

# BLACK BELT PROMOTIONS

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE OWNER AND INSTRUCTOR

## A Holiday Sale System: Easy to Plan Easy to Manage Easy to Succeed

*By Eric and Pat Hensley and Vic Bosch*

A holiday sale is an easy and quick method to extract additional value from every student in your school. We're convinced (and so are the many schools who have used it) that our holiday sale system, when correctly planned and managed, will generate \$100 in gross sales per active student.

During the last three years, we have developed a holiday sale system that has been successful for the many school owners to whom we have taught our system and ourselves. Our first serious, one-day sale grossed \$11,500; the next year, \$33,500, and then \$32,500 at our 2004 sale. Our gross profits from those holiday sales range from 36% to 41%.

If there is a secret to our system, then it is: FOLLOW THE SYSTEM. All of the steps have proven to work in schools just like yours. That doesn't mean the system will work in every school, but we know it has worked for many schools. Do EVERY step and do it EXACTLY as recommended, and your holiday sale may make your holidays brighter and happier than they've been for many years.

A successful holiday sale is also a great retention-building opportunity. Students (or their parents) who have invested in training gear and merchandise are less likely to quit, which "rescues" revenue that may have been contracted, but otherwise never collected.



*NAPMA members Eric and Pat Hensley, own three schools. They operate one in Evans, Georgia; their daughter, Falon, manages the Martinez, Georgia school; and their son, Aaron, runs the school in Aiken, South Carolina. Please contact them with any questions at [jxigirl@yahoo.com](mailto:jxigirl@yahoo.com).*

*Vic Bosch's school, Champion Martial Arts, is located in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Please contact him at [victor.bosch@sympatico.ca](mailto:victor.bosch@sympatico.ca).*

*You may also contact Alice McCleary and Steven Giroux, school owners who have used this holiday sale system successfully. Their email addresses are [McMAC103@aol.com](mailto:McMAC103@aol.com) and [stevegiroux@girouxbros martialarts.com](mailto:stevegiroux@girouxbros martialarts.com).*

## The Holiday Sale Checklist

### Part One: Planning

Step No.	Step Description	Action
1.	Pick your sale date or dates. You may need more than one sale day, if you have a large student body. Before Thanksgiving week is best, but many schools have had successful sales during December. We typically start our sale at 10 a.m. Many mothers will shop while their children are at school. There are usually few shoppers during classes.	Do this step now!
2.	Decide what merchandise you want to sell and the discount(s) you will offer. We usually offer a 15% discount on all the merchandise, especially sparring gear and a blue uniform pants. We select specific items to offer at larger discounts because vendors provide us with larger markups. The first day of our three-day sale is reserved for Black Belt Club members, and only on that day do we offer an additional 10% discount. I don't recommend "loss-leaders."	Do this step now!
3.	Order a sample of each item you will sell to create displays. DO NOT order a large inventory of merchandise, which you may have to return. Take orders during the sale and then order only the merchandise you need to fill those orders. Schedule order pick-up dates prior to the holidays.	Do this step now!
4.	Plan and implement your in-house advertising program. Emphasis the fantastic deals, the convenience and the date(s) and time(s). Design signs or posters to display throughout your school, even in the bathrooms.	Do this step when you pick your holiday sales dates, so do it now!
5.	Determine your refund policy. We recommend no refunds for any reason. Accept exchanges only, which must be finalized by the end of January. (We learned the hard way!)	Do this step one month before your sale.
6.	Take an inventory of your old merchandise. Plan for a clearance bin and price all of it very low, just to be rid of it.	Do this step one month before your sale.
7.	Decide whether you will sell pre-paid private/semi-private lesson vouchers in a discounted package with expiration dates of six months to one year. Our school's private lessons are \$50 for 30 minutes, and we offer a four-voucher package for \$100. We limit one package per family and sell it to virtually every customer. Warning: Don't offer private lessons if you operate a one-person school with more than 50 students.	Do this step one month before your sale.
8.	Some schools also offer discounted upgrade programs during their holiday sales. Our students upgrade eventually, if they stay. We would rather not offer discount programs during a holiday sale because that encourages students to wait for the annual sale to upgrade.	Do this step one month before your sale.
9.	Create and distribute a flyer to your students and parents. We recommend that you create a series of flyers; one for each program, listing the items students will need for their future training. (Beginners: their next uniform gear package, the bo, DVD, T-shirt, etc.; advanced: shin pads, a new gear bag, T-shirt, kick and/or punch shields for practice at home, etc.) Be creative! You know best what your student will need during the next phase of training.	Do this step one month before your sale.
10.	Decide if you will provide a snack table. This will both attract and retain customers longer, which means they are more likely to buy more. You will probably need a separate table and at least one helper.	Do this step one month before your sale.
11.	Decide if you will offer free gift-wrapping services. You will probably need a separate table and at least one helper to provide this service. This is a service we eliminated after the first holiday sale because only one or two customers asked for gift-wrapping.	Do this step one month before your sale.

