

Getting into the Holiday Spirit

By Jamie Adler

Incorporating a Christmas business may complement your IGC — and there could be a lucrative opportunity for incremental dollars.

Kurt S. Adler Inc. has been selling Christmas decorations to garden centers for over 60 years, many of those garden centers are still buying from them today.

It all started when one of our salespeople approached a friend who owned a garden center in White Plains, New York, and asked, “What do you do when you’re not busy, during the off season, in the wintertime?”

The garden center owner lamented that he still had to pay taxes, bills and payroll. He would try to keep his best employees, but unfortunately would have to let others go because he couldn’t afford to keep them, many of whom would find other jobs and would be lost for the future season.

After a long discussion, the two men decided they would try to turn the garden center into a Christmas center. It took many people hours of hard work to accomplish, but they were successful and very happy with the results.

After the first year, our salesperson said that this channel was a natural for the Christmas business. The garden center employees knew how to make aesthetically pleasing displays because they knew how to arrange products; after all, they did it all the time with foliage. As time went on,

many other garden centers followed this model.

If you’re not in the Christmas business yet and would like to get involved, here are some tips.

Jumping into the Christmas Market

Order carefully. By this we mean start off by buying a small quantity of various items instead of a lot of one item. After you see what sells best, reorder the items for that season.

Before ordering from any one supplier, we recommend asking two pivotal questions: 1) Do they have enough inventory in stock in October, November and December to accommodate reorders? And 2) Do they have options if an item is sold out in November? For example, if you purchased a nutcracker ornament assortment and, come November, you have sold out of it and the supplier also sold out of it, does the supplier have enough breadth in nutcracker ornaments that one can buy another ornament to replace the one that sold out?

Carry a unique selection. A garden center needs to carry unique merchandise that is exclusive — not the same items customers would find at a mass merchant. Many suppliers go overseas and import existing inventory which, in many cases, is also offered to the mass merchants. Make sure to find a supplier that can offer specialty items to set you apart from the competition. Our items are unique and provide a true specialty to consumers. With over 20,000 items to use as inspiration, we are also able to create special, unique souvenir items for a wide array of companies.

Offer new items each year. Christmas is a novelty business and, by definition, must be new to a large extent. We recommend asking the manufacturer how much of the line is turned over each year. They must be keeping up with the times and adapting to trends, while keeping the tradition as a focus.

Our motto is “Traditions with a Twist.” For example, we have the Hollywood Nutcracker line, which is our own take on the traditional nutcracker. Hollywood Nutcrackers are a whimsical approach to traditional nutcrackers with a fun spin such as beautiful, bright colors, feathers and sparkles. In addition to these, we also offer a line of KSA nutcrackers and the classic Steinbach Nutcracker. We do extensive trend forecasting and are always at the forefront of the industry to make sure we are providing the latest trends to our customers.

Pay attention to the merchandise quality. The merchandise you bring into your store represents you and your brand. If you purchase merchandise that is not produced well, that will reflect on your company. Many suppliers cut corners and produce inferior products for lower costs. We take great pride in our high-quality items. We have been in business for 75 years, and are always hearing how our products stand the test of time and continue to last through generations.

Buy from reliable companies. Do your research on those you order from and make sure they are credible. As a family-run company, we strive to make all employees, customers and vendors feel as though they are also a part of the family with customers and employees going as far back as 30, 40 and even 50 years! We have been the leading importer of



Ornaments are a good fit for IGCs already selling live Christmas trees.



holiday decorations since 1946, and have worked with many of the industry's top artists and factories. We also work with renowned licensing names such as Disney, Coca Cola, Nickelodeon, Star Wars, Peanuts and many more.

Use all of your resources. Whether it's attending webinars, browsing through catalogs, speaking with salespeople or reading articles, we encourage you to take advantage of any and all resources available. We have salespeople who have been with us and in the industry for many years and are eager to speak with and educate customers.

We also have showrooms located throughout the country. Each showroom is managed by an experienced showroom manager and salespeople who have been with us for decades. We also have expansive catalogs and videos for inspiration and to help you select merchandise and plan your buy.

Many garden centers see the benefit of capitalizing on the space during the winter months, when people might not be shopping for traditionally spring, summer and fall products as much. Incorporating a Christmas business may complement yours very well, and there could be a lucrative opportunity for incremental business. In addition, if you already sell live Christmas trees, adding a Christmas assortment is the perfect missing piece to your offerings. 🍂

Jamie Adler is an employee at Kurt S. Adler Inc. and the granddaughter of Kurt Adler. She is thrilled to be in a third-generation family business that creates joy for millions of people. She can be reached at Jamie@kurtadler.com.

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