

MPIBA Bookseller Summer Camp Workshop: Holiday Prep Starts Now

BOOKS & PRODUCTS

- Consider ALL of the fall and winter holidays as well as local and regional celebrations.
- Re-evaluate your fall/holiday frontlist orders:
 - Check on orders, update quantities
 - Create a calendar of pub dates.
- Review your bestselling books since March to see what you need to stock up on.
- Place your orders for non-book/gift items:
 - Consider “bundles” of books, greeting cards, and gift items.
 - Consider Greeting Card bundles.
- Review the robust list of Indies First and other publisher specials.
- Plan for ordering the MPIBA Holiday Gift Guide titles that work for your store.
- Attend FallCon 2021:
 - Look for titles you might have missed
 - Find additional gift items to stock
- Understand and communicate potential supply chain issues:
 - Find a good source of information (sales reps, phone reps, Edelweiss, Publishers Weekly)
 - Decide how you’ll communicate delays and pub date changes with staff.
 - Decide how you’ll deal with special orders not arriving in time, or being out of stock on big books.

MARKETING & EVENTS

- Plan and prep your marketing in advance!
- In all communications with customers:
 - Voice the importance of shopping local for the holidays.
 - Encourage your customers to shop on-line (if applicable), and promote your store’s URL.
- Make sure your buyers are communicating with marketing.
 - Promote things you ordered in large quantities
- Plan your holiday events and festivities:
 - IndiesFirst/Small Business Saturday (Saturday, November 27)
 - Cyber Monday (Monday, November 29) -- promote your website
 - Cider Monday (Monday, November 29) -- promote the warm fuzzy of in-store shopping
 - Holiday storytimes.
 - Holiday “book talk” or “gift talks” for your customers.
 - Author events (signed books make great gifts!).
 - Ladies Night Out gift market (with other local vendors).
- Research community holiday celebrations and coordinate marketing efforts or create a holiday pop-up shop to reach new audiences.

- Reach out to the media to get news coverage for your store and any specific holiday events or promotions.
- Plan to give your website a general update with current information and fresh content.
 - Plan for updating with seasonal and holiday graphics and recommendations for each holiday.
 - Promote sales of e-books and audiobooks by curating content on your website.
- Order your MPIBA Holiday Gift Guide Catalogs and sign up to send via email.
 - Plan newspaper insertions and direct mail campaigns.
- Prep holiday shopping social media and/or email campaigns
 - Title suggestions for every type of gift.
 - Evergreen content: “Books make great gifts”, “Give gift cards”, etc.
 - Weekly themes (picture books, history, cookbooks, fiction, etc.)
- Plan to promote gift cards and gift certificates -- easy gift ideas!
- Promote your store as a venue for private, after-hours shopping parties to customers who are interested in inviting family and friends.
- Promote pre-orders for big holiday books:
 - Customers can get holiday gifts ordered early!
 - Remember to have someone look at pre-orders regularly, and adjust orders.

BOOKSTORE & DISPLAY

- Schedule time for general store upkeep:
 - Dust shelves, clean windows, rearrange fixtures.
 - Update and replace worn shelf-talkers.
 - Evaluate and update store signage.
- Create a holiday display plan:
 - Window displays.
 - Festive decorations.
 - “Wrapped and ready to go!”
 - Gift recommendations.
 - Holiday Gift Guide Catalog (order display materials from MPIBA).
- Think about how you can honor the holidays while being inclusive:
 - Celebrate diverse cultures and religions.

STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- How might staffing needs change for the busy holiday season?
 - Will you need to hire “holiday help”?
 - Will you have extended hours?
 - When might you see spikes in traffic due to community happenings?
 - Can work be done outside of open hours? (restocking, filling displays, etc.)
- Establish schedule expectations for the holidays:
 - Create a policy for holiday time-off requests.
 - Create an overtime policy.
 - Make sure both new and current staff are aware of all expectations.
- Create and update sales and customer service expectations and training:
 - Encourage staff to thank customers for shopping indie and local.
 - Do you say Happy Holidays vs. Merry Christmas? Or?

- General reminders for your best customer service practices.
- Decide how you will inform staff of promotions, displays, important books.
 - Plan a rep night with your staff.
- Make sure everyone knows where supplies can be found and restocked.
- Offer training to diversify skills (gift wrapping, taking special orders, etc.)
- Make plans to take care of your staff and yourself during the busy holiday season.
 - Offer an extra (paid) day off in January.
 - Make sure everyone has two consecutive days off (their own weekends).
 - Provide snacks, water, break stations (holiday cookies!)
 - Allow for breaks in staff schedules.
 - Plan some fun, like dress-up days, or a staff celebration, or?
 - Encourage self care.

Other Things to Consider as the Holidays Approach

- Update and promote your shipping policy
 - “Order by in order to receive by” dates.
 - Look at USPS & UPS dates.
 - Explore shipping options to ease staff time:
 - PirateShip
- Update Your Holiday Hours (impacts staffing, marketing, etc.)
- Check your inventory of business and office supplies and other critical items:
 - Shopping bags
 - Register supplies
 - Toilet paper
 - Printer paper, pens, staples!
 - Display materials.
 - Sticky notes and event supplies.
 - Check your sources, and inform/empower staff to buy/restock supplies.
- Decisions about gift wrapping:
 - Offer it? Or not?
 - Bring in a non-profit organization to manage it?
 - Plan for staff time.
 - Order gift wrap
- Think about how to deal with increased requests for non-profit support.