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Sentimental Gifts Trump All Others According to VoiceQuilt's Survey of U.S. Women

*Majority of U.S. women give group gifts, most believe 'it's the thought that counts'
and in celebrity gift giving, team Aniston leads Jolie-Pitt*

ATLANTA – August 23, 2006 – VoiceQuilt (www.voicequilt.com) today announced the findings of the *2006 VoiceQuilt Trends in Gift Giving Survey*, a nationwide survey of adult women on the motivations and attitudes behind gift giving. The findings show gift giving is in its prime as nearly half of all U.S. women (47 percent) buy gifts for 10 or more occasions throughout the year. Group gift giving is widespread, as is the desire to give the gift of "voice memories."

"What I find so fascinating is the actual number of occasions that women are purchasing gifts for and the fact that a non-occasion like 'just because,' is such a popular occurrence among the majority of women," said Hope Flammer, chief executive officer and founder of VoiceQuilt. "Gifts that are sentimental and original are very important among female gift givers nationwide, as are gifts that preserve memories. This thoughtfulness coupled with the amount of time women spend shopping for gifts, tells us that today's gift giving trends are really about a meaningful, one-of-a-kind experience."

Gift giving in its prime

Today, U.S. women are buying gifts for a large number of occasions. Nearly half of all women (47 percent) say they gave gifts for 10 or more occasions in the last year and one-quarter (25 percent) say they gave gifts for 15 or more events. Nineteen percent say they gave gifts for 20 or more occasions in the last 12 months.

The top five gift giving occasions in the last year were birthdays (95 percent), religious holidays such as Christmas (88 percent), Mother's day (74 percent), Valentine's Day (70 percent) and Father's day (66 percent). Sixty-five percent say they gave gifts over the last year "just because" and interestingly, nearly one-third (28%) of married women nationwide say they did not give an anniversary gift in the last year.

Half (50 percent) of all women surveyed say they gave ten or more gifts in the last 12 months for religious holidays and 27 percent gave 10 or more gifts for birthdays. Nearly one-third (30 percent) say they gave one wedding gift in the last year. Fifty-seven percent of those surveyed say they gave between one and five gifts in the last year "just because." The favorite gift giving occasions of women nationwide are:

- Birthdays (76 percent)
- Religious holidays (60 percent)
- "Just because" (22 percent)

When asked, the majority (64 percent) of U.S. women say they like to give gifts to friends and family. Twenty-three percent say they love to give gifts to everyone all the time, 12 percent say they only give gifts when necessary.

Two heads are better than one

Today, group gift giving is very popular. When asked about group gift giving, 51 percent of women nationwide say they were part of a group gift in the last twelve months and 70 percent of those gave group gifts more than once. Of those that participated in group gifts, more than one-third (38 percent) say they gave a group gift three or more times, 32 percent say they gave a group gift twice in the last year and 30 percent say one time.

Of group gift givers, 53 percent say they organized a group gift in the last year. The top group gift giving occasions are:

- Birthdays (58 percent)
- Religious holidays (54 percent)
- Baby showers (49 percent)
- Weddings (44 percent)
- Births (44 percent)

Even a non-event is popular among group gift givers. Twenty-seven percent say the most likely group gift occasion is for no event at all or "just because."

A gift worth more than a thousand words

Gifts that are personalized with voice recordings are very desirable: 72 percent of women say that if they could give the gift of "voice memories," such as a child talking to a grandparent or a special message for a recent graduate, they would. Over two-thirds of U.S. women (68 percent) say they have saved a voicemail that makes them feel happy or reminds them of a loved one, so they can replay it.

Women strive to give gifts that are more thoughtful, personal and one-of-a-kind. According to 92 percent of U.S. women, the most important attribute of the gifts they give is that the gift is sentimental. Ninety percent say the gift should be something the recipient asked for, functional (88 percent), original (83 percent) and "just for them" (79 percent).

Flammer added, "This idea of preserving memories strongly resonates. Women really value sentiment and this is one of the reasons I founded VoiceQuilt. I wanted to make it easy to preserve voice-based memories around the significant events in life – and to safeguard those memories in heirloom-quality keepsakes."

The majority (64 percent) of respondents say they have given a unique, one-of-a-kind gift in the past 12 months. Fifty-seven percent say they gave a hand-made or home-made gift and 44 percent say they gave a personalized gift. Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) say they gave a racy gift in the last twelve months.

Nearly all women (96 percent) say the old adage, "it's the thought that counts," still rings true.

Gift giving attitudes and motivations

U.S. women say their motivations behind gift giving are "to say I love you" (62 percent), "because the occasion required a gift" (58 percent) and say "to surprise the gift receiver" (52 percent). Other motivations behind gift giving are:

- "because they loved giving gifts," (48 percent)
- "to thank someone," (43 percent)
- "because it was the right thing to do," (37 percent)
- "because the gift receiver gave me something and I needed to reciprocate," (14 percent)

- "to say I'm sorry," (5 percent)
- "felt peer pressured," (4 percent)
- "to brownnose or curry favor with someone," (1 percent)

When asked about their favorite part of the gift giving process, the majority (57 percent) of U.S. women say they enjoy watching the recipient open the gift the most. Twenty-five percent say they enjoy shopping for the gift and figuring out what to give, while 10 percent say wrapping and presenting the gift and seven percent say being thanked for the gift was the part they most enjoy.

Women believe they are just "ok" gift givers. More than half (53 percent) of female respondents say they are "ok, I get by with gifts that fit the occasion," one-third (34 percent) say they are "great, I always give the best gifts no matter what the occasion," 10 percent say "I could do better at my gift giving, if only I had the time" and two percent say they are the "worst gift giver."

