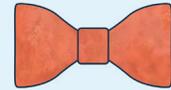


EMBRACING THE GIFT CARD



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We talk to a lot of merchants regularly, and the trend to support Gift card initiatives is on the up-tick.

It's finally happening. Gift Card programs might just be starting to be recognized as the incredible marketing tool that they are.

WE TALK TO A LOT OF MERCHANTS regularly, and the trend to support Gift card initiatives is on the up-tick. This is definitely an uphill battle, but know this—Proactive gift card managers are getting in front of the c-suite and they are using the powerful metrics of branded currency to begin to educate executives about the incredible hidden super powers of gift card technology, and more importantly, they are recognizing there is deep emotional psychology that makes gift cards the most popular gift over the last decade.

We're seeing the trends everywhere—More merchant marketing teams have adopted gift cards, in many cases shifting the resident 'GC Geek' over to their team for better control on partnerships and discounts.

Frankly, we have the third party aggregators and the merchants that partner with them to thank for that. The proliferation of gift cards into high traffic grocery, drug, and mass market stores has increased our marketing

footprint significantly, making these locations a go-to destination for consumers looking to give the gift of choice and convenience in a retailer that offers them that benefit as well.

This trend has also made those companies that aggregate and have robust relationships more profitable, with private equity suddenly in heavy acquisition and investment mode.

We're hearing that while merchant gift card management teams are staying small, the

WHILE MERCHANT GIFT CARD MANAGEMENT TEAMS ARE STAYING SMALL, THE AMOUNT OF MONETARY SUPPORT HAS INCREASED

amount of monetary support has increased, with more marketing dollars and a higher understanding within executive teams that gift cards are (or should be) an integral part of marketing plans everywhere. The recent economic boom has shifted executive teams, moving marketing professionals from successful gift card focused companies to a



As a result, gift card consulting firms are seeing an upswing. Most merchants are interested in hearing about consultant options, and their ability to gain approval on getting sales or program management support is higher than it ever has been in the past.

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO BE LOOKING FOR GIFT CARD RELATED WORK

Speaking of permanent employees, there has never been a better time to be looking for gift card related work. Staff is moving around in the most significant shift than we've seen in the last ten years.

So what does this mean?

The searing, white hot spotlight is on us. With company understanding about our best kept secrets comes opportunity, hard work, but most importantly, it gives us a voice and a platform to shout gift card benefits to the rooftops and watch our industry rise, crumbling away the rubble of misunderstanding.

We are definitely in an Evolution. Come join us, won't you?

WITH GREATER POWER THERE IS GREATER RESPONSIBILITY

new position, and taking their understanding for gift cards with them.

But as Peter Parker knows—with greater power there is greater responsibility. Gift card teams are being asked to pull reports they have never had to pull before. Older processors without advanced reporting capabilities are being shoved aside by younger, more nimble platforms that can dynamically measure relative success by sales channel, discount, and card types.

Our beloved Gift Card Geeks have new managers, new expectations, and new goals, while often being asked to juggle it all with the same staff.



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