

## Time to Prepare for Valentine's Day 2018

Are you ready for the 2018 Valentine's Day? It's not too late to start preparing for next year. A Valentine's Day that lands on a Tuesday, such as this year's, has little in common with a Valentine's Day that lands on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday in terms of sales and customer traffic. However, a Valentine's Day that lands on a Tuesday mirrors one that lands on a Wednesday, meaning the 2017 Valentine's Day is a wonderful opportunity to prepare for the 2018 holiday.



Start by taking **daily** detailed notes. Here is what you should record:

- **What kind of purchases are being made?** Are they impulse or planned purchases? If they are impulse buys, then congratulations – you are great merchandiser!
- **Which gender is making most of the purchases?** If it is mostly men, you now know you need to build on selling to women for 2018 and vice versa.
- **Are you adding companion sales?** (For example: are you selling a candle along with massage oil and/or a matching fragrance?) A vanilla scented candle, vanilla scented body lotion, and vanilla scented organic massage oil sold together produces a nice ring at the register. These types of products sell all year long and do not need to be discounted after Valentine's Day.
- **What are your high and low rings at the register for this Tuesday holiday?** How many lows have you rung and how frequently do you see the high rings? Prepare your buying for next year to increase the average Valentine's Day-related sale. Make a note of the good (and bad) surprises.
- **What item is selling well that surprised you?** What line isn't selling so well that surprised you? Is offering free gift wrapping helping sales? Is offering a free Forever Stamp boosting greeting card sales? Are you planning to purchase the same categories of Valentine's Day cards, or do you need more specific categories such as "To My Wife," "To My Husband," "To Mom," or humorous cards? How is your inventory of Valentine's Day cards doing on each day leading up to the holiday? (Tip: if your inventory is running low, promote your blank cards in the Valentine's Day section.)
- **What are customers asking for?** Write down what people are asking for – it makes buying so much easier for next time. (Side note: [do you have a want book](#) at your register?)

Remember, the best buyers are passionate about taking notes. The best merchandisers take photos and notes, position merchandise to sell, and do not rely on decorating to make their displays look good. The best managers never, ever discount until after the holiday. P.S. – Valentine's Day is a great day to wear red sneakers...just saying.

-- Gabe Trahan, NCPA Senior Director of Store Operations and Marketing  
NCPA's Front-End Overhaul