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The Funnel Unwrapped:
A Multi-Channel Playbook for Winning the 2026 Holiday Season

The holidays are just around the corner for commerce brands and agencies. And as we approach the critical Q4 holiday season, they already face several challenges.

First, shoppers are more discriminating than ever, comparison-shopping across retailers for the best deals, while brands fight to deliver stronger results against stiffer competition. And with recent data underlining the inescapable truth—that you can't simply spend your way to profitability in an increasingly fragmented and saturated marketplace—the way forward can be very murky.

This playbook will clear the air.

Instead of isolating your campaigns in silos—Amazon, Walmart, TikTok, owned channels, and more—we'll teach you how to build a unified strategy that streamlines operations and drives greater, more cost-effective revenue at scale. Rather than over-indexing your spend on bottom-funnel placements, you'll learn how to leverage discovery commerce to capture your prospects upstream and nurture them all the way to checkout.

In the following pages, we'll supply you with a proven, data-driven framework for maximizing the impact of your 2026 holiday campaigns, from planning and execution to measurement and optimization.

A Proven Full-Funnel Framework

It's no secret that the commerce media landscape is fragmented: separate teams manage separate platforms, measuring with separate tools and chasing separate KPIs. They don't communicate with each other much and coordinate together even less.

Unsurprisingly, these disconnected systems and workflows cost brands time and money, which quickly compound. We call this penalty the SILO Tax.

Today, the customer journey doesn't follow a single path. Shoppers discover products on TikTok, compare them on Reddit, and ultimately check out on Amazon.

The brands that win this holiday season aren't just increasing their spend; they're spreading it across the entire customer journey, telling a curated and compelling narrative at each touchpoint.

The 4 Stages of Holiday Success

1. Awareness (8-10 weeks out): Win discovery moments across TikTok, Pinterest, and YouTube. Build Share of Voice before competition peaks. Use these channels to plant demand signals you'll harvest later.

2. Consideration (4-6 weeks out): Influence search behavior and category opinion on Amazon and Walmart. Lock in competitive positioning and pricing. Set automation rules based on competitor moves and real-time signals.

3. Conversion (Cyber 5): Execute scenario-planned campaigns with pre-approved budgets. Automate bid and budget optimizations to respond to real-time inventory, competitor activity, and demand patterns. Ensure your multi-channel campaigns function as part of a single, cohesive strategy—no silos!

4. Post-Holiday (January-March): Convert new-to-brand holiday shoppers into repeat buyers. Build organic momentum. Review data from the 2026 holiday season with an eye to improving next year's strategy.

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Awareness

Getting in Front of Customers (Before Your Competitors Do)

Historically, most brands heavily weighted their holiday spend toward Cyber 5, and Black Friday in particular. That's a mistake.

By the time Black Friday arrives, most shoppers have already made up their minds. They know what products they're going to buy, and they know what brands they'll purchase them from.

Build demand 8-10 weeks out to ensure you're on their shopping lists.

Top Awareness-Driving Tactics

- [ ] **TikTok & Short-Form Video (8-10 weeks out):** Shift budget toward upper-funnel creative that builds category demand, not just product awareness. Halo effects are strongest when a customer sees a TikTok video but doesn't click, searching for your brand on Amazon later. Run standard ads on Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube to amplify reach.
- [ ] **Influencer & Organic Partnerships:** Partner with influencers early. Holiday content requires lead time. Coordinate so paid media and organic creator content reinforce the same message in the same timeframe, driving compound lift.
- [ ] **Share of Voice (SOV) Measurement:** Track SOV weekly across all your categories. Early in the season, SOV reveals where your competitors are spending and which keywords are about to become more expensive, so you can protect your organic positions without overbidding.

Consideration & Conversion

Owning Your Shelf Before the Rush

4-6 weeks before Cyber 5, the focus shifts from awareness to conversion readiness, as customers move into search mode.

The brands with high SOV, competitive pricing, healthy stock, and strong organic rankings will win this stage.

