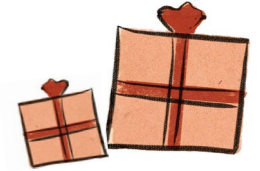


Wiser Way GIFT OWL

TEXT BY RACHEL MANN

Concierge gift-giving company “Gift Owl” makes giving presents even easier. Gift Owl takes over the hard work of finding your recipient the perfect assortment of presents. We talk with Gift Owl’s founder, mother-of-two and entrepreneur Amy Yates about her curated gifting concept and gift-giving tips.



Sky Castle: How did you get the idea for Gift Owl?

Yates: After I had my first daughter, I wanted something to do to keep occupied that wasn't all about the nappies. I'd always loved picking out presents for people, trying to find something that was a bit different from the run-of-the-mill present, something that you wouldn't find in any shop. I came up with the idea that there are a lot of people who are difficult to buy for out there, people who have everything... The person who knows best about what they like is the recipient. And our card and questionnaire is a fun way of the recipient giving that information.

How does it work for the gift-giver?

You go onto our website (<http://www.gift-owl.com>) and you buy a Gift Owl card for someone. The card can come to you, the giver, first but ends up going directly to the recipient. The card has lots of fun questions about their likes, their dislikes, how crafty they are... They send it back to us. Then we hunt down things we think they would like and send them back in a package of lovely things, wrapped up in brown paper and string.

How do you find the items?

I've always got my eyes open for interesting things that I think might fit with someone. When I get cards back, I try to look out for personalized things, handpicked items. I look everywhere. I use Etsy quite a lot; you get a lot of individual designers, craftspeople, and one-of-a-kind pieces. I have vintage shops I go to.

Have you ever gotten a Gift Owl Card back and been stumped?

Sometimes the recipients don't fill in very much, and obviously we don't know the person we're buying for... so the

more they fill in the better. We also say if you don't have a favorite, don't fill anything in. It gives me a bit of a challenge! I always try and make sure I send something out that I really hope they'd love to open... Recently we had someone who, all they talked about was their favorite football team...I managed to hunt down a program for match that was played the day that they were born, we got some feedback that they really liked it.

How do you prepare for the holidays? Is this your first Christmas season?

We're trying to get lots of press releases out, speaking to blogs, and getting people to know about us. We've got a couple of specials coming up for early shoppers; we'll probably find that from November to December we'll be pretty busy getting the cards out, and then in January we'll be busy getting them back. We went live on December 5 last year, so this Christmas is really our first one.

Do you have any tips for people giving their own gifts, apart from going to Gift Owl?

Well, that would be giving my secrets away, wouldn't it? ... Try to get something that's a bit different—not the run-of-the-mill socks and aftershave. Think outside of the box a little bit; try and get something you think the person would be really excited about opening. Put a bit more thought in; start early. Find something you think they would like, but put your twist on it. You want them to remember who it's from. ■

*Interview transcript has been edited.