

To gift or not to gift...a marketing question

As has happened every November for the six years I've lived in my current home, I received this on my doorstep:



It is given by a local real estate agent who also sends a magnetic calendar in the mail and places quarterly sales updates on my doorknob. He includes a card with his contact information along with the jar of apple butter.

Here's the problem: I don't really eat apple butter. I am not opposed to it, but it is not something I eat regularly. I have three unused jars from the past few years, and I don't really know what to do with them. It's a shame to throw them out, but it's not something I feel counts as food to be taken to the food pantry. In other words, it has become clutter and something that puts the burden on me. For me, this is not a welcome gift.

I am not sure why this real estate agent keeps doing this. Perhaps he has found there is a return on investment, or he wants to be known as the apple butter guy. I am not sure, but in my opinion, his is an example of how not to do corporate

gift giving.

Gift giving can be a good marketing tactic, as long as there is some thought and strategy behind it.

Many large companies regularly give customers a gift that costs them very little but is very effective in getting people to the door: a free visit, a \$25 coupon toward your purchase, discount cards, VIP seating, and so on. Others send Christmas gifts to ongoing customers. Some take hold monthly birthday lunches for clients. These companies and organizations have budgeted a certain/set amount toward corporate gifts, and have instituted these as regular marketing effort.

In order to have a *successful* gift giving campaign. you should think about the following two things:

1. What are you trying to accomplish?

Perhaps you are thanking customers for their business during the year, or perhaps you want to entice new customers. Either way, if you don't know why you are giving, there is absolutely no point to doing it.

2. Who are you giving to?

This is crucial information. If you are giving to a client you've known for years versus giving to a potential customer, you will be spending different amounts of time and effort. For a long-term client, you probably will need to find a personalized gift, and for a potential customer, you want to encourage them to check you out.

But not just any gift will do.

Once you've decided what you are trying to do and to whom you are giving, you can choose the gifts that make the most sense. Some attributes that you may want to consider are these:

- Memorable

- Useful
- Linked to your brand identity
- Stand out from the crowd

Remember: what makes a a good gift is something the recipient appreciates or wants.

What are your thoughts on gifts as a marketing tactic? Have you received or given a particularly good or bad gift? Please let me know.