In terms of gift giving cycles, women who take their time shopping for a gift lead procrastinators and last minute holiday shoppers by a landslide. When asked about the time it takes to research, select, purchase, wrap and send or deliver a gift. The majority (59 percent) of women nationwide have a gift giving cycle of one week or more, 27 percent say their gift giving cycle is two to three days and 14 percent say one day. Shopping for gifts is hassle-free, according to 66 percent of U.S. women.

Who's the favorite?

Spouses and significant others led children when women were asked about who they gave the "best gift" to in the last year. Thirty-two percent of women nationwide say they gave the best gift to their spouse or significant other, 25 percent say child, 24 percent show no favoritism and seven percent say their mother. Dads came in with only two percent of the vote and one percent say in-laws.

Similar rankings were seen when U.S. adult women were asked who is the person they gave the most expensive gift to in the last year. Forty-four percent say spouse or significant other, 31 percent say child, 13 percent say mother and seven percent say friend. Again, dads came in with just two percent, tied only with in-laws at two percent.

The easiest person to find a gift for is a child according to 47 percent of those surveyed, 19 percent say spouse or significant other, 14 percent say friend, 13 percent say mother, four percent say father, two percent say co-worker and one percent say in-laws.

Vast majority of women purchasing gifts online

The internet is very popular for gift givers as more than two-thirds (69 percent) of women nationwide purchased gifts online in the last 12 months.

- Fifty percent of women say they purchased one to five gifts online in the last year
- Thirteen percent say they purchased six to 10 gifts online in the last year
- Three percent say they purchased 11 to 19 gifts online in the last year
- Four percent say they purchased 20 or more gifts online in the last year

Celebrity shopping

When asked about which celebrity they would give a gift if given the opportunity, Carrie Underwood's graduation and an anniversary gift for Tom Hanks and Rita

Wilson tied for first with 22 percent of the vote. Jennifer Aniston edges out Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, since 19 percent say they would give a birthday gift to Aniston and 17 percent say a gift for the birth of Pitt and Jolie's baby, if they had the opportunity to. Eleven percent would give Katie Couric a gift for her new job and 10 percent would give Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban a gift in honor of their recent nuptials.

In addition to popular celebrities, women were asked about giving gifts to their pets. Nearly two-thirds of U.S. women (64 percent) admit to doing this.

Gift registries, love 'em or leave 'em

U.S. women do not warm up to gift registries for nontraditional uses such as non-wedding, non-baby events (birthdays, religious holidays). Forty-three percent of women nationwide say they "use them as a last resort, think they're tacky" or "just refuse to use them." Twenty-six percent say they "don't care and only use them some of the time." Only 20 percent say they "love them and make their life easier."

Nearly half of all women re-gift

When receiving "bad" gifts, U.S. adult women typically re-gift or give the gift to someone else (43 percent) and 41 percent give the gift to Goodwill or another charitable organization. Thirty-eight percent say they return the gift to the original retailer and find something else. Eight percent say they sell the gift through a consignment or thrift store, six percent sell the gift online and five percent say they just throw the gift away. Nearly one-third of U.S. women (32 percent), say they have received a gift they hate and only display the gift when the gift giver is visiting.

Spending sprees

The vast majority of U.S. women spend less than \$50 on gift giving regardless of the occasion. When it comes to spending less than \$25 on gifts, get well/condolences (79 percent), retirement (66 percent) and births (52 percent) led the way.

When it comes to spending \$25 to \$49 on gifts, birthdays (45 percent), engagements/bridal showers (43 percent) and baby showers (39 percent) were the top three occasions for this amount of spending.

For gifts purchased in the \$50 to \$99 range, weddings (27 percent) and birthdays (22 percent) are the top two occasions, tied for third are engagements/bridal showers and anniversaries with 15 percent.

When spending \$100 or more on gifts, weddings (15 percent) and anniversaries (nine percent) are the top two occasions. Both graduations (seven percent) and birthdays (seven percent) tied for third.

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About the Survey

Conducted in July, the *2006 VoiceQuilt Trends in Gift Giving Survey* is based on an online, nationwide survey of U.S. adult women. Of the 410 participants, 25 percent are single, never married; 52 percent are married; two percent are separated; 15 percent are divorced; and five percent are widowed. Thirty-two percent of respondents live in the South, 28 percent live in the Northeast, 24 percent live in the Midwest and 18 percent live in the West. The survey's margin of error is plus or minus 5 percent.

About VoiceQuilt

VoiceQuilt was founded in Atlanta, Ga. by Hope Flammer. Flammer was inspired to create VoiceQuilt after hearing the encouraging words her best friend spoke to her hospitalized husband. Flammer believes the familiar voice, providing words of support, was instrumental in the husband's recovery. After rebundling existing technology, Flammer developed and patented VoiceQuilt, a collection of personalized recorded messages preserved in hand-crafted keepsakes - music boxes that play memories. Voicequilt is a uniquely personal custom gift. Ideal for commemorating special occasions, groups of family members, co-workers or friends share their words of celebration, encouragement, memories and more.

"Families may want to come together to create an audio album," said Flammer. "Spoken memories preserve family history in a kind of audio scrapbook or yearbook. With so much interest these days in genealogy and family reunions, families can create a legacy for the generations to come and even fill the VoiceQuilt box with memorabilia to match the recorded memories," she added.

For more information, visit www.voicequilt.com or call (678) 424-6597.

Editor's Note

Camera-ready charts and graphs of the findings from the *2006 VoiceQuilt Trends in Gift Giving Report* are available by contacting Julie Herron Carson by phone at (404) 285-3434 or by email at jhcarson@bellsouth.net.