

The Retail Guide to Buying and Merchandising Candles:

# Six Easy Tips to Maximize Candle Sales

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## 1. Know what your customers want in a candle.

### **Candle lovers buy candles based on three criteria: scent, color, and style of candle.**

As a shop owner, the decision to introduce candles into your shop is an easy one. Now more than ever retail gift shops are reporting a steady growth in candle every year. In an unsteady economy this is good news. However the tough part is deciding what brands and types of candles to start carrying. Stay focused on why people buy candles and not get overwhelmed by candle lovers' tastes because buying a candle is a personal choice. Those who offer several options will find it will work in your favor. For instance some candle lovers gravitate towards jar candles in different colors and pleasant scents. Others may enjoy pillar candles, tapers for candle light dinners or weddings, scented wax melts - which are super trending right now, or unusual candles that look like baked food that may be purchased for its decorative appearance. Do not ignore other trends such as those that focus on eco-conscience/vegan crowd who prefer soy or palm based candles. When starting out offering candles, strive to offer a good variety of at least two different brands as you can always try different ones down the line. Make sure that those brands are not being offered by a neighboring gift shop to reduce competition. Finding different candle brands is as easy as going to a wholesale gift show, picking up a retail trade magazine, or doing a simple Internet research. It is important to learn about candle lingo and facts along the way.



## 2. Test a couple of candles first.

Candle manufacturers will tell you what they want you to hear when it comes to making a sale, but how will you know if they are telling the truth if you don't try before you buy? Additionally, how do you plan on convincing your customers to purchase a candle if you and your staff haven't burned them? The simple act of trying a few sample candles with your staff will make it easier to market candles to customers because knowledgeable staff will make it easier for them to close a sale. Customers today are always looking for



validation when making a purchase too and if your sales people cannot give customers a reason to purchase a product, no matter what the product is, it ultimately reflects on your shop's ability to deliver good customer service. Another reason to test a line of candles before you place an order is it could save both time and money. You may find the candles might not meet your standards or create a lot of soot damaging your display furniture if you choose to burn the candles in your shop. It is better to spend just a little bit of money and buy a few to sample and be satisfied rather than stuck with hundreds or even thousands of dollars in merchandise that you may later struggle to sell.

### 3. Properly Displaying Candles Can Make Or Break Your Candle Sales



While each shop is different, one thing rings true... there is never enough display space! The nice thing about candles is that they are small and can be displayed in several different ways. Some options may include shelving such as bookcases or candle hutches, crates, or tiered tables. Regardless of you choose to display your new candle line, do make sure there is a core area where they are grouped together so they'll be easy to find.

One thing to consider is choosing a style of furniture that matches the style of the candles. Some candle manufacturers offer display furniture, but that is after you buy so many candles, it may break your budget. A little DIY can help. Modern, sleek candles may not be ideal with distressed "country style" shelving yet would be very striking on glass. If you choose to offer multiple colored candles white surfaces makes them pop. Clashing colors in displays can be a visual overload for shoppers and deter customers.

Don't forget about good lighting! In order for shoppers to read fragrance labels or clearly see the color, good lighting is a must. Simple clip on lighting works well but for added appeal try white Christmas lights or battery operated stick-on lights. You should also burn a candle often or at least during high volume days, this shows not only how brightly they glow but, also adds brightness and warmth and the aroma usually drives customers to explore additional fragrances and buy.

A great way to maximize your candle visibility is feature them is add them to seasonal displays. Pastel colored candles mixed in with Easter or spring displays or ocean type fragrances mixed with a summer or beach themed display does double duty offering additional exposure to the candles your store carries.

## 4. Romance cards and signs are your friends!

A really nice, personal touch is to utilize romance cards. Romance cards are small descriptive signs posted next to a product that offers customers some insight to that product. The information could include a fact, an employee recommendation, product description, or name of a product. Romance cards are a gift shop's best friend working like a sales associate answering frequent customer questions, recommend products, and add to the uniqueness to your shop that a big box retailer cannot do.



It would make a retailers job easier if candle companies offer marketing signs or romance cards, but not all do. This is where going above and beyond for your customers will go a long way in helping to not just boost candle sales, but can also be applied to other products in your store.

