

Products

by Patrick McCombe

GIFT IDEAS

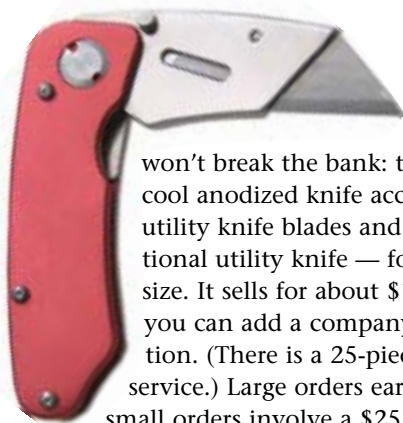
Hard to believe, but it's time to start thinking about holiday gifts for your employees, subs, vendors, and customers. If you're like me, you use every excuse in the book to put off holiday shopping. Remember, though, that gifts with a company logo take some extra time.



Watch Out

Construction sites are tough on wrist watches, so if you're looking for something useful for your lead guy (or your whole crew), consider the new *Guard Dog* watch. This good-looking timepiece clips to your belt and folds inside a plastic cover for protection from job-site mishaps. Made from hardened crystal that resists scratches, it features oversized numerals that are easy to read. The company can engrave the back and make custom dials that incorporate a company logo. The watch sells for about \$50.

Guard Dog Watches, 952/944-2100.



Cool Cutter

Here's a handy gift for employees and subs that

won't break the bank: the *SuperKnife*. The cool anodized knife accepts conventional utility knife blades and — unlike a traditional utility knife — folds up into pocket size. It sells for about \$15; for another \$3 you can add a company logo or inscription. (There is a 25-piece minimum for this service.) Large orders earn discounts and small orders involve a \$25 setup charge.

Engraving requires a vector art image, but the company can convert print images and other electronic file types for a fee.

SuperKnife, 866/756-4331, www.superknife.com.

Snack Packs

Sweeten your business relationships with treats from the Apple Cookie & Chocolate Co., whose extensive line of construction-themed gifts includes *Sweet Tool Belts* (\$50), *Construction Drawings* (\$18), and *Hard Hats of Snacks* (\$30 to \$60). The company can ship to everyone on your list and offers *JLC* readers a 10 percent discount. If my workplace is any indication, few holiday gifts generate more goodwill and excitement than packages filled with cookies and sweets — mmmmm.

Apple Cookie & Chocolate Co., 800/223-9866, www.applecookies.com.



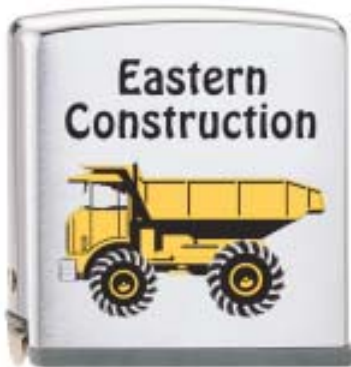
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Lighter Fare

Looking for a good way to spark long-term relationships with employees, subs, and vendors? Try giving out the new-generation *Zippo MPL*. This cool-looking refillable lighter comes packed in a gift box that you can have engraved with your company logo. The manufacturer's promotional-products division offers other business gifts, too, including pocket tape measures, writing instruments, and corkscrews. All can be customized with

your business name or logo. The MPL lighter goes for about \$14 and the pocket tape measure for about \$11. Both prices presuppose a 50-count minimum order and include one-color surface imprinting or laser engraving.

Zippo, 814/368-2700,
www.zippo.com/promo.



Jingle Bell Rock

If you're looking for one gift that you can give to the whole crew, check out this job-site radio. The

Power Box from Bosch not only sounds great, it has four GFCI-protected outlets, a 12-volt DC power supply, and a Bosch battery charger. The digital tuner has 10 AM and 20 FM pre-sets and an integral

antenna that won't break or bend. It's available with a CD player for about \$180, or without one for \$150. DeWalt and Milwaukee make similar job-site radios, if you're on one of their battery systems.

Bosch, 877/267-2499, www.boschtools.com.

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Mug Shot

No matter how small, a holiday gift can make your company look better than the stingy competition. And if you choose something people actually use, so much the better. Take the 14-ounce *Thermos Travel Mug*. It keeps that daily cup of coffee piping hot — and your company name right in front of everyone's nose, literally. The maker, 4imprint, specializes in custom-printed merchandise. It offers hundreds of items and can make your logo print-ready for a \$50 setup fee. The mug sells for \$5.49, at a minimum quantity of 48. Prices drop with larger orders.

4imprint, 877/446-7746, www.4imprint.com.



Stay in Touch

During the holidays, make sure to send a card to subs and former clients. Oxman Publishing specializes in well-illustrated and humorous *Holiday Cards* for construction types, from plumbers and GCs to excavators and electricians. The card designers seem to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the home building and remodeling business, and their humorous images will give recipients a good laugh. Prices depend on quantity ordered; 100 cards sell for \$110. The company will add your business name and message for no additional cost.

