

FRAGRANCE

Use your expertise to guide customers who are looking for the perfect gift, and help turn your store's festive season from good to great.

Fragrance has been the ultimate gift since time immemorial; the word perfume derives from 'per fumum', meaning 'by smoke', from when scented incense was burned as a gift to Gods thousands of years ago. Ancient man had it easy compared to today's shopper. With an estimated 1,600 scents launched last year alone, it's no wonder a puzzled perfume buyer might decide to stick to the same scent year in, year out.

Prepare for Christmas

With up to 70% of a store's annual fragrance sales happening in the three months before Christmas, preparation is key to capitalise on this increased footfall. "Make sure product training is up-to-date, and that teams refresh their knowledge by reading through any training notes or manuals," says Suzie Abel, Beauty Buyer for Jarrols Department Store, Norwich, and a director of Copra (Cosmetics & Perfumery Retailers Association). "Get each member of the team to swot up on a brand each day, then 'sell' this brand to a colleague the next day. It's a great way for both team members to learn more."

"Counters are always busy at Christmas so merchandising needs to be eye-catching yet clear and shoppable," adds Georgina White, Head of Training at Kenneth Green Associates. "A customer won't be attracted to the counter if they can't see the wood for the trees. Even though we have more products like gift sets to display at this time of year, we still need to remember we are selling a premium product and branded coffrets should never be stacked on the floor."

"Put new launches to the front of displays," concludes Joanna Norman, Director of Pandora Fragrance Consultancy & Training. "This will allow you to tell its story and ingredients. Try and stay the same side as the customer rather than having the stand between you and them."

Attract your customers

The following factors can help you maximise the impact of increased footfall in-store over the festive period:

Shopping events: "A great way to encourage customers to buy all their festive gifts during that time – with or without a discount incentive. In my store, events are also about theatre and



Scents of the season

entertainment, with wine and nibbles, live music and visiting experts, turning the event into a social occasion, while also being commercially successful," reveals Abel.

Limited editions: "As they are only on counter for a short time, the consultant can recommend limited editions as something special to add to the buyer's perfume collection," says White.

Coffrets: "They represent good value or a chance to sample different scents," says Norman. "Point out the benefits and any savings the customer will make."

Gifts With Purchase (GWP): "GWPs can be used either as an extra incentive to close the sale, trade up or buy a second unit; or as a thank you for shopping," says White.

Help them choose

Retail and fragrance expert Lorna McKay

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co-founded The Perfume Society to demystify scent for fragrance fanatics and newbies alike. "A fragrance purchase can be emotional, functional or frivolous, as well as indulgent and somewhat expensive," she explains. This is enough to make the most confident gift-giver have doubts. "90%

Determining who your customer is purchasing fragrance for is crucial to recommending the ideal scent

They're shopping for...a husband

Try asking: What's his style? What are his hobbies? Is he outgoing and the centre of attention, or classic and discreet?

Trend to try: Niche and cult brands. "Thanks to social media, there's a desire for individuality. Some of our most popular ranges are Tom Ford, Creed, Acqua di Parma, Miller Harris, Amouage and Penhaligon's," says Suzie Abel.

Suggest: Zadig & Voltaire This is Him! (RRP from £38); Trussardi Uomo The Red (RRP from £39); Jimmy Choo Man Intense (RRP from £43).

They're shopping for...their mother

Try asking: Is she classic, elegant and sophisticated? Is she a bit edgy and likes to make a statement? What's her favourite flower?

Trend to try: "Chypres are making a comeback; classics like Guerlain Mitsouko, Clinique Aromatics, or modern versions like Armani Si Le Parfum or Liz Earle No 9," says Lorna McKay.

Suggest: Elizabeth Arden Always Red Femme (RRP from £27); Missoni (RRP £38); Acqua di Parma Peonia Nobile (RRP from £76); Miller Harris L'Eau Magnetic (RRP from £65); My Burberry Black (RRP from £65).

They're shopping for...a best friend

Try asking: What does she currently wear? Does she like to change fragrances often or stay with the same style? Does she wear perfume during the day or to go out?

Trend to try: Personalisation. "The desire to create a bespoke gift that is absolutely right for the recipient is an important factor. It is perceived that more thought has been put into the purchase and therefore it will have more meaning," says Suzie Abel. At Boots, L'Oréal Scent Story gifts hide a fragrance in the pages of a personalised book, which can be engraved.

Suggest: Estée Lauder Modern Muse Nuit (RRP from £50); YSL Black Opium Wild Edition (RRP from £47); Stash by Sarah Jessica Parker (RRP from £20); Michael Kors Wonderlust (RRP from £43).

They're shopping for...a teenage boy

Try asking: What are his hobbies? What kind of brands does he wear? Does he prefer rich oriental smells or crisp, aquatic fragrances?

Trend to try: Fashionable fragrances. Choosing a scent from a fashion brand he is familiar with will win cool points.

Suggest: Ted Baker Limited Edition Skinwear (RRP from £18); Abercrombie & Fitch First Instinct (RRP £29); Hollister Wave for Him (RRP £19).

There are many fine fragrances suitable for teenagers, but body spray is also a great option for younger gift recipients. Impulse has added Impulse Why Not? (RRP £1.99) to its limited edition collection with pop sensation Charli XCX. Boasting a tropical scent with zesty notes of bergamot, frozen lemon and bitter orange, infused with earl grey tea and natural spices such as nutmeg and cardamom, the limited edition offering is designed to tap into the consumer demand for exciting, fun and wearable on-the-go fragrances.



of Christmas Eve shoppers in department stores are men doing their last-minute shopping. They need help!" adds Norman.

When helping customers who are looking for fragrance gifts, White advises: "In general, every customer should be asked to describe the person they are buying for. This helps the sales consultant understand the character and preferences of whoever the perfume is for."

Abel adds: "A knowledge of the fragrance families is essential. That way, when you ask a customer what the recipients favourite scent is, you can recommend another in the same family."

White says that money isn't everything when it comes to suggesting scents: "It's useful to know the customer's budget, but this wouldn't be the first question I would ask. If the customer doesn't tell you straight away then make the choice of what to show them based on the scent, rather than the price."

Stacey Kitt, Aramis and Designer Fragrances National Trainer, concludes: "Give the customer choices. Based on information provided, we advise our consultants to have the customer blind smell up to three fragrances on a blotter or on the skin. This means the customer picks their scents on a personal understanding of the person they are gifting, and not just basing their decision on a brand name. Once they have decided on a fragrance, we take the customer on a brand journey to reassure them they have made the perfect choice."

To wrap up...

Georgina White says: "Building a rapport and connection with the customer is always the key to achieving more sales – winning the customer's trust and really listening to them will, in turn, help them listen to your recommendations."

In order to maximise the success of each

interaction, think of link-selling as a conversation piece, suggests Suzie Abel. Ways to do so include saying the following:

- "I'm glad you're happy with the fragrance. Did you know that the body lotion can extend the life of the fragrance on the skin by 50%? Let me show you."
- "Is this a gift for someone special? Why not spoil them by adding an extra product – we can gift-box this for you too."
- "Do you have any other gifts to buy that I can help you with? Let me show you this fabulous new fragrance that has just arrived."

Finally, any extra benefit you can offer will make your customer's shopping experience more pleasurable and memorable. "Add a 'high touch' finish to the gift-giving service. We always advise our consultants to offer gift-wrapping services to make the customer's shopping experience as convenient and special as possible," says Kitt.