

Thinking Outside The Foil Wrapped Box

What The People on Your Corporate Gift List Really Want This Year

BY CAMIE LEARD



You can't escape it; try as you might. Having lunch with an associate? There it is, nagging at the back of your mind. Strategy meeting? You can feel it in the corner, intently watching. Even when you're walking to work, its footsteps hasten behind you, threatening to catch you at any moment—the holidays are right on your heels and you're running out of time.

You've been procrastinating on buying gifts for your clients, employees and partners because: a) you simply haven't had the time; or b) you're tired of presenting these valued people a standard box of chocolates and some golf tees with your company name on them, but you just can't think of how to properly show them your appreciation. These are the people who work hard for

you every day; the people who are the very reason behind your success; the suppliers, customers, associates who make your business run—they deserve better, don't they?

"Yes! But what should I do?" you cry, desperate to get this tightening feeling off your chest.

Business in Calgary talked to some people who specialize in getting you out of a jam this holiday season and truly impressing your colleagues with something special, affordable and—most importantly—memorable.

I wish I could stand on a busy street corner, hat in hand, and beg people to throw me all their wasted hours. —Bernard Berenson



According to Cynthia Pickering of Time is Money Executive Concierge Inc., there is one thing everyone on your list is guaranteed to want and need this year: time.

“The modern business person’s values are changing,” says Pickering. “There is a lot more of a focus on work/life balance and every minute is precious.”

TAKE A LOOK AT THE STATISTICS:

- 70% of workers don’t think there is a healthy balance between their work lives and their professional lives. (*Globe and Mail* by Leigh Branham. (April 27, 2005) *TrueCareers Survey*)
- Between 67% and 76% of women aged 20 to 44 feel they are stressed and do not have enough time. 65% of men aged 20 to 44 feel they are stressed and do not have enough time. (*StatsCan 1998*)
- 61% of all workers are now willing to sacrifice pay in exchange for more personal and family time. (*Globe and Mail* by Leigh Branham. (April 27, 2005) *Radcliffe Public Policy Centre Study*)
- Between 55% - 66% of men aged 20-44 feel they do not spend enough time with their family and friends. (*StatsCan 1998*)
- 23% of Canadians have cancelled or postponed a vacation due to work obligations.
- Combined work hours for dual income households with children has increased to 91 hours compared to 81 hours in 1977. Men only spend 1.3 hours on themselves a day, compared to 2.1 hours in 1977. Women only spend 0.9 hours on themselves a day compared with 1.6 hours in 1977. (*Families and Work Institute: Overwork in America*)



Moving to Calgary from Ontario in 1997, Patty continues her career of 20 years in the fashion industry. An accomplished seamstress with a flare for style and a keen eye for color Patty’s assistance will help make any of your wardrobe decisions a comfortable and professional experience.



You are invited to come in and visit Patty and her team at Supreme.

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Cynthia Pickering

What this means, according to Pickering, is that in order to earn the money they need to live their chosen lifestyle have enough time with family and friends, people need to be spending less time picking up the dry-cleaning, taking the car in for repairs and, well, shopping for holiday gifts.

“These days, time really is money,” she says. “People are willing to sacrifice money to have more time for the things they love to do—like spend time with their families, go to hockey games, travel, whatever their passions may be.”

“Great! But how do I give my clients “time” for the holidays?” you might ask. It just so happens you *can* put time in a bottle — or at least in an envelope.

“Gift certificates for our services make for a very unique and extremely thoughtful gift,” says Pickering. “It shows you understand that they’re busy and want to help make their lives just a little bit easier.”

Buying gift certificates to an executive concierge is like providing an executive assistant for a specific length of time.

“We do all the little things that eat up someone’s time,” says

Pickering. “Shopping, errands, finding Flames tickets, ordering flowers, booking tee times, making spa appointments and so on.”

For entrepreneurs and small to medium business owners, an executive concierge can be an especially valuable gift in that Pickering says they are able to provide some administrative duties, research, presentation preparation and other services.

“Sometimes small business owners don’t want or need a full-time executive assistant, but do occasionally need someone in to do these things,” says Pickering. “We can comfortably step in and help out as needed.”

Though the concept of the executive concierge is fairly new to Calgary, Pickering is sure it will take off as the city continues to grow.