Paul Oxman Publishing, 800/228-0787, www.pauloxmanpublishing.com.

FOUNDATION WATERPROOFING

Thick Skin. We all know that slapping on a bucket of foundation coating does little to protect basements from water intrusion over the long term. For a more permanent basement-waterproofing method, take a look at the *Tuff-N-Dri* system from Tremco Barrier Solutions. The spray-applied coating goes on much thicker (60 mils) than brush-on coatings, and it can span small gaps and cracks. Rigid fiberglass insulation protects the membrane from damage during backfilling and prevents condensation on the interior wall surface. The manufacturer provides a 20-year transferable warranty with up to \$10,000 in coverage on every installation.

Tremco Barrier Solutions, 800/876-5624,
www.guaranteeddrybasements.com.



Slab-Seepage Control. Any comprehensive foundation-waterproofing plan prevents vapor transmission and seepage through the basement slab. In areas with a high water table, where a layer of poly might not be enough to stop water seepage, an air-gap membrane is extra insurance. The manufacturer of the *Delta MS* air-gap membrane suggests sandwiching the product between a “waste slab” and the finished slab. The membrane creates an air space between the two slabs that prevents water and water vapor from entering the basement; a drainage system and a sump remove any water that accumulates between the slabs. According to the manufacturer, protecting a 10,000-square-foot-office and retail building on a waterlogged site near the Hudson River cost \$25,000 in materials and labor.

Cosella Dorken, 888/433-5824, www.coselladorken.com.

Water-Management Mat. Air-gap membranes work according to a fairly simple principle: If you give water an easier path to follow, it won't penetrate the foundation. Products like Eljen's *No Aggregate Drainage System* use a plastic dimpled mat that channels water to a foundation drain. Eljen's version differs from similar products in that it uses an integral filter fabric that prevents the foundation drain from collecting sediment. The system includes fabric straps for hanging the mat while the foundation is back-filled. Eljen claims the product also works well for curtain drains and similar water-management applications. It sells for about \$1 per square foot.

Eljen, 860/610-0426, www.eljen.com.



POOLS & SPAS

Life Guard. Pets and children drown in backyard pools with startling frequency, but the *Poolguard Underwater Alarm* can help prevent such tragedies. When the portable alarm detects underwater waves, it triggers an 85-dB siren; a remote receiver located in the house also sounds a warning. The company makes door and gate alarms as well, which discourage kids from

even getting near the pool. I found the Underwater Alarm for in-ground pools (above) on the Web for \$150 and the above-ground model for \$120. The door alarm (top) sells for \$40.

PBM Industries, 800/242-7163, www.poolguard.com.



Ultimate Info. If you're interested in learning more about swimming-pool equipment and repair, check out the *Ultimate Tech Manual*, a well-written book from our sister publication *Pool & Spa News*. It covers repairs and maintenance of most pool mechanicals in exacting detail.

Plenty of good photography, charts, and diagrams make it the best publication I've seen on the subject. Even if you have no interest in pools and spas, the sections on pumps and motors have lots of other applications and make the book easily worth the \$15 purchase price.

Pool & Spa News, 323/801-4900, www.poolspanews.com.



Plastic Spa Pad. Most spas require a pad or deck for support, but getting a short load of concrete is expensive, and mixing some 30 bags of concrete isn't much fun. Here's a practical solution: The *EZ Pad* is a 3-inch-thick solid plastic mat designed as a base for portable spas. The two-piece pad is available in five sizes, from 66 by 88 inches to 96 inches square. Prices start at \$500.

EZ Pad, 866/397-2370, www.ez pads.com.



Out of the Mud

by Thomas Payne

There is a saying we have here in Portland, Ore., where we work in the rain nearly seven months of the year: "If you want to eat in the rain, you work in the rain."

Recently I was brainstorming with the crew of Nathan D. Young Construction, our primary remodeling subcontractor, to look for ways to stay out of the mud. Specifically, we wanted a walking surface that would make it easier to get around the job site. The product would have to stand up to the

wet weather, couldn't be slippery, and had to be affordable. Nathan came up with the idea of using jute landscaping fabric, which is commonly used to stabilize new plantings on steep hillsides.

The first test came during a midwinter job when we were putting on an addition. Getting around back to the addition was a 150-foot walk over fresh backfill and existing grass. With the frequent rain and regular trips back and forth, it wouldn't be long before the soil was ankle-deep mud.

But by spreading three layers of jute in some areas and one layer in others, we were able to stay on top of the mud all winter. The jute survived the whole job and was pulled up at the end by the landscaper.

You can find jute landscaping fabric at landscape suppliers and rental yards. In Portland, a 4-by-225-foot roll sells for less than \$50. 

Thomas Payne is the owner of Craftsman Homes Group in Portland, Ore.



Jute landscaping fabric proved effective at keeping carpenters from sinking into the mud at this wet Oregon job site.

