

RETAIL GIFT CARD ASSOCIATION

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New Retailer Gift Card Group to Protect Consumer Interest *Retail Gift Card Association formed to ensure positive customer experience*

With increased consumer interest in gift cards, top US retailers led by founding members Applebee's, Best Buy, Home Depot, Marriott International and Subway, have joined together to create an industry group whose goal is to ensure shoppers have only positive experiences with the gift cards they buy and use. The **Retail Gift Card Association (RGCA)** formed in October with a mission to create consumer-centered policies and procedures for members that will let consumers continue to confidently buy and use the cards that have become the #1 gift choice over last several years.

As gift cards have increased in popularity, many new product offerings have fallen under the gift card label; not all of these are consistent with stringent guidelines proposed for member retailers. Some gift cards have policies with respect to fees and expirations that are clearly not in the best interests of the consumer. Membership in the **RGCA** is limited to premier retailers with strong brands and longevity in the market, who place particular emphasis on their customers' satisfaction and agree to abide by a set of principles that place the consumer first. The **RGCA** will be calling on ALL retailers to follow a strict standard that will protect consumers.

In addition to strong, consumer-oriented guidelines for merchants, the Association will investigate new initiatives that will provide increased security against fraud and greater protection in the event of business reorganization or bankruptcy. "The **RGCA** is committed to working with consumers, interest groups and the media to make sure that customers receive products that are effective, safe and still exciting to use," said Leigh Anne Ambrose, Sr. Director Global Incentives and Gift Cards for Marriott International, one of the founding members of the organization.

Dan Horne, a professor at Providence College who has been studying American gift giving for more than 20 years says that gift cards work well and that recent research confirms that they continue to be consumer favorites. "Data shows that gift cards have extremely high levels of satisfaction because they really fill a need," said Professor Horne. "Consumers love to give people the opportunity to go shopping, enjoy a meal out, or experience a night away. In difficult economic times, giving the ability to go out and buy or do the things that are most highly valued is better than taking a guess that someone needs a new sweater or pair of pants." For the top retailers to put together a consumer-focused group makes sense to Horne. "Their success as retailers depends on creating a positive experience and a long term relationship with their customers."

RGCA membership is limited to gift card retailers who have demonstrated commitment to customer friendly practices and significant longevity in the marketplace. For further information about the

changing gift card marketplace or the **Retail Gift Card Association** please contact Carman Wenkoff at 786-270-1276 or carman.wenkoff@TheRGCA.org.

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