



THE SWISH



LIST

The dreaded year-end gift-giving season is fast approaching. Kerry Dimmer advises top executives on the who, what and when of giving.

It wasn't corporate policy that determined why a certain captain of industry declined to accept a coveted ticket to the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games. Rather, I would like to suggest, it was a personal code of ethics. There might of course be another reason — can you imagine the media frenzy if it were discovered that a lucrative business arrangement existed between her company and the gift giver's corporation?

It is this scrutiny that has caused so many SA companies to look at 'whether to' and 'what to' send as genuine year-end thank you gifts, especially to exco members and the like. To be sure, many of the details of the act of gift giving may appear questionable, but not every beautifully wrapped box is given with any more motivation than sincere, no strings attached gratitude.

The selection of a gift for high-end executives is, however, a complex dilemma. On the one hand you have to presume that these are people who have everything.

or can pretty much afford to indulge whatever whim they might have. On the other hand, a gift that is overtly expensive, or one which may be in keeping with their station, could place the recipient in the uncomfortable position of having to defend acceptance or return the gift.

But let's pause for a moment and consider the history of gift giving which dates back to Roman times. Tokens such as tree branches were symbolically presented to the emperor for the new year to promote good luck. Over time this practice escalated into the giving of silver and gold coins. These more expensive gestures were motivation to procure favours or demonstrate allegiance – a practice that still exists today and is possibly the reason why some individuals react so defensively when a gift is inappropriate.

Being oversensitive when receiving an expensive executive gift may produce a pricking of conscience but inevitably human nature dictates that we are actually flattered when someone thinks highly enough of us to reward us. Company-branded, in-your-face products have their place in terms of marketing but as a symbol of appreciation or to mark an annual event, the high-end executive gift needs to be more distinctive and well-thought out than just another general giveaway.

Patricia Pichulik of P&P Communications points out that some effort is required to make an impact. 'The gift has to be meaningful. Buying 10 of the same item for a board of directors could depersonalise the gift, unless it is something rare or coveted. Instead, make the effort to discover what makes each individual

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tick and then, for example, buy a book relevant to a passion or particular interest. This is the type of gift that can be capped across the board in terms of budget and goes a long way in proving the genuineness of the gesture of giving.'

There are gifts that are so special that presenting the same item to a number of executives would be considered most acceptable. Carrie Adams of Norman Goodfellows suggests that the limited release of a six-bottle box of wine to commemorate Gary Player's major championship series wins, is a most desirable package. 'Produced by Quoin Rock winemaker Carl van der Merwe, and beautifully packaged, each bottle sells for around R250.'

While on the subject of packaging, Norman Goodfellows is not only adept at meeting executive corporate gift budgets, making the appropriate liquid selection and writing the cards that accompany delivery of the gift, they'll even drink the product with the recipient if necessary, laughs Adams.

Fikile Marketing and Branding are gaining a reputation for putting together exclusive and limited edition gift packages. This year Fikile pays tribute to Nelson Mandela with the development of a limited edition gift box featuring his book, *The Long Walk to Freedom*, combined with a replica of Mandela's Nobel Peace Prize medal.

Fikile owner Devlin Player, says that a limited quantity creates a perception of exclusivity and allows for creative freedom. 'For instance, one of the gift ideas we recently explored was the development of a tray of plants that sprout flowers in the name of Toyota's Prius. This ties in well with the concept of this hybrid,

HINTS AND TIPS FOR EXECUTIVE CORPORATE GIFTING

1. Before sending a gift be sure to check corporate policy on gift giving. Many companies place restrictions on the value of the gift its executives are allowed to receive or give. On the other hand, there is a tiny loophole in that many companies consider a gift branded with a company logo to be a promotional item. What makes this even more appealing is that SARS will consider a corporate gift claim if you can prove it was purchased for marketing purposes.
2. Avoid the traditional year-end rush and rather recognise special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, promotions, and other achievements.
3. Research the tastes of the recipients – favourite foods, sports, music, movies, colours, special interests, whether they collect anything. Use this information for gift inspiration.
4. Personalise the gift with a handwritten card.
5. Use distinctive packaging.
6. If you give a bottle of wine, include a guide to drinking wine or a bottle opener. Or if sending an expensive pen, throw in some handmade paper, perhaps even monogrammed with the recipient's name.
7. If a gift is unacceptable to an organisation, ask if a donation may be made to a charity of the recipient's choice.



