colorado Springs.

• Denver, CO
• Las Vegas, NV
• Los Angeles, CA
• San Diego, CA
• Seattle, WA
• Keystone, SD
• Portland, OR
• Phoenix, AZ
• Colorado Springs, CO
• Myrtle Beach, SC

Trips that allow people to take advantage of the great outdoors are particularly appealing this fall. From hiking and exploring state and national parks, to visiting beaches and outdoor gardens, all of these top road trip destinations feature activities that allow families to enjoy America’s backyard within their individual comfort levels,” continued Twiddale.

AAA provides more than 62 million members with automotive, travel, insurance and financial services through its federation of 32 motor clubs and nearly 1,000 branch offices across North America. Since 1902, the not-for-profit, fully tax-paying AAA has been a leader and advocate for safe mobility. Drivers can request roadside assistance, identify nearby gas prices, locate discounts, book a hotel or map a route via the AAA Mobile app. To join, visit AAA.com.