



Eleventh Hour Holiday Preparations

Make your window of seasonal opportunity—and profits—open wider.

FOR MILLIONS of consumers, last-minute holiday shopping has become a tradition not unlike eggnog and red stockings. With mocha lattes rushing through their veins, they run through stores as if they were on an episode of “Supermarket Sweep.”

It’s shopping in the fast lane, and get ready, because the race is about to begin.

Be aware ... the rules have changed.

For decades, the Friday after Thanksgiving was hailed as the biggest shopping day of the year. Dubbed by some retailers as “Black Friday” because that was the day business owners broke into the black for the year, it typically brought stampedes of bargain shoppers through doors at the crack of dawn, knocking over everything in sight, including unsuspecting sales clerks and their own children. Within minutes, most displays resembled footage of a natural disaster, and employee’s nerves were frazzled beyond repair.

In recent years, Black Friday has been the third runner-up behind the Saturday before Christmas, the and second place day after Christmas.

For many equine retailers, up to half of holiday business can be expected in the two weeks before Christmas. Research shows that only about 10 percent of today’s holiday shoppers are completing their purchases by the day after Thanksgiving, and half will not be finished by Dec. 10.

In some respects, that’s good news for equine retailers.

Procrastination and busy lifestyles are probably part-

ly responsible for this shift in the seasonal shopping time continuum. Much of it is also due, however, to the game of chicken that has begun to permeate holiday shopping mentalities.

Retailers try to put markdowns and blowout sales off as long as possible, but the buying public has learned to bide its collective time. As the season progresses and predictions for retail sales turn gloomy, stores cave in, offering coupons and sale prices that once were reserved only for post-holiday sales.

So, what does that mean to you as a retailer?

First, you’ll have more time to prepare for the big crunch. Second, you better be ready to be stretched thinner than Aunt Betty’s strudel dough when it finally comes. Preparing now will go a long way towards easing the pressure in the days to come.

Extend the Holiday Cheer

DON’T GIVE IN to the “one day only” mentality. Accommodate busy holiday schedules by extending promotions and store hours from late November through the New Year. Promotions that span a period of a week or two rather than a day or two, combined with longer shopping hours, will help even the flow of holiday traffic in your store.



By Barb Kastens, Assistant Editor