

## EARLY GIFT GUIDE

# Small businesses look to stay on top of holiday trends

(StatePoint Media) As the weather outside turns more frightful, consumers and small businesses look to the holiday shopping season to heat things up.

Whether you're a consumer or a small business owner, holiday shopping is always a hot topic. So staying on top of new shopping trends is critical for your bottom line — from finding better deals to understanding what's popular and why.

There's no time like the holidays to learn more about what to expect this shopping season. A recent survey conducted on behalf of Deluxe Corp., a leading provider of marketing services and business products for small businesses, sheds light on new trends to watch out for this year:

### Going Local

With a whole world of shopping available at consumers' fingertips and with big box discount chains a top choice for in-person holiday shopping, the expectation would be that small

businesses are suffering.

However, for a variety of reasons ranging from great prices to unique merchandise, consumers are not neglecting boutiques and small businesses. In fact, 35 percent of people claim they will prefer to shop at small businesses this year for their holiday shopping, an 8 percent rise from 2012. And a vast majority of respondents agree it's important to support local businesses.

### Quick and Convenient

Online shopping is gaining in popularity, and with good reason — the expectation of quick and convenient shopping. Search engines remain an important way for consumers to find gifts online. In fact, 57 percent of Hispanic respondents — representing an important growing demographic — plan to use search engines for holiday gift ideas.

However, it's no surprise that half of all respondents say they don't go past the first two pages

of search results.

"All the data that we see sends an undeniably clear signal to business owners that they need to be found online," says Tim Carroll, vice president of small business engagement at Deluxe.

For small businesses looking to drive shoppers to their websites over the holidays, having an effective Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategy is an important component of a successful holiday marketing plan.

Many small businesses turn to marketing services firms, like Deluxe, to help get them front and center on search engines like Google. Information about these services can be found at [www.Deluxe.com](http://www.Deluxe.com).

### Starting Early

"Black Friday," the major shopping event that takes place annually on the day after Thanksgiving, continues to be a cultural phenomenon.

Worried about crowds? So are lots of other shop-

pers evidently. Forty-two percent of consumers get holiday shopping done earlier in November, and women are even more likely to be early birds.

### Holiday Cards

Snail mail or email? A majority of people are traditionalists, still preferring to receive a card in the mail. But those who make at least

six figures are more likely than others to prefer an online card.

By staying on top of the trends, you can shop smarter this season.

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