Signs featuring candle brands should be on top of your list of things to have prominently visible at your candle display. Nearly all big name candle manufacturers offer branding signage whether it is on a plaque or etched into their display furniture. Signage for smaller manufacturers, local artists, or private label candles may fall under the responsibility of shop owners or merchandising managers. Simple and cost effective signs are simple to create using Microsoft Word Mac's Pages or a simple desktop publishing program. Other online printer such as [vistaprint.com](http://vistaprint.com) are also helpful where for a few dollars you get signs of differing sizes professionally printed. Just make sure you have permission to reprint a company's logo if you choose to do so.



## 5. Never Fail Candle Promotion Ideas

1. **Offer a candle sale.** Shoppers cannot resist sales. Some candle sale ideas you may want to try may include 10% off a candle of the month. Try a Two-fer Tuesday promotion where if customers buy 2 candles, they can get a 3rd candle for free or 1/2 off. A "This Just in" sale is also very effective where new candle fragrances would be on sale for percentage off for limited time.
2. **Create a Birthday Club.** Blowing out candles is a birthday tradition. Why not start a new tradition in your shop? This is a great promotion geared towards cultivating repeat customers. To get started contact those on your mailing list asking them if they want to be apart of a new Birthday Program and explain how the program works. Then for those who want to opt in, simply ask for their birthday month and an e-card will be email to them the month of their birthday with coupon redeemable for a free candle at your shop. To entice more to participate, offer a monthly coupon for other items in your shop or special discount just for them when new candle scents arrive throughout the year. Most likely the birthday girl/guy will bring a friend and they will probably buy a candle or other product, thus giving you additional business year round.
3. **Institute a Candle Reward Program.** Just like free coffee punch cards, make a candle reward punch card where if a customer buys five candles, the sixth one is free or if they buy nine the tenth is free. Offer to keep shoppers punch cards behind the counter (in an index box) or use an app on a smart phone for easy tracking each time he/she comes to the store and preventing loss of cards too.
4. **Have a Candle Contest or Scavenger Hunt!** It's hard to resist a fun contest or scavenger hunt. A candle contest may be naming a custom candle scent for the store where the winner gets a free candle or discount coupon in the new scent. A scavenger hunt may include finding a set number of candle symbols around the store and if all symbols are found the hunter gets a prize. This is a great way to introduce new lines of candles to your shop or an activity for antsy children!



## 6. Feedback is your friend

Everyone has an opinion, especially when it comes to candles. One may say your best seller is stinky. Another may rave and buy all of one fragrance that you thought wasn't "your cup of tea". There is not an exact science when it comes to pleasing all candle lovers. To know if your shop's first candle pick works, you must listen to your customers. Customers will give you valuable feedback while they smell candles in your shop, suggest additional fragrances, or tell you why they are back for more. A great way to get feedback is to ask them to like your shop's Facebook page and review the candle purchase or ask if they will join your email newsletter list and contact them directly for a testimonial. When it is time to re-order, use the feedback as a reference guide and do ask questions to your sales rep about new candles, if any are going to be discontinued, or even discounts.

## Final thoughts...

*"Overall home fragrance sales have reached approximately \$5.1 billion in 2007 according to marketing research firm Packaged Facts. The company forecasts a 3% annual increase in the sale of scented products to \$6 billion by 2012." - Country Business Magazine, September/October 2009, page 40.*

*"The biggest sector in the candle industry is with companies who offer natural or alternative waxes. People are becoming more conscious of health concerns and are becoming more green." - Dawn Mathisen, January 18, 2011. [www.examiner.com/article/statistics-inspire-many-candle-lovers-to-start-a-business-of-their-own](http://www.examiner.com/article/statistics-inspire-many-candle-lovers-to-start-a-business-of-their-own)*

*"Approximately 35% of candle sales occur during the Christmas/Holiday Season. Non-seasonal business accounts for approximately 65% of candle sales." - [www.candles.org/about\\_facts.html](http://www.candles.org/about_facts.html)*

This Ebook was written by Michelle Sholund, the owner of By the Bay Botanicals. The photos were taken by Michelle Sholund and copyrighted. If you have further questions on this topic or would like more information on the line of palm wax candles called Destination Scentsations go to [www.bythebaybotanicals.com](http://www.bythebaybotanicals.com).



We also want to give a special thanks to The Maryland Store for giving us permission to take a few photos within their shop located in Westminster, MD.

