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## Michelle Pekrol of Star Gift Alliance Knows Swag

by Debra Preitkis-Jones

Michelle Pekrol says it's one delivery she'll never forget. As owner of Star Gift Alliance, the leading provider of swag for the entertainment industry, she's had many interesting experiences making sure swag gets to the right city, on the right day.

But in this instance, the venue was still in lock-down following a recent shooting. Unable to deliver the crew's swag through the front door, a local runner she knows ended up throwing the boxes over the closed gate. Nobody was hurt. Everyone was safe. And the band's crew got swag before they left for the next gig. Pekrol says it's this personal, stop-at-nothing service, that sets her apart from her competitors.

Working on the road as a production assistant and wardrobe coordinator, Pekrol knows what roadies need. She started out more than ten years ago providing gift baskets for the crews. "When you're on the road, you don't know what city you're in or what day it is," Pekrol explained. "You don't have time to buy gifts for your family or participate in

things at home. So, we did that for them with the gift baskets."

Fast-forward more than a decade, and Star Gift Alliance makes awesome swag for some of the top touring vendors in the industry and has been providing Tour-Link with conference bags, awards and most of the swag in the bags for almost 10 years. Pekrol says she can provide anything from conference giveaways and custom logo chocolate to tour swag and high end client holiday gifts (including wrapping and shipping). "It is all about branding and saying thank you to people who work so hard on the road and to the people that hire your company. If you send out nice swag it will get worn and used so it is a win-win for everyone." Pekrol says she gets most of her new clients from word of mouth because she knows how to keep the clients and road crew happy. "There's this whole UN peacekeeper (action) that comes into play," Pekrol joked, [so] "I'll talk with the crew people and I'll just make sure everyone gets what they want and they're happy with the item, while staying within my client's budget"

When ordering items for particular holidays or events, Pekrol suggests planning ahead. For example, "Christmas comes at the same time every year, yet so many people wait until the last minute," Pekrol says. "It's too bad because the money they spent on expedited charges could have gone to some very nice gifts or stayed in their pockets." This advice also goes for last minute orders for the road crews, no matter what time of year. Overnighting can be expensive, so Pekrol says plan ahead and save.

With another touring season fast approaching Pekrol says now is the time to start thinking about swagging your crews. "Most vendors know well in advance that they are supplying certain tours, give me the tour name and production contact and I will do the rest. With proper planning we can land the swag in the city where the vendor will be at the show so they are the hero bringing swag to the gig."

No matter what time of year it is, you can always let Pekrol know what you're interested in; she uses Facebook often to query clients on their needs for the next time around.

Pekrol does have one request; please, don't ask her to throw your new swag over a gated fence, once was enough. For more information go to: <http://stargiftalliance.com>

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