

▶ Planner's Toolkit

Protocol & Etiquette

The Art of Client Gift Giving

By Dallas Teague Snider

The art of gift giving has been around since the beginning of time, varying based on the culture and the economy of the historical period. Today, we give gifts throughout the year for special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, baby showers, graduations, etc. Gift giving reaches a peak during December; it's a time when we want to show love and appreciation for co-workers, clients, friends, and family. The holidays are a great time to say "thank you" and offer best wishes for the New Year. Although it is the thought that counts, there are things to consider before making that holiday purchase.

Customer Culture

Be sure you understand the culture of the organization, its values, and customs. What are the legal and ethical guidelines of the organization? Are there any restrictions on receiving gifts? Some companies do not allow employees to receive any gift worth more than \$25. Others do not allow it at all in order to avoid the appearance of favoritism toward any particular vendor.

Surprise and Delight

What is new and different? How can you offer something personal yet practical? Consider what is "hot" or trendy now—like Made in the USA or eco-friendly items. Avoid logoed items. If you give your client a unique and personal gift, it's more likely they'll not only use it but also tell everyone you gave it to them. Isn't that a better promotion for your company than a logo shirt or paperweight that no one else may every see?

Gift Wrapping

Take the time to dress it up. There are wonderful options for packaging available. Decorated boxes are a great option. Be sure to consider special needs for any items that need to be shipped. Take special precautions so the presentation is as nice as you intended. Even if offering a gift card or certificate, do not neglect the packaging. It makes all the difference in the gift experience for the recipient.

What About The Office?

Offices vary in size and have their own personalities. You know your office best. If you find yourself in a new environment, consider the following strategies until you know better how to navigate the waters.

If you have a limited budget, a great way to give a gift to your co-workers is to do something for the entire group. Consider bringing a tasty treat for all to share in the break room, which acknowledges everyone. If you do have a special gift for a particular co-worker, consider giving it to them away from the office.

What about the boss? Giving the boss a personal gift might give the impression that you are trying to earn brownie points. You know your relationship and can judge that accordingly. Consider asking your co-workers if they would like to participate in giving a joint gift to the boss.