

Celebrate Something!

By Lina Beth Dorough

I opened my consignment boutique in October 2000. Each year on our anniversary we have a multiple day sale and various perks for attending. Each year is different. In prior years, we have had style shows in the store, image consultant speakers, wardrobing tips, etc. Our 6th Anniversary Sale was celebrated October 6 & 7, 2006.

The sale involved 10-75% off everything. We take 10% off of the new items in the store (consigned items not ready for reduction, new jewelry, purses, luggage, etc.), 50% off items ready for first reduction and 75% off the expired items.

Prior to the sale, I designed small reminders to hand out at our counter for a month before the sale. A week prior, I sent a mass email to 550 people. We have only been doing the emails for 4-5 months. We stopped our mailouts because of the expense. For the month prior to the sale, I added a trailer to my TV ads promoting the dates. I have been using cable TV, almost exclusively HGTV, for three years. I have had more feedback from this advertising media than any other. I buy 85 ads per month.

In the email I mentioned our specials, new items to the store, and the fact that we would have unannounced surprises throughout the sale. The first day, I gave away a Paula Deen apron each hour. On the hour, we asked each customer to guess a number between 1 and 1000. The winner picked the apron that she liked best. Many discussions began over Paula Deen's popularity on the Food Channel.

During the first five hours of the sale, we gave double punches on our customer appreciation keytags. The A-A Accurate keytags, incidentally, are probably the best promo I have ever done, right up there with cable TV advertising.

I began the second day with a scavenger hunt for my three employees . . . we started 15 minutes before unlocking the doors. They had all worked extremely hard on the first day of the sale and I told them that the next day we were going to play for a few minutes before we worked hard again. I fixed fruit smoothies and placed them in our office freezer. I wrote a note on our white board saying, "I'm grateful for you!" and also told them to check the freezer. After finding their fruit smoothies, they got a note telling them to go to the jewelry section of our store and choose any item or give me the note and I would pay them \$20 in cash. They began to giggle and said that this was like Christmas. It was a very satisfying moment for me. These three women do for others all of the time and they deserved to be surprised and rewarded. They chose the jewelry and were given another note saying to choose a piece of clothing or redeem the note for \$20. They chose the clothing. The next note sent them to the evening jewelry case for their final surprise and a note explaining that I would meet them at a local tearoom for lunch the following Monday—my treat.



I admire Southwest Airlines' philosophy that I read about in their book, "Nuts," which says, "If your employees are content, you don't have to worry about your customers." My employees were happy and we had a second day of fabulous sales and happy customers. It was a blast for me, too.

Anniversaries are a good time to give away something. I had bought cute nightshirts—with clever sayings on them—in July. I had only sold 10 out of 36, not a great record, so I decided to give the rest away to the first customers on the second day of the sale. They got really excited about the giveaway. I wish they had appreciated the nightshirts when I was charging for them.

Both days, we served sparkling grape juice, nuts and snacks. It was a very successful anniversary sale. However, the bank deposits are only one aspect of the success story—contented, loyal employees and customers are the other.

Happy consigning. Celebrate something!

Lina Beth Dorough, owner of *Lina Beth Fine Consignments* in Ocala, FL, is an active NARTS member.