“This type of service is huge in places like New York, Toronto, Montreal, Tokyo, Los Angeles and other major centres,” she says. “and I keep hearing that it’s about time something like this was available in Calgary.”

And, if buying time isn’t exactly what you had in mind, Pickering can also help you find whatever it is that’s on your Santa’s list.

EDITOR’S PICKS

Sweet Indulgences

Call me a traditionalist, but I like getting something sweet during the holidays. If you’re the same, try Calgary’s own Crave Cookies and Cupcakes for the most impressive baked treats that will be remembered right through until Valentine’s Day.

Pamper Packages

Anyone would appreciate an hour or two at the spa. Increasingly popular for both men and women, massage, skin treatments, hand and feet treatments and more will put you on the front page of your recipient’s good book. Try the Oasis Spa and Wellness Centre in Mount Royal Village for a luxurious experience or Prema Sai Wholistic Living on 14th Street SW for a range of natural healing therapies and products, as well as special employer pricing for those wishing to treat their employees to a massage.

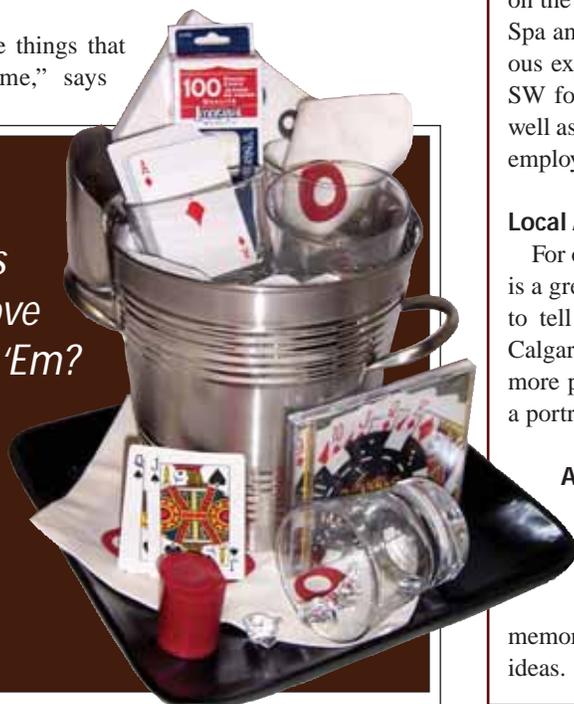
Local Art

For out-of-town clients, the work of Calgary-and-area artists is a great way to give them a taste of our great city and a story to tell people who visit their offices. Visit any number of Calgary’s great galleries for some ideas. For something even more personal, consider commissioning a local artist to paint a portrait of your client’s family.

Adventure

Invite your clients to take a dogsledding tour with their family or a helicopter ride in the Rockies. Every time they tell someone about their amazing adventure, they’ll remember it was you who gave them those memories. Visit www.discovercalgary.com for more great ideas.

Does your sales manager love Texas Hold ‘Em? Why not give him the Poker Night gift pack.





Penny Todd



Lola Caracciolo

Sublime creates custom gift baskets designed specifically for the recipient that is reflective both of the giver and the receiver and respective of the budget.

“We have created gifts ranging from \$5 to \$500,” says Todd. “But the average gift is usually between \$80 and \$175.”

Does your sales manager love Texas Hold ‘Em? Why not give him the Poker Night gift pack that can include an ice bucket on a wooden tray, glasses, playing cards, poker chips, a Las Vegas various CD and napkins.

“We have added all kinds of treats to this gift as well including chocolate cigars, crackers and olives,” says Todd.

Is your executive assistant a chocoholic? Instead of a box of assorted, why not try the Chocolate Fondue gift with a serving platter, fondue pot, melting chocolate and cookies and biscotti for dipping?

Sublime also works with companies to include their branding in the gifts as well, such as the barbecue gift Deloitte ordered shown on page 79.

“Giving a gift that is unique to the recipient is what will get you noticed,” says Todd. 

Longevity

“Having nasty cheese that’s thrown in the garbage at the end of the day is not ideal,” says Todd. “You want to give a gift that will be around for a while.”

The Most Bang for Your Buck

“If you have \$50 to spend, is it worth it to throw a logo on a glass that’s going to be shoved in the back of the cupboard?” says Todd. “Probably not. You want to spend your \$50 on something that will be remembered and appreciated.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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