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eco-friendly car. Similarly, the supply of a biodegradable windshield sun screens in limited quantities goes to selected Prius purchasers.'

Whenever a company does something bold and daring, it's invariably emulated almost ad nauseam. So it is with extraordinary, highly valued gifts. Corporate adviser and financial author Jacques Magliolo confirms that there are worldwide trends that gift buyers for high network clients follow. 'This year it may be limited edition wines, next year could be a holiday in Spain or perhaps diamond Cartier watches.'

Magliolo has been a recipient of some of these high calibre gifts, like a Breitling watch valued at R120 000, or a private jet holiday to Barbados. As gloriously tempting as these presents may sound, Jacques has



GOLFERS

The gift of a golf bag or clubs has been replaced. John Emery of Golf Trips SA can put together a gift voucher package for executives to spend a weekend playing golf. Such vouchers would include flights to golf destinations like Fancourt and Sun City. 'Sweetening the pot,' says Emery, 'is the inclusion of pampering treatments at the golfing venues' luxurious day spas for accompanying wives or partners. These trips are generous at a cost of up to R7 000 – R8 000 per person for two nights during high season.'

FITNESS FIENDS

Planet Fitness recently launched a R100-million health and fitness facility called Planet Platinum, providing physical training at its most exclusive. The club will boast, among other things, an indoor golf driving range, kinesis movement technology, a 250m sky-blue running track, a day spa and a WiFi enabled executive lounge serviced by the Radisson Hotel. Memberships can be secured for a second party with a deposit of R20 000 and a monthly fee of R995.

tactfully declined to accept them because, he says, 'I do not wish to be beholden to anyone.'

This is, of course, the murkier side of gift giving and as Magliolo points out, you should be very careful about accepting a gift particularly if you have not yet provided a service to the company doing the giving. 'Such gestures are often disguised as Christmas presents, yet they may have a far more sinister connotation which will only become evident at a later date.'

What is remarkable is that SA corporate gift companies are sadly lacking in big ideas when it comes to the concept of tangible gestures that are extraordinary or unique. Research reveals a significant number of corporate gift suppliers regurgitating the usual boring array of exclusive pens, magnums of wine or whisky, watches, pamper products, and leather goods ad infinitum.

If you really do want to make an impression, don't think that a gift will necessarily fulfil an obligation of appreciation. Sometimes just a good old handwritten thank you on an elegant piece of paper will have the reader scrambling for a tissue or two – so maybe include a monogrammed hanky. **JSE**

GIFT IDEAS FROM THE INTERNET

Amazon.com's 'Kindle'

A digital book reading device that allows you to read books, magazines, blogs and office paperwork. Using the same wireless technology as a cellphone, you can purchase best-sellers and even have magazines delivered to the device. Approximately R2 800.

The Laundress Travel Pack

A premium collection of high-end fabric detergents and care products created by Ralph Lauren. The Travel Pack includes Crease Release and products that will remove business dinner stains. Approximately R340.

iPosture

Worn next to the skin, iPosture senses when the body slouches and vibrates to remind the wearer to straighten up. Approximately R780.

Cigar Bags

Isothermal bags to protect the executive travellers' cigar collection. Approximately R1 900

Neoprene bags and covers

A synthetic rubber material that is waterproof and heat proof, and moulded into notebook covers, shopping bags, mousepads, etc. Prices vary.

Buy a tree for a rainforest

Planted on behalf of your named recipient in Sebangau National Park in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. A Goggle Earth KMZ file is supplied with the co-ordinates of the tree in order to watch its growth over the years. Visit www.mybabytree.org and pay about R45 per tree.

Space travel

Buy a day trip on Virgin Galactic into space at the end of 2009. The deposit is about R156 000 and the total cost per ticket about R1 560 000.

2010 World Cup tickets

Not yet available, but you can subscribe to links that will alert you immediately when tickets are available for sale. Visit www.worldticketshop.com.