

Small Business News & Notes

Holiday Shoppers Flock Online, Small Businesses Follow

(NAPSA)—U.S. small-business owners expect consumers to spread holiday cheer with their purchases this year—and many will do it online.

According to a recent survey, 62 percent of U.S. small businesses said they anticipate a strong holiday season. That's a slight increase over last year's 60 percent. To better serve the expected high turnout of holiday shoppers, 68 percent of small businesses will run seasonal promotions—mostly online.

The 2nd Annual 2006 Small Business Holiday Outlook survey was conducted by Constant Contact, an e-mail marketing service for small businesses, associations and nonprofits.

The majority, 81 percent, of small businesses polled also expect consumers to make more holiday purchases online in 2006.

"This optimism from small-business owners is great news for the upcoming holiday season and the overall health of the U.S. economy," said Gail Goodman, CEO of Constant Contact. "It's also encouraging to see the increased importance of online marketing for today's small businesses, as they continue to look for new ways to stay in front of current and prospective customers."

To capitalize on this, many small businesses will use online marketing methods to promote their holiday offerings. In fact, of the 68 percent surveyed that will run seasonal promotions, 82 percent will use e-mail marketing in their promotional mix.

Savvy companies realize that to make the most out of the holiday spike in spending, they must stay in touch with customers with frequent communications. E-mail marketing is a fast, easy and affordable way to do this. Accord-



Eighty-two percent of small businesses will use e-mail marketing to build relationships with customers and increase sales this holiday season, according to a recent survey.

ing to experts, small businesses should plan and send their e-mail campaigns early—to grab the attention of shoppers before the holiday rush.

Sending special promotions and coupons via e-mail marketing is a great way to get shoppers in the door and coming back—during the holidays and year-round.

When beginning e-mail marketing, it's important to find a service that's the right fit for your business or organization. A good e-mail marketing service will provide list management services (opt in, unsubscribe, etc.), professional-looking e-mail templates and mailing, and reporting functions, and help get your e-mail delivered.

Using a third-party service is inexpensive and will ensure that you look professional when you send out your e-mail newsletter. More than 80,000 small businesses and organizations use Constant Contact. They offer affordable monthly plans, are easy to use, and even offer a 60-day free trial to try out the service. To learn more, go to www.constantcontact.com.