



When Drinking At Work Is OK
Alcohol-consumption etiquette at company parties and events
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Retailers Cut Back On Free Shipping
A favorite online-shopping perk becomes harder to find this year
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Digital Cameras Get Flashy
New high-end models capture consumers tired of shutter lag
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◀ Tiffany sees value in licensing a line of luxury eyewear. **Media & Marketing** Page B4

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MANAGING YOUR CAREER

How to Co-A Would-I Takes Fore

DON MASURA BEG job as a career co-sources consultancy las four rounds of face-to touch with interested e One year later, they him a position until the next year. "They are net decisions," complai vement specialist: fr who supports himself t wait "is frustrating." Many companies dri cess, leaving applicants months. "People are se ing bad hiring decision man, head of Heyman.



By Joann S. Lublin

process unsettling and lander, an executive co "Your job is to remain while setting clear bou To stay upbeat, you side recruiters, inside managers how long the cally takes to fill a des describe the usual step

BILL GUERIN, a m who wants to be a table issue after his th search firm. One offic member—nearly three had applied—that th for as long as another ous leaders had to agre months "is probably be

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SMALL BUSINESS

Enterprise / By Raymond Flandez

Selling Ties (or Anything Else) to Subscribers

More Online Clubs Sign Up Patrons for Monthly Orders, Controlling Costs, Inventory

AS A FORMER LAWYER who dreaded tie-shopping, Greg Shugar of Naperville, Ill., knew other businessmen probably shared his feelings. So not long after founding an online store called the Tie-Bar.com with his wife, Gina, in 2004, he added a service to make shopping more convenient for customers—not to mention, lucrative for his own business.

He started a Tie-of-the-Month Club. For \$199 a year, customers signed up at www.thetiebar.com to receive a silk tie each month. So far, the Tie Bar, which designs the ties and has them manufactured in China, has more than 150 subscribers, with more than a dozen on their second year.

Aided by the Internet, a growing number of small businesses are offering clubs that provide goods to subscribers monthly, either as an add-on to their existing business or as primary means of sales. For entrepreneurs, it's a way to cut the costs of starting a business as the rise of online shopping has erased the trouble of setting up a brick-and-mortar store.

There are other incentives, though. For one, business owners say their cash flow is more stable because they have guaranteed sales each month, through a yearly or other set-time subscription, because most of their customers pay up

front. They also have better control of inventory because they know ahead of time exactly how much to purchase each month and at certain times of the year. Such freedom to plan is a valuable asset for ferreting out cost efficiencies and stabilizing sales.

Plus, entrepreneurs say with club-of-the-month models, they don't have to carry such a wide array of different items because they only have to fulfill a set amount for each featured item each month. In most cases, owners choose what item to give customers rather than have their clients do the picking.

The proliferation of clubs inspired Steve Schaffer to create Club-Offers.com, a shopping comparison site started two years ago that now offers a selection of more than 120 different monthly clubs. For example, fruit clubs can go anywhere from \$19 to \$28 a month. The most expensive club the site presents is a "Caviar of the Month" Club, which sells a year's supply of eight ounces of caviar a month for \$1,880.

"Fruit is the most popular," Mr. Schaffer says. "But the other clubs are growing in popularity."

Setups Vary
How these businesses are set up varies. Some have only an online presence; others have a catalog or work with boutique shops. Some clubs, such as the Tie Club, are add-on services for their main online site, where customers can purchase items individually without joining the monthly club.

So far, the \$500,000 in sales fiscal year from Mr. Shugar says how much the Tie helped their sales the company's id Other compan ning these mos multiple ones. D Clubs of America met monthly club pizzas and intern brewed beers, a than 1.5 millio 20,000-square-foot ily to members club in 1994.

The company bers, up from 15 approaching \$10 from his Web site Marketing Met

As clubs have marketing appro Kris Calef, owner Lake Forest, Ill in 1994, with a brewed beers—the cheese, chocolate C&H's busines consumer to alter act lines, such as beer and cigar gif and flowers. Cust mine how long last, from a on month of a year.

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