



Advice

Psychology of Selling

Last-minute madness

Helping men make the most of their last-minute holiday shopping sprees



MOST RETAILERS WOULD AGREE that in the week leading up to Christmas their ratio of women to men shoppers takes quite a radical shift. For a good part of the year, except for hardware, sporting goods and do-it-yourself stores, the majority of shoppers are female. And then, 10 days prior to Christmas, the majority of shoppers for many retailers suddenly become men of all ages.

Shopping procrastination for men is almost a default behaviour. The reason for this, if you believe what Freud said, is that humans will seek to avoid negative emotions and delay stressful tasks. This is called the pleasure principle and how it works is that many tasks are considered stressful and not pleasurable so they are replaced with easier and more enjoyable pursuits, which give immediate enjoyment.

Think of the choice of having a beer and watching a hockey game on TV versus fixing that burned out bulb in the hallway. There is no contest!

Another factor that comes into play is the lack of frequency of shopping for most men. They're simply not used to doing it and often view shopping as not pleasurable, and because shopping isn't part of their regular routine they often forget to do it. As Christmas approaches other tasks take precedence over shopping until the calendar catches up with them and they have no choice but to finally go shopping.

The good news is that most of the gifts that they have to purchase for others have been purchased already by their wives or girlfriends, so they're left only having to buy for said wife or girlfriend.

How do you deal with this procrastinating male? The best thing you can do is have their wives or girlfriends "register" for what they want at your store. Promote this early and often to almost guarantee that he'll make a beeline to your store in those busy days before Christmas. Also, if you offer free gift-wrapping, super fast check-out and guaranteed returns, you'll own this procrastinator! And remember he who shops late rarely worries about price. Having the gift to give is far more important than saving a few dollars. ■

James Dion has a bachelors and masters degree in psychology from the Chicago State University and a Ph.D. in industrial psychology from the Illinois Institute of Technology. Coupled with 30 years of hands-on retail experience, he's one of the most sought after retail consultants internationally. He's also the author of three books including *Retail Selling Ain't Brain Surgery*, *It's Twice As Hard*.