

Small Business Buzz

A weekly report on small business owners and entrepreneurs in North Texas.



QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? Staff writer Sheryl Jean wants to hear your ideas and suggestions about our small business coverage. E-mail her at sjean@dallasnews.com.

THE FIVE

A local expert provides five recommendations on a topic useful to small business owners. This week, Nikole Rose, chief candy officer of Las Colinas promotional products company Marketing Candy, talked to staff writer Sheryl Jean about five tips for memorable company gifts this holiday season.

1

Edible gifts

Gifts that can be eaten — from candy and cookies to fruit and cheese — are universally popular and fun. They engage four of the five senses: sight, taste, smell and touch. Edible gifts are also available for any size budget.

2

Make it personal

A personalized gift demonstrates special thought and has a higher likelihood of being used, creating a constant reminder of the gift giver. Make a personalized gift by using a photograph of the recipient (from a company event to keep it professional) or give a monogrammed item, such as a desk accessory or golf towel.

3

Gifts people won't buy for themselves

Have you ever bought an umbrella? Harry & David pears? Items that people use and enjoy but don't typically buy for themselves make great gifts. They're seen as a luxury or a special treat.

4

Packaging

In business, it's all about the presentation. The same principle applies to gifts. Whether it's a decorative gift bag or a sparkling bow, packaging can make even a simple gift appear special.

5

Clever cards

Don't stress a budget that's smaller than in years past. It's OK to send a beautifully designed, high-quality card instead of a gift. A card is a great way to share a message about the joys of the season and convey your appreciation for their business. A handwritten note is a nice touch.

Rose has worked in the promotional products industry in North Texas since 1997. She also is president of Rose Group Cos., the parent of Marketing Candy, which was started by her husband, Michael Rose, in 1997. She joined the company in 2005.



ENERGY

Worries push lower

Price falls on economic fears as drop in U.S.

Worries that the economy is weakening have pushed prices down. Although the government says that oil supplies are plentiful in the U.S.

West Texas Intermediate crude, the benchmark price oil in much of the world, fell \$1.84 to finish at \$114.25 on the New York exchange. Brent crude used to price many foreign oil contracts fell \$1.95 to end at \$114.50 in London.

Oil prices fluctuated for weeks about the crisis.

Oil has fallen 10 percent since it spiked to \$145 a barrel.

Phil Flynn, chief U.S. analyst at Best in Chicago, says prices probably won't fall much further than the government's 2 percent, suggesting that 2 percent will be needed.

Crude supplies of 10 million barrels a day, which is 2 percent below year-end levels, the Energy Department's Information Administration said in its weekly report.

Supplies of oil, rose sharply.

Demand for U.S. oil has fallen as pump prices have dropped to record levels in the past year.

The reason for that demand for