## BLACK BELT PROMOTIONS

12.	Plan your traffic pattern for the sale area. Display your sale merchandise on two parallel tables or use three tables for a U-shape "counter." Give yourself plenty of space, so customers are able to shop from either side of the tables. DON'T wait until sale day to do a mock set-up. Be sure your tables and displays will fit. If you operate a one-person school, then you may want to close classes during the sale and ask someone to help you.	Do this step one month before your sale.
13.	Buy triplicate order forms on carbonless paper; easily found at any office supply store. Buy enough order forms, so you have one for each active student plus 15 more.	Do this step one month before your sale.
14.	Arrange credit card processing with your bank, if you don't already utilize this service. You can expect that 90% of your sales will be by credit card.	Do this step one month before your sale.
15.	We strongly recommend that you use a cash register. They're inexpensive and will make the sales process much easier. If this will be your first cash register, then make sure the helper who will operate it practices during the two weeks prior to your sale. The cashier must know how to void sales!	Do this step two weeks before your sale.
16.	Create your merchandise displays. Small items can be pinned to foam-core boards or taped to poster boards to hang on walls to save space. Use table covers and skirts for a professional presentation.	Do this step two weeks before your sale.
17.	<p>Train your helpers with a trial run of the entire process!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erect the tables and dress them with table covers and skirts.</li> <li>• Prepare your snack table and gift-wrapping tables, if you decide to offer these services.</li> <li>• Position your displays for maximum exposure and easy viewing.</li> <li>• Teach them how to use the order form. We use the three-colored copies in the following manner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Give the yellow copy to the customer as a claim check.</li> <li>◆ Put the white copy in a sales basket or box. The white copies are used to process orders (See Part Two below.)</li> <li>◆ Keep the pink copy in the sales book for future cross-reference.</li> <li>◆ We recommend that you have enough sales helpers, so several are able to help each customer, write their orders and direct them to the register.</li> <li>◆ We recommend that one person operate the cash register and take payments to avoid errors.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Do this step seven to 10 days before your sale.
18.	Make sure you have plenty of change (one- and five-dollar bills, and coins); however, checks and credit cards will be the great majority of payments.	Do this step the day before your sale.
19.	DURING SALE DAY, wear Santa hats and/or festive red and green clothing or holiday accents. Eat a good breakfast, have water handy and expect a long day! You may be very happy you decided to include a snack table when you work through lunch.	Do this step the day of your sale.

**Part Two: After The Sale**

Step No.	Step Description	Action
1.	Create a tally sheet for each vendor from which you are ordering merchandise. (See example on this month's <i>Media Master</i> CD-ROM.) Use the white part of the order forms to list and total the items on each vendor's tally sheet. We recommend that you put tick marks beside each item and then a total number in the box at the right side of the sheet. Ask someone to check your work as you count your orders and transfer them to the tally sheets. Then re-check your tally sheet again. <b>THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!</b>	Do this step immediately after the sale: the same day or the next morning.
2.	Use your tally sheets to place your orders, immediately!	Do this step as soon as your tally sheets are completed, checked and re-checked.
3.	<p>Prepare in advance for vendors' shipments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You'll need shopping bags and either tables or plastic tarps.</li> <li>• Designate a room or corner of your school to unpack and sort the merchandise.</li> <li>• We use a two-car garage and cover the floor with plastic tarps, so the merchandise remains clean. It's also a good idea to sort the merchandise at another location.</li> <li>• Place the tables or tarps in rows, so you're able to walk between them.</li> <li>• Take a shopping bag and one white order form and walk through the merchandise pulling the items for that order.</li> <li>• Use a highlighter to mark each item on the white order form as you put it in the bag.</li> <li>• Ask someone to check each of the orders you pulled.</li> <li>• When you are satisfied it is correct, close the bag with tape or tie it with a wire tie.</li> <li>• Tape the pink copy of the order form to the bag securely.</li> <li>• Place all of the white copies of the order forms in alphabetical order in a folder.</li> </ul>	Do this as soon as all of your ordered merchandise arrives.
4.	<p>Coordinate your order pick-up day(s). <b>THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT STEP, WHICH I RECOMMEND YOU FOLLOW EXPLICITLY.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the orders to your school prior to the pick-up day(s). Make sure you have an "out-of-the-way" space for all of the bagged orders.</li> <li>• When customers arrive for their orders, ask for the yellow copy of the order form, which is their claim ticket. (You may want to remind customers to bring the yellow copy before they arrive, if you have the means to do so; a note to parents, for example.)</li> <li>• Place the yellow copy under your white copy and ask the customer to sign it, verifying they received their order in full.</li> <li>• Staple the yellow and white copies together and place them in your filing system.</li> <li>• Of course, you will have at least one customer claim he was not given the yellow copy of the order form. To verify those orders, review your white copy and the merchandise in the bags with the customers.</li> <li>• Another suggestion: Open the bags of large orders and verify each item with the customers.</li> </ul>	Do this step on pick-up day(s).