

Merchandising Easter Tips for 2013

This year Easter Sunday is March 31. Retailers consider this an early Easter that comes with a short selling season. Easter is no exception to the holiday selling season which means the bulk of retail sales will take place the last 7 to 10 days before the holiday. Now is the time to make sure everyone is clear on who and when people are scheduled to work. Inform staff of your Easter hours now and do it again each week until Easter arrives.

It is imperative to inform your customers of any **changes** you have planned for **store hours**. Closing early or extended hours need to be announced immediately and signs saying so need to be posted throughout the store today.

Depending on whose statistics you chose to believe, it has been reported that in one form or another up to 78% of consumers celebrate Easter. In most cases chocolate is involved. Easter is second in the top selling candy holidays.

Here's what you can learn about Easter trends from Pinterest. Pinterest is a web-based social image bookmarking system where people "pin" or book mark photos and clippings that they find interesting. It's a great spot to find out what may be on the horizon. Pinterest.com At no surprise, the number one item being pinned is the Cadbury Crème Egg. I hope you have lots of them and they are priced competitively. Also hitting the popular section of the site are Cadbury's Caramel two-packs, wine glasses filled with jelly beans, conversation Easter candy (a knockoff of the conversation heart candy sold for Valentine's day), tuxedo peeps (peeps dipped in chocolate), and Ghirardelli Easter Squares.

Five important things to know:

1. **Lindt Lindor Truffle** singles are a great candy to promote for Easter. The wrappers are bright colorful foil and the single truffles are somewhat shaped like eggs. They are good quality chocolate, and because they are generally sold by singles customers on every budget can afford them. With the right signage they can become the best impulse item in the store. They sell the best on the counter displayed in a clear glass bowl. You can sell them 3 for a dollar or 35 cents each. **HERE IS MY FAVORITE PART - They do not have to be discounted after Easter.**
2. **Cadbury Crème Eggs** still remain number one. Nothing comes close. Put them out on the shelves as soon as you get them! Because these candies only are available once a year, from January 1 to Easter, you can never put them out too soon. Make sure to have some available at every register. **WARNING: Cadbury Crème Eggs are a price sensitive item, keep your retails competitive.**
3. Each year **Just Born** introduces new marshmallow **Peeps**. Peeps dipped in chocolate are back this year and now have to compete with new Giant Bunny Peep and Rainbow Pops Peeps. If you have limited space and you want to guarantee a good sell-through then stick to the long time, two favorite colors of #1 yellow and #2 pink colored Peeps. *According to Just Born, over five-million peeps are made each day.*
4. There should be **NO VALENTINE** candy to be seen! Seriously, if you have some, eat it, but do not have it competing with new Easter candy.
5. The **secret** to selling candy and Easter baskets is... **Never Run Out of Grass!** Customers looking to build their own Easter basket start with grass (shredded green shiny plastic). Don't run out of it, if you do, then people will take their entire Easter purchase to the store that has all of their needs. If you do not have 10 bags left over after Easter, then you didn't buy enough.

To ensure **better sell through** of holiday candy it is best to stick to the reliable all-time favorites. Cadbury single eggs (you can buy the 4 pack but remember to break them down once your singles get low), Cadbury

Mini Eggs, Cadbury Clucking Bunny, Hershey's Candy Coated Eggs, Hershey's Pastel Kisses, Milky Way Creme Bunnies, Milky Way Creme Eggs, Peeps, Palmer chocolate bunnies, Reese's Peanut Butter Eggs and Jelly Beans. Keep good inventory notes! **Items sold at a discount** cannot be counted as a positive sale. Also remember that running out of candy two days before a holiday does not make a successful selling season.

Intense **Dark Chocolate** and **Organic Chocolate** are no longer niches; they are musts in your candy selection.

Insert a section of single count Easter candy at your main checkout counter. Place this section adjacent to the everyday bars, gums and mints.

Easter Baskets: make sure to have some candy alternatives available for Easter baskets. Silly Putty (have these on a clip strip), Playdoh, playing cards, bright-colored markers, jump ropes, bubbles and wand, stickers, sidewalk chalk, plush animals, Matchbox cars, marbles, and balls. Prefilled Easter baskets are losing their appeal and are even difficult to sell at half price after Easter. **It's highly recommended to go light the inventory of prefilled baskets.**

You can offer an alternative to the plastic / wicker baskets by offering brightly colored beach pails! I like the pail idea the best.... because they **don't have to be discounted** after Easter.

When purchasing **plush toys** (yuck), remember that chicks and rabbits are only popular during Easter. Stuffed bears will always be number one. It's ok to run out of chicks and rabbits, just make sure to have a few bears as backup. Simply attaching a **colorful piece of ribbon** to everyday plush can make the items more attractive as an Easter gift. I like the ribbon idea because the ribbon comes off and the plush doesn't have to be discounted. **Note on plush:** *A wise old plush salesman (yes there is one) once shared with me that plush that can be posed, ones with adjustable arms and legs, do not sell nearly as well as soft floppy plush that can easily be hugged. He added, you can tell quality plush from carnival plush by looking at the paws, no not their ancestry, but their feet and hands. If the paws or parts of the paws are of a different color or material, then in most cases it is a better quality toy. Gives one pause doesn't it?*

Looking for a **healthier suggestion** to increase Easter sales? Build your own Happy Health Basket. Add hand cream, multiple vitamins, candles, shower gel, jewelry, scarves, sandals, hair barrettes, nail polish and any other things you can think of that can fit in a basket. **Inspiration can go a long way**, and the best part is... none of these items have to be discounted.

Greeting Card Tips

Easter greeting cards are, at best, staying steady in sales but in most cases are decreasing. All in all, Easter greeting cards still rank 4th out of the 5 card-sending holidays. (Halloween and Thanksgiving are not considered traditional greeting card holidays.) Keep a close eye on your card carry over and make adjustments for next year. Wondering what the last place greeting card holiday is? It's Father's Day.

One pound chocolates, boxed novelty candy, stickers and even some photo frames **fit nicely in card pockets**. For an example of how chocolate looks displayed in greeting card pockets and other Easter ideas, [click here](#).

Over **half of the purchases** for Easter are made the Saturday before the holiday. Don't Panic! Remember, customers stop shopping when their hands are full. Have plenty of shopping hand baskets distributed and easily found around your store.

Would you like to join the Merchandising Overhaul of Fame? Send your photos to:
gabe.trahan@ncpanet.org