

## Holiday Catalog School

By Pat Rutledge, A Book For All Seasons, Leavenworth, WA

Back in the *old* days, before our store committed wholeheartedly to the Holiday Catalog, our holiday mailing was a long and arduous process: Order catalogs without imprint; stamp catalogs with store credentials; purchase, stamp and label 9x12 envelopes; stuff catalogs into the envelopes and moisten and seal; sort for mailing; deliver to post office; stand in line, etc. You get the picture!

What a relief it was when we committed to 10,000 + catalogs, and the catalogs came imprinted and we did an insert into our daily paper. We now had the catalog not only in the hands of customers on our mailing list but we were also reaching folks who had never set foot inside our store, and at the same time, freeing our staff for more productive activities.

I thought it was too good to be true; a quality catalog representing *my* store and the PNBA reimbursing half the cost of insertion, up to 4 cents per piece. And all we were being asked to do was report our catalog sales by January 15<sup>th</sup>!

The staff agrees that it has been an excellent resource for holiday suggestions and has the added value of making us look professional.

### **How to go about ordering the holiday catalog for the first time**

#### **Decide how you will distribute the catalog outside the store:**

- Direct mail from the store database
- Insertion in daily or weekly paper
- Mailing to a postal zone
- Alternative insertions; i.e., Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, School Newsletter, etc.

Once you have decided how you will distribute the catalogs, you will know how many you can justify ordering.

#### **Marketing with the holiday catalog**

Once you have decided on the quantity and distribution method, you will want to decide when you want the catalogs to hit the street. This street date will vary from store to store. Depending on your market and your competition, you will decide whether you want to get your catalogs out in early November, right after Thanksgiving or the beginning of December.

If you decide on a newspaper insertion, you will need to know that date when you order your catalogs from PNBA and at the same time, you will need to provide the art work for your catalog imprint.

Once you have sent off your catalog order, it is a good time to start creating your marketing campaign around the catalog.

#### **Here are some points you might want to consider for your marketing campaign.**

- **Commit to carrying all the books.** (*We have found that books we thought wouldn't sell, did!*)

#### **How you will display the catalog books in your store.**

Our store virtually has no display windows or designated display areas, so we make a holiday catalog book nook by clearing a section of shelves and displaying all the books as they appear in the catalog; page by page. Our customers, as well as the staff, like this visual display as it makes it a breeze to locate a requested title, while at the same time creating a holiday focal point for the store.

### **Distribution and promotion within the store**

- At your store events
- As bag stuffers
- With every special order and mail order
- Included in all mailings during November and December; i.e. payments to local businesses, etc.
- Participation in the PNBA Catalog display contest, just for the fun of it
- Host a staff holiday party

It is essential to get the staff behind the catalog. Last year we hosted a staff party and asked the staff beforehand to be prepared to share at least five books in the catalog that they were excited about and could hand sell. We all walked into the party with our annotated catalogs in our hands and walked out with a slew of titles we were excited about in our heads. It also served as a great time for us to gather over wine and cheese and get psyched for the season.

### **Distribution and promotion within your community:**

- Host a holiday party for your customers, possibly discounting catalog titles during the party. We usually have music, food, wine and all the staff available to help with book selections that night.
- At local businesses, medical clinics, beauty salons, lodging establishments, restaurants, teachers' lounges, etc.
- Assisted living facilities, nursing homes, etc.; including a coupon for free gift wrapping can be a real sales point.

### **Other marketing and promotion:**

If you are doing a newspaper insert, consider running an ad in the same paper or an earlier issue announcing the holiday catalog and offering a limited time discount on catalog books. Promote the catalog in your newsletter, email newsletter, My Space and in all other venues you use for promoting your store; we sponsor a radio talk show and that seems to be one of our best ways of getting the word out about the catalog.

As with all advertising and marketing, the results are only as good as the thought and effort given them. The big difference that I see with the Holiday Catalog is that PNBA provides, free of charge, a professional advertising piece for its membership and all that's left for us to do, is develop a good marketing strategy to use in our individual stores.

Remember, it's as simple as this:

- Commit to the catalog and to carrying at least one of all titles
- Create a marketing campaign for your store and a catalog party for your community
- Count up your increased sales all the way to the bank and report your sales to PNBA to get your reimbursement

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