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**Shopper's Expectations for 2009 Holiday Gift Returns Experience Decline from 2008**

*New study from Opinion Research Corporation links strong customer advocacy  
with retailer's ability to exceed expectations at returns time*

**PRINCETON, NJ – January 8, 2009** — While one-fifth of respondents indicated that their holiday gift returns experience exceeded their expectations in 2008, that number dropped significantly to only 9% this year, according to a special edition of the “Ouch Point” survey from Opinion Research Corporation (an *infoGroup* company, NASDAQ: IUSA). This drop is likely attributed in part to key negative aspects of the returns process, such as excessive time spent waiting in line and the lack of available staff on hand to assist customers. Both aspects underscore the consequences of having an insufficient number of associates on the floor. Interestingly, customers identify the helpfulness of staff as one of the most positive aspects of their return experience.

These findings are essential for retailers to understand given that customers base their future behaviors on current experiences. In fact, the survey demonstrates that among customers whose expectations were exceeded, an overwhelming majority (83 percent) are extremely likely to shop that store again, and half (50%) are extremely likely to recommend that retailer to family and friends. However, future intentions are cut by one-half or more when customer expectations are not met, challenging revenue growth and customer advocacy.

“Our findings strongly suggest that the more positive the returns experience, the more likely customers will be to both shop again and recommend the retailer, which impacts future revenue. This has significant ramifications for retailers in an environment where spending is down and online purchases are up (48% of shoppers set a \$500 limit on their holiday gift budget this year, \$250 lower than last year’s limit of \$750, and 43% of consumers chose to purchase gifts online this year, compared with 38% who purchased holiday gifts online last year), said Linda G. Shea, Senior Vice President and Global Managing Director of the Customer Strategies Practice at Opinion Research Corporation.

“Despite a preference for online shopping, of those gifts that were returned, more than ninety-three percent (93%) were returned in a bricks-and-mortar environment. Retailers should accept the fact that the multi-channel environment is not going away, and as such, customers will expect a seamless returns experience regardless of whether a purchase was made through one channel and returned through another,” Shea continued.

The percentage of people returning gifts this year increased slightly from 2008, with 22% returning a gift in the first shopping week after Christmas, compared with 17% in 2008. Long wait times and lack of available staff ranked at the top of consumer’s holiday gift return “Ouch Points” for 2009.

**About Opinion Research Corporation**

Opinion Research Corporation, an *infoGroup* company, is a full-service, global market research firm offering action-oriented advice and intelligence to clients worldwide in the areas of Customer Strategies, Corporate Branding and Reputation, Employee Engagement and Market Planning and Development. ORC is also a partner of CNN on the CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll, conducting national, speech reaction, state and

flash/overnight polls for the most trusted name in news since April 2006. To learn more, visit [www.opinionresearch.com](http://www.opinionresearch.com).

### **About The Ouch Point® Series**

ORC's Ouch Point® series examines the tolerance thresholds of Americans in common scenarios they face daily in both their professional and personal lives.

### **About *info*Group**

*info*Group ([www.infoGroup.com](http://www.infoGroup.com)), founded in 1972, is the leading provider of business and consumer databases for sales leads & mailing lists, database marketing services, data processing services and sales and marketing solutions. Content is the essential ingredient in every marketing program, and *info*Group has the most comprehensive data in the industry, and is the only company to own 12 proprietary databases under one roof. The *info*USA database powers the directory services of the top Internet traffic-generating sites. Nearly 4 million customers use *info*Group's products and services to find new customers, grow their sales, and for other direct marketing, telemarketing, customer analysis and credit reference purposes. *info*Group headquarters are located at 5711 S. 86th Circle, Omaha, NE 68127 and can be contacted at (402) 593-4500. To know more about Sales Leads, click [www.infogroup.com](http://www.infogroup.com). To get a 72-hour free trial and 100 free sales leads, click [www.salesgenie.com](http://www.salesgenie.com).

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