



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **General-Purpose Gift Cards Gaining In Favor, says Auriemma Consulting Group**

WESTBURY, N.Y. — Sales of gift cards should provide one bright spot in an otherwise lackluster holiday shopping season this year. More than half of holiday shoppers plan on purchasing gift cards as presents this season, spending one-third of their total holiday volume on gift cards, according to Cardbeat®, a syndicated market research report published by Auriemma Consulting Group (ACG). While store-specific gift cards still account for the lion's share, general-purpose gift cards branded by Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover are gaining in popularity.

Concerns about store bankruptcy may be one of the reasons for preferring a general-purpose gift card; 16% of holiday shoppers said that they don't buy store-specific gift cards because they are concerned that the store may go out of business.

"Store-specific gift cards are the most popular for smaller purchases, but the intention to purchase a general-purpose gift card goes up as the dollar amount increases," says Nancy Stahl, editor of Cardbeat. "In the past few years, there has been an overall growth in network-branded pre-paid cards that have been used to deliver everything from payroll to refunds to government benefits. Consumers have grown more comfortable with the idea of a pre-paid Visa or MasterCard, and they have become a familiar sight at in-store kiosks," she notes.

The most popular reason consumers cited for giving gift cards this holiday season is the desire to give recipients the flexibility to purchase something that they really want or need. "While store-specific gift cards still retain a significantly larger market share than general-purpose gift cards, we expect it to shrink if consumers continue to display a preference for giving a gift card that is more flexible in general," says Stahl.

The information in this release includes data from a survey conducted in September 2009 of 439 credit card users who plan to do holiday shopping this year. The results from this survey were recently published in Cardbeat, a syndicated market research study from ACG that provides insight into how consumer perceptions impact credit card acquisition and usage.

### **About Auriemma Consulting Group**

Since 1984, ACG has offered comprehensive management consulting, consumer research, industry roundtable, and benchmarking services to the financial services industry. ACG clients include credit card issuers, commercial banks, auto and mortgage lenders, merchants, networks, and industry vendors. With offices in New York and London, ACG offers actionable solutions to help clients make important business decisions to maximize their efficiencies and revenues. For more information, contact Nancy Stahl at 516-333-4800 or [nancy.stahl@acg.net](mailto:nancy.stahl@acg.net).