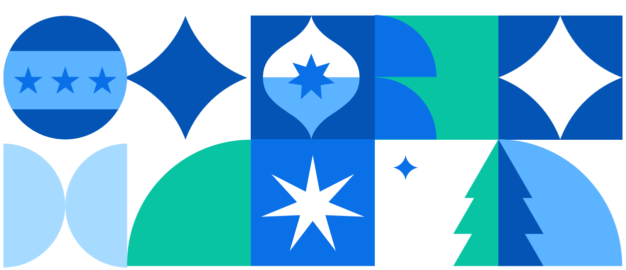
Don't wait to optimize your visibility and inventory, or your better-prepared competitors will claim a lead that will become increasingly difficult to retake.

Three Data Signals That Tell You When to Move

Share of Voice (SOV): How much visible ad inventory do you own relative to your competitors? If your SOV is improving 4-6 weeks out, it's an encouraging sign that you're winning shelf space before CPCs spike.

Weeks of Cover (WoC): How long will your current inventory last at your projected sales velocity? This is the most underappreciated signal in holiday planning. If an ASIN has less than 3 weeks of cover heading into Cyber 5, cap spend on it—or you'll run out of stock, lower your organic rankings, and waste valuable budget.

Pricing & Buy Box: Is your pricing stable and competitive? Do you own the Buy Box on shared keywords? These variables determine conversion probability. If a competitor loses the Buy Box or raises prices 2-3 weeks before Cyber 5, that creates a conversion window—but bidding higher won't win it; you need to sell at a lower price to secure the advantage



Proving TikTok's Downstream Impact

If a prospect watched a TikTok video without clicking and then searched for your brand on Amazon days later, you'd want to know about it. Unfortunately, most attribution tools don't capture this data—the famous TikTok halo effect—which leaves you in the dark on how TikTok discovery fuels off-platform conversions. Pacvue's Halo Reporting shines a light on that process. Modeling TikTok's downstream impact on your Amazon sales, search rank, and page views—while controlling for seasonality, promotions, and ad spend—this solution reveals whether and by how much TikTok moved the needle on your Amazon business.

Cyber 5 Execution

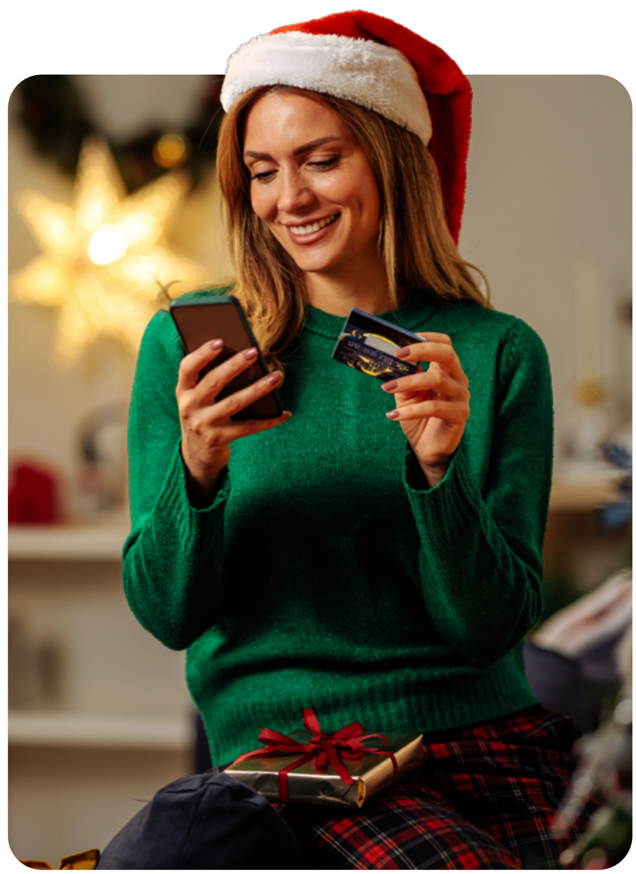
Scenario Planning & Automation

Successful holiday campaigns are built in advance, not during the event itself.

With pre-approved scenario budgets—organized into conservative, base, and aggressive tiers—you won't lose time and momentum debating spend levels when conditions change. Automation rules enable your team to react in real time, when execution speed determines Cyber 5 success.

