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Americans Spend \$30 Million on Virtual Gifts During Holiday '09

Posted January 12, 2010 by James Brightman

While GameStop's holiday sales were [somewhat disappointing](#), the industry continues to see a rise in digital goods. Thanks to the rise of social and casual gaming, one area of the digital business that's seen a fair amount of growth is virtual gift giving. Ironically, while traditional video games require hefty marketing budgets, these digital titles and micro-transactions require little thanks to their viral nature.

PlaySpan, which specializes in monetization solutions for online games, virtual worlds, and social networks, conducted a study with the help of Frank N. Magid Associates and VGMarket, and found that Americans gave an estimated \$30 million in virtual gifts this past holiday season. The report, *Inside Virtual Goods: Tracking the US Virtual Goods Market 2009-2010*, forecasts the digital goods business in the U.S. to be worth \$1 billion in 2009.

PlaySpan's internal survey also found that 20% of its digital goods buyers also gave virtual gifts, and that about 15% of all virtual gift giving occurred during the November and December months. The report said that nearly 1 in 12 Americans purchased a digital good in 2009, with the average price of a virtual gift estimated around \$3 per transaction.

"The holiday season delivered a spike to our marketplace and according to our data, other digital goods companies reaped the benefits of increased consumer interest in virtual gifting. The visible effect is that there were a few more empty stockings and missing presents under the tree this year, and we expect this to be a growing trend over the next few holidays," noted Eric Hartness, Chief Marketing Officer of PlaySpan.



James Brightman is a veteran games journalist with more than six years of experience. He was previously the EIC of GameDaily Biz

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