Customer Trends: Staying Ahead of the Game

A couple years ago, my teenage kids were saying "Lit" when they meant that something was good, and by the time I started saying it to annoy and embarrass them, I was informed that "Lit" had been replaced by "Fire." I'm sure once I have the courage to start referring to good things as "Fire" it won't be cool anymore either. (BTW – can we all agree to just say "Cool" and leave it there???)

Teasing my teenagers with improper use of today's vernacular isn't very important (although it cracks me up), but in the world of customer engagement, understanding what is popular to your audience is very important. If your goal is to surprise and delight, then you can't achieve that with something that was "Fire" several years ago.

You've heard the terms "On-trend" and "Current" to describe the latest vogue fads, but how do you know what they are? And how can you show your customers that you care enough about them to reward their loyalty and participation with gifts and experiences that are modern and attractive?

Here are a couple ways you can make sure you don't look out of touch when creating a loyalty gifting program:

Pay attention to current conditions
In 2020, everyone was staying home, so there was an increase in demand for household items. As we pull out of the pandemic, everyone wants to get out of the house, prompting experts to predict a surge in travel – so travel items gain interest and popularity.

Make sure it looks good on camera
It's pretty obvious social media and videos dominate. Everyone is Facebooking, Tik-Toking, YouTubing, and Snapchatting until they are blue in the face. You've probably seen videos of someone "unboxing" a gift that was sent to them. Offering your customers products and opportunities worth sharing socially is the best way to get your brand more exposure than ever before! So make sure you are using video-worthy, share-worthy items.

Don't forget the packaging
Speaking of looking good, it's not enough to give products that are packaged in plain white boxes, or not packaged at all – no matter how great the product is. Retail-caliber packaging and beautiful imagery heighten the gifting experience and create an emotional connection.

Plan ahead
It's not really a product trend, but planning ahead has become the new way to win. As global supply chains have been impacted, people that wait to make decisions will be forced to take what they can get, rather than finding the exact right item for their audience. "This is the best we could do with the time we had" is not a great way to reward customers.

Define your audience
Let's say your customers are typically over 60, then you can't show appreciation for their business with something that appeals to the Kardashian demographic. Conversely, if you have younger customers, you can bet they know what the famous online influencers are interested in. Do some research and find loyalty gifts that appeal to your specific audience. In addition to age, keep in mind geographic location, time of year, and seasonal events.

Follow companies that are paid for trends
Macy's, Crate & Barrel, Williams Sonoma, Dick's Sporting Goods, and thousands of other retailers are in the business of following, pushing, and creating trends. If you want to know what products are "Fire" in the marketplace, look no further than the retail world.

I hope these tips will help you achieve your "surprise and delight" goal when it comes to rewarding customer loyalty. And hey maybe, just maybe, my kids will think I'm cool. Probably not. I see an eye-roll emoji in my future.