Pre-Cyber 5 Execution Checklist

- [ ] **Scenario Budgets:** Approve conservative, base, and aggressive budgets for lead-in (4 weeks before), event (Cyber 5), and lead-out (2 weeks after) phases separately. Pre-approved budgets save your team from approval delays when conditions change mid-event.
- [ ] **ASIN-Level Forecasts:** Align media and inventory teams 4 weeks out. Forecast spend and projected sales by ASIN. If media and inventory plans diverge during Cyber 5, you'll pay a heavy cost to correct that misalignment mid-campaign, so ensure everyone's on the same page well beforehand.
- [ ] **Automation Rules:** Build rules that activate without human intervention. When WoC drops below a threshold, a rule should reduce your bids. When a competitor loses the Buy Box, a different rule should increase your spend. When inventory becomes tight, you'll rely on another rule to manage dayparting.
- [ ] **Real-Time Dashboard:** Set up a daily dashboard to track competitor SOV, WoC by ASIN, Buy Box ownership, pricing relative to category, and same-day spend vs. budget. This is your Cyber 5 command center—pay close attention to it.



Post-Holiday & 2027 Roadmap

Converting Momentum into Sustainable Growth

Many brands stop advertising on Cyber Monday, then wonder why their new-to-brand customers don't come back.

Don't fall into this trap.

In the two weeks following Cyber 5, launch a post-event campaign to convert the new-to-brand shoppers you acquired during the holiday season into repeat customers, driving compound growth well into the new year.

Prioritize Retention Over Acquisition

- [ ] **Convert NTB Shoppers:** Your customers who bought from you for the first time on Cyber 5 are most likely to repurchase in the 2-4 weeks after. Retarget them with complementary products and loyalty messaging. This is where holiday NTB acquisition becomes lifetime value.

- [ ] **Measure True Incrementality:** Use [incrementality testing] to separate net-new demand from reshuffled existing demand. Brands that understand which of their new-to-brand sales were genuinely incremental vs. shifted forward will build more informed and effective 2027 plans.

- [ ] **Build Your 2027 Playbook:** Every metric from the 2026 holiday season becomes the baseline for next year's forecast. Pay particularly close attention to new-to-brand lift, ROAS by channel, inventory turnover rates, and competitor dynamics. If you study the lessons from Cyber 5 2026, you'll be better positioned to succeed during Cyber 5 2027.

Case Study

Panasonic achieved a +33% improvement in iROAS during a major sales event by using digital shelf signals—including inventory, price, and competitor activity—to trigger automated bid optimizations. When they identified that a product was in stock, owned the Buy Box, and faced surging competitor pressure, the system increased bids to maximize conversion. When inventory tightened, it reduced those same bids automatically, keeping pace with real-time market conditions to drive measurable efficiency gains.

Securing Cyber 5 Success in 2026 and Beyond

Already, it's clear the competitive bar will be even higher next year.

In an increasingly saturated and fragmented market, the key to unlocking success at scale isn't spending more or prioritizing any single channel.

It's moving away from channel-level budgets and toward outcome-based budgets. It's breaking down silos, consolidating your campaigns—from execution to optimization—into a single system where every dollar is accountable to business outcomes like sales, market share, and repeat purchase rate. It's automating intelligently and telling a cohesive narrative across channels and funnel stages so everyone's working toward the same goals.

This holiday season, the most successful brands will invest in:

Unified Visibility: One system tracking performance across every channel—Amazon, Walmart, TikTok, Target, and beyond—without platform switching or measurement discrepancies.

Outcome-Based Strategy: Moving from channel budgets to outcome budgets. Every dollar allocated toward measurable business outcomes—like sales, repeat purchase rate, market share—with complete visibility and accountability.

Real-Time Execution: AI-powered automation optimizing across your entire channel mix simultaneously, responding to real-time signals instead of waiting for weekly or monthly reviews.

It All Starts with the Right Strategic Partner

Pacvue is the leading Commerce Media OS, powering over $12B in advertising spend across 100+ global retail media networks including Amazon, Walmart, Target, Kroger, Instacart, Criteo, and CitrusAd. Powered by industry-leading AI and real-time data, Pacvue enables over 70,000 brands and agencies to maximize advertising performance, drive incrementality, and expand reach across the commerce universe from a single mission control. As of 2025, Pacvue powers 12% of total retail media ad spend worldwide excluding China. Combined with Helium 10's SMB solutions, Pacvue delivers the industry's most comprehensive platform for businesses of all sizes. Founded in 2018, Pacvue spans Seattle, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Washington D.C., London, Shanghai, and Tokyo. Discover more at pacvue.com.