

6 Unique Styles of Giving Christmas Gifts—Which Is Yours?

It's the Christmas gift-giving season. How will you find the gifts for everyone on your list? Hardly anyone gets out of buying gifts for other people. It is such a customary part of Christmas that you may have never thought about how you do it.

The *Journal of Consumer Research* reported on a study conducted at the University of Illinois in which researchers went with people Christmas shopping to discover their gift giving strategies. They accompanied a number of people over several days as they went shopping for Christmas gifts, observing and noting their pattern of purchasing different gifts.

Out of their research, they identified six strategies for gift buying that I call giving styles. What makes these styles unique is how someone may use a different giving style depending on the relationship they have with their recipient. A person might purchase gifts for their spouse one way but another way for their coworker or in-laws.

Wondering what giving styles you tend to use? Check out each below to determine which style you use most often and discover which styles you might need to tap into this holiday season.

Pleaser

The pleaser is the most common style for gift buying. Pleasers want to get the perfect gift. They listen whenever people talk about things they like, and then they go out and purchase the gift they know that person is going to enjoy.

Individuals with this style are often seeking affirmation that the gift was exactly what the person wanted. A person with

this style of giving is seen as thoughtful and appreciates that acknowledgment.

Provider

The provider is a person who buys gifts that people need. This is the husband who buys his wife a blender. Some would ridicule the man because he might say, "You said you wanted a blender. You said you could make smoothies and would lose weight if you had a blender. I got you a blender."

These are the kind of people who buy tools for guys who want to fix stuff and software for the gal who needs it for her computer. They buy practical things for people in need. At Christmas, they might buy necessities for needy children that are distributed through their church, like a new coat or a pair of sneakers. Providers often purchase gifts someone wouldn't necessarily get for themselves.

Socializer

The socializer buys gifts for people that they want them to have. They say, "You would look great in this kind of outfit, so I'm going to buy it for you and you'll just look fantastic. I'm going to help you look better than you've looked before."

This is the kind of person who buys gifts that are self-help oriented with the intent of communicating that their gifts can help in some way.

From this giving style comes the gift card. A socializer buys gift cards and gives them to whomever so they can buy whatever they want.

Compensator

The compensator is the kind of person who tries to make up for something with their gift giving. Many who have this style use the Christmas gift-giving season as the way to do that.

Parents who have divorced will try to compensate for how bad they feel about the impact on their children, so they'll make up for it with some kind of big gift or series of gifts. Compensators will also use this season of the year as a way to make up for a lack of loving words or actions throughout the year.

This is the person who buys something they really want and then wrap it for themselves and put it under the tree. I might know something about this. Many times, while shopping for others, I will find something I want at a price I like. Then I give it to my wife to gift back to me.

Acknowledger

Acknowledgers give out of a sense of duty—usually small gifts, though not always. This kind of gift giving happens when a person receives a gift and then feels obligated to give a gift in return.

Regifting is most common among acknowledgers—the practice of taking a gift you received that you really didn't want, never opened, never used, never wore and simply recycling it. It is gift giving, if not a little unusual for some.

Avoider

This style of giver is the Scrooge of Christmas. They really don't want to give gifts, go through the effort of purchasing gifts or try to find out what people want. As a result, they give as little as they can. Their thinking is that they can't give to everyone, so only a few people will get gifts.

It is a begrudging way of giving that they rationalize or justify it in their own mind. To them, Christmas has become commercialized, so they don't want to buy into it.

They think people already have enough stuff, and don't want to contribute to their junk pile with more stuff they don't need.

This giving style is really a non-giving style. The avoider does not want to give gifts and does not see gift giving as valuable or important.

Which gift giver are you? What is most fascinating about these giving styles is how they depend on your relationships and are constantly evolving. Your giving style can actually be contingent on who is receiving the Christmas gift.

So, happy shopping—and Merry Christmas! {eoa}

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