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## **Holiday: Ideas to create Instagrammable moments at your centers - by Diana Perry**

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If there's one thing we all learned this year in retail real estate, it's to incorporate more experiential retail into our centers. But when envisioning the holidays, think about experiential beyond the immediate bricks and mortar store, think shopping center-wide. Tom McGee, president and CEO of ICSC told Connect CRE publication their survey forecasts 90% of Americans to shop in-store for holiday gifts. In fact, "holiday spending is expected to increase by 4.9% for a total of \$823.3 billion, with the average adult spending \$683 on holiday-related items." Why not capitalize on the traffic at your centers to create additional social media buzz? Below are some ideas to create more Instagrammable moments at your centers around the holiday season.

Traditionally, Instagrammable meant just photo opportunities, but think bigger, this definitely includes video as well.

Bring vacancies to life – With the holiday season comes generous foot traffic. If you have vacancies at your center, brighten them up with a window display, perhaps even creating some ancillary income. I once worked with Topnotch Resort in Stowe, VT who wanted to run a promotion at our center over the holiday months. I hired an amazing window decor specialist to do a giant winter scene, it was the epitome of Instagrammable and incorporated a contest which created more buzz and long-term engagement.

Warm up to your customers – Be spontaneous! Work with a coffee tenant (if you have one) to create free hot cocoa gift certificates and put them on random cars in the parking lot. If people were perhaps done shopping, maybe they'll go back if they get a free coffee or hot chocolate and hit a few more stores on the way out. Create a hashtag so people can share their unexpected experience. It would cost very little to do this but would be a yummy surprise for shoppers.

Spoil your VIPs – Bring a VIP element to your center. If it's an urban center, offer to send Ubers or Lyfts to and from the center for your VIP customers that you know shop with you often. Perhaps take it a step further and have personal shoppers available to help while your customers are dining. They could give the personal shoppers a price range, persona and time restraint. The shopping

experts should be well-versed on what each store has to offer and can move about efficiently, yet creatively.

Gift wrapping for a cause – Not a new idea, but such an appreciated one! If there is anything you can do to help people save time but give back simultaneously is an absolute win. Work with a few tenants or have a designated location at your center for gift wrapping. I'd recommend working with various nonprofits each week of December. For each gift wrapped, ask for a small donation at people's discretion where all proceeds benefit the nonprofit. I'd recommend working with a local, regional and national nonprofit.

Bring on the Falalalas (and video) – Hire some carolers to stroll the center singing all the Christmas favorites. This will certainly get people in the holiday spirit. Be sure to take live video of the carolers and announce when they'll be back at the center.

Fun Fact: When thinking about gifts for a child, remember: "Something they want, something they need, something to wear and something to read." – Amanda Morin, Understood.org.

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