

E-NEWS ARTICLE: The New Social Worker's Holiday Shopping Guide for Social Workers

Contributed by Linda Grobman

I'm not really much of a shopper myself. I'm just not one of those people who love to shop 'til they drop. However, December is a time when shopping seems to be on everyone's mind. Is it on yours?

I like to take a social work approach to shopping. Assess the situation: What does the person want (or need)? What gift will have a meaningful impact and express something of value to the recipient? Develop a plan of action: How can I best obtain the best gift? Can I efficiently visit local stores, or can I accomplish more online? Will the person appreciate a physical gift, a gift card/certificate, or something less tangible, such as a gift of my time or services? Implement the plan: With list in hand, begin the quest for those perfect gifts!

Sometimes shopping is easy, and sometimes it's more of a challenge. For some situations, I have found that I personally prefer online shopping. I can put one gift "on hold" while I search for others, thus avoiding having to go all the way back to the other end of the mall to look at that one thing that looked "sort of" interesting. There are no crowded stores and parking lots. I don't have to "fight" traffic, and I save on gas, thus helping save the environment. Plus, I can find unusual or unique items (including social work-related ones!) that I would never see in a local store. And...at the end of the shopping trip, I simply have to wait until the packages arrive at my door (or I can have them shipped directly to the "gifted" location).

I have been thinking of some online shopping tips based on my experiences and observations. So, here goes:

1. Be progressive: There are many Web sites that offer progressive shopping opportunities. One that I came across recently is Donnelly/Colt Progressive Resources Catalog. This sounds like a gigantic corporate structure, but Donnelly/Colt is actually a small family-owned business that sells progressive merchandise, including gift baskets; t-shirts; posters; and other items with messages of peace, social justice, human rights and other issues. Another similar site is Northland Poster Collective, where you can buy posters, buttons, calendars, notecards, t-shirts, and other items with messages of grassroots organizing.
2. Be fair: Fair trade is defined as "a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency, and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers -- especially in the South. Fair Trade organizations (backed by consumers) are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising, and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade," according to FINE, a network of fair trade organizations. One example of fair trade shopping can be found at Ten Thousand Villages.
3. Travel the Amazon: One of my favorite online places to shop is Amazon.com. I love bookstores, and Amazon has developed into a very nice place to browse for almost any book (or other items, for that matter). Besides being able to find almost any book (or various other items) that you might be seeking, you can also find customer reviews, product descriptions and photos, excerpts (in many cases), and lots of other useful information to help you make a buying decision. To get started on your Amazon quest, go to the Amazon home page. By following this link (and others to Amazon listed below) to Amazon.com, you will also be supporting The New Social Worker, as we will receive a small commission on your purchase.
4. Be charitable: Many charitable organizations have gift items for sale on their Web sites. Support your favorite cause by making a donation in your honoree's name or by buying a t-shirt, mug, jewelry, or other item that says you care. CharityVillage.com offers a shopping guide with links to Canadian charities that sell goods online. Some other examples of charitable gift ideas can be found at: Lance Armstrong Foundation, American Red Cross, Broadway Cares, and Heifer International.
5. Go posters: I have found some wonderful posters with a variety of motivational messages at allPosters.com. Topics include: diversity, challenge, self-esteem, tolerance, attitude, bullying, leadership, and others. The New Social Worker has developed a poster store with some hand-picked social issues posters. Again, I will disclose that we get a small commission on these sales, so shopping here supports The New Social Worker. I really like these "issues" posters, and allPosters also has a wide variety of posters on ALL subjects. You can get many them by themselves, framed, or laminated.
6. Follow the muse: Music can sometimes express an emotion better than words can. So, why not give a gift of music? Some of my favorites in the singer-songwriter category are: Anne Hills (a social worker/singer-songwriter and Vance Gilbert (folk singer). I have many other favorites, too, and your tastes (or those of your loved ones) may be totally

different, of course!

7. Go eBay: eBay is another of my favorite online shopping spots. If I know the item I am looking for, I can often go to eBay and find it for less. Be sure to check out the feedback ratings of the seller, and read the item description, shipping policies, and other information carefully when ordering on eBay. The New Social Worker will get a small commission from your purchase here, as well.

8. Get certified: If you don't know what else to get, or you know that the person really likes to shop for him/herself, a gift certificate always comes in handy. You can get Amazon.com gift cards by clicking [here](#) or go to [GiftCertificates.com](#) for a wide variety of gift certificates.

9. Go healthy: A gift geared toward health or fitness is often appreciated. If you have a runner on your gift list, check out GPS devices that keep track of distance, speed, heart rate, and other info, for example.

10. Get social work: If you are shopping for a social worker (or looking for something to put on your own wish list), consider a social work book. The "Days in the Lives of Social Workers" books edited by yours truly, although sometimes used as supplemental textbooks, are written in jargon-free (mostly), non-academic language. They are simply collections of stories written by social workers, describing what they do on a day-to-day basis. These books are sold through our online store, and you can currently buy all three of them as a "gift set" at a discounted price. Or, if you are looking for social work "novelty" items, try our social work gift store.

Well, I hope I've given you some ideas, so you can implement your plan and reach your goal. Happy shopping, now or any time of year!