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The best holiday gifts for your clients

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Inc.

With the economy still in recovery, many small business owners are trying to decide whether they should give gifts to clients, what they should buy, and when they should send the gift so it stands out above the rest. Sometimes a simple, yet personalized, card is an appropriate solution to your budget woes. If you have a little more money to spend there is always the standard gift basket. But is "standard" really good enough for your best customers?

"When choosing a holiday gift for clients, it is important to be thoughtful," says Laurence Briggs, president and CEO of [Republic of Texas Company Store](#). "When customers use our corporate gifting concierge service to add personalized touches to gifts, we always ask them to give us more information about their client. What holiday do they celebrate? What are their hobbies and interests? What is their industry?" Briggs reminds us that it is important to show your clients that you care by paying attention to the details. "You would be surprised to learn how many people who celebrate Hanukkah receive Christmas cards from their clients," he says. That's certainly not a good way to demonstrate your attention of detail and appreciation of a client.

But not everyone can afford a corporate gifting concierge and high-end gifts. If you don't have a budget for holiday gifts, Briggs suggests choosing personalized holiday cards for your clients. "Is your client a techie?" he asks. "Then you could find a holiday card that has a technical theme to it." He reminds us that people will appreciate the thought you put into sending them a card with a thoughtful handwritten note telling them that you appreciate their time and business. Showing your appreciation in small ways goes a long way!

Whatever your budget, Briggs suggests treating your business gift-giving process much like you do your family gift-giving situation. You probably wouldn't give everyone in your family the same gift, so why would you choose the same gift for each of your clients? "Pay attention to your client's habits," Briggs says. "Do they order wine at dinner? If so, a gift of wine with a personalized note is a great gift." Briggs goes on to suggest sweets for the dessert lovers and fun foods like a salsa collection for the clients who like to spice it up at dinner time.

Another point to consider is that your clients' gifts may be tax-deductible, according to Wendy Nelson, who is a partner at [B2B CFO](#). "The IRS allows you to deduct up to \$25 per client that you give a gift to," she says.

When is the best time to send a gift? Nelson suggests looking in a counterintuitive place for guidance: your profit-and-loss statement. "If you anticipate ending 2011 with a loss but expect a better year in 2012, you may consider purchasing your gifts in January so you can take the deduction in 2012 when it will be of greater benefit to you," she advises.

Why send a gift *after* the holidays? Well, if a client has a seasonal business, for example, there might be a more meaningful time of year to appreciate a gift. Briggs points out that if you have a project with the client that is coming to completion you could send a gift celebrating the accomplishment with your client. Also think about special events that are occurring in the first quarter of the year for your client. Are they opening a new office or launching a new product line? A gift at this time will stand out from the crowd and recognize an accomplishment they are sure to be proud of. Sending it within the first quarter also ensures that the lack of a holiday gift won't reflect poorly on you.

The original "To Gift or Not to Gift?" article can be seen [here](#).



You probably wouldn't give everyone in your family the same gift, so why would you choose the same gift for each of your clients?
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