



TOY TALK

Preparing for Christmas 2024

Roger Earl

One of my good hobby friends recently shared his 15 years of personal Q4 retail store notes with me. Each year, he logged notes to remember what worked and what mistakes to avoid the following year.

His notes were a trip down memory lane with entries about some of the hot products of yesteryear. There were many successful products: Estes Proto X, Blade mCX, Dromida Ominous, HobbyZone Champ & Firebird, and so on. One big surprise for me was his notes about toy impulse items:

- Buy more STEM building kits (not necessarily LEGO). Find a supplier for Fischertechnik construction kits. Several customers requested them.
- Next year, buy more Rock-Em Sock Robots, Magnum Guns, Magnum Marshmallow Guns and Gel Blasters. Trust this note.
- Underestimated stocking stuffer-type gifts, like small puzzles and play putty.
- Sub \$50 items are where it's at—cheap everything. I should have bought more of this stuff at NRHSA in September.
- I ran out of rock tumblers again! Buy in August/September. If you don't have them, you can't sell them.

- Have a good selection of rubber band airplanes at Thanksgiving to last the rest of the year.
- Slot car sets are great last-minute gifts.
- Look for buys under \$10; buy 300 instead of 100.
- Have 80 pieces of something at \$99 going into the last weekend of Christmas. You will move them all.

The first lesson is every retail store should log significant Q4 events as a reminder for next year. His other entries included buying bigger bags, having more staff on Black Friday and demonstrating overstocked items.

Second, your customers are very busy and stressed about buying gifts during peak holiday season. They really want to quickly purchase items for all their friends and family and get the "buying task" done.

My advice is if you have the items mentioned above on display near the cash register, these items will sell. Essentially, you are doing your customers a massive favor, and you can expect keystone margins with no ongoing customer support.

It's never too early to start panicking preparing for next year's Christmas selling season. HM



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