

Retail by the Numb3r\$

BY HEATHER BOULGER,
BCREB EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



Retail jobs are everywhere. Look beyond the checkout counters and you will find a vast range of exciting projects and career opportunities. The retail industry is the second largest industry in Berkshire County (responsible for approximately 14.8% of employment which is about 10,000 jobs). Retailing includes all the activities involved in selling goods or services directly to final consumers for their personal, non-business use. Retailers are of various types such as convenience stores, specialty stores, department stores, supermarkets, discount stores, chain stores, and shopping mall/centers. Retail outlets exist in every nook and corner of the county.

With the upcoming holiday season and a push to buy locally, I found a variety of retail data issued by the National Retail Federation that I thought you would enjoy. It's no surprise that the economy is having an impact on consumers. According to the NRF's 2009 Holiday Consumer Intentions and Actions Survey, U.S. consumers plan to spend an average of \$682.74 on holiday-related shopping which is a 3.2% drop from last year.

- 65% say the economy will impact their plans
- 84.2% will be spending less this year
- 55% will be shopping the sales more often
- 42% will be using more coupons
- 34% will be putting up last year's decorations.

According to the NRF many Americans will also make changes in gift giving.

- 36% will buy more practical gifts
- 17% will buy a joint gift for kids or parents
- 16.7% will be making more gifts
- 28.6% will be traveling less or not at all for the holidays

What did the numbers say for 2008?

- \$832.36 – average amount spent on holiday gifts, food and decorations
- 49.3% of 18-24 year olds shopped online last season

- 40% of people started shopping before Halloween last year

As in previous years, 3/4 of Americans' holiday budget will be spent on gifts. While spending on family members will decline by a slight two percent (\$387.06 in '09 vs. \$395.15 in '08), gifts for friends (\$66.77 vs. \$80.13) and co-workers (\$19.26 vs. \$22.63) will see double-digit drops. Americans also plan to spend about five percent less (\$34.81

vs. \$36.88) on "other" gifts for people like babysitters, teachers and clergy.

Candy and food spending may be one bright spot this year, with the average person planning to spend \$10 more than last year (\$90.26 in 2009 vs. \$80.28 in 2008). Spending on other non-gift categories like decorations (\$40.75 in '09 vs. \$43.45 in '08), greeting cards and postage (\$26.77 vs. \$27.39), and flowers (\$17.05 vs. \$19.10) is

expected to drop.

Though Americans were less inclined to purchase gift cards last season, the popular gifts retain their spot at the top of the list among gift recipients. According to the survey, 55.2% of adults would like to receive a gift card this holiday season, with clothing (48.8%), books and DVDs (48.6%) and electronics (33.2%) among other popular choices (NRF). ■

Flu Facts for the Workplace

8 Ideas for a Healthy Work Environment

According to the Mass Office of Health and Human Services the best defense is a good offense to prevent getting the flu this winter. Visit www.mass.gov/flu for more tips and information.

1. Maintain a healthy lifestyle through rest, diet, exercise, and relaxation.
2. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available.
3. Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes. Germs spread this way.
4. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your elbow. Dispose of tissues in no-touch trash receptacles.
5. Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean, such as telephones, computer keyboards, doorknobs, etc.
6. Do not use other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment.
7. Don't spread the flu! If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home. Symptoms of flu include fever (100 degrees) or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. CDC recommends that sick workers stay home if they are sick with flu-like illness until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
8. Get vaccinated against seasonal flu, when vaccine is available in your area. For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.



Honor our Veterans on November 11th

On November 11th and every day we wish to show our utmost appreciation and sincere gratitude to all Veterans, National Guards, and Reservists. Berkshire Works Career Center has local Veterans Representatives in Pittsfield and North Adams who are committed to providing a wide range of services to Veterans to help find education, training and employment opportunities. To the 17, 661 Berkshire County Veterans (2006 Census) and the 23.7 million US Veterans – Happy Veteran's Day and a heartfelt thank you!

