

DESIGNING AND DELIVERING A WINNING PRACTICAL ECOMMERCE HOLIDAY PROMOTION

“

*STRATEGIES TO CAPITALISE ON
THE HIGHEST REVENUE
GENERATING EVENTS IN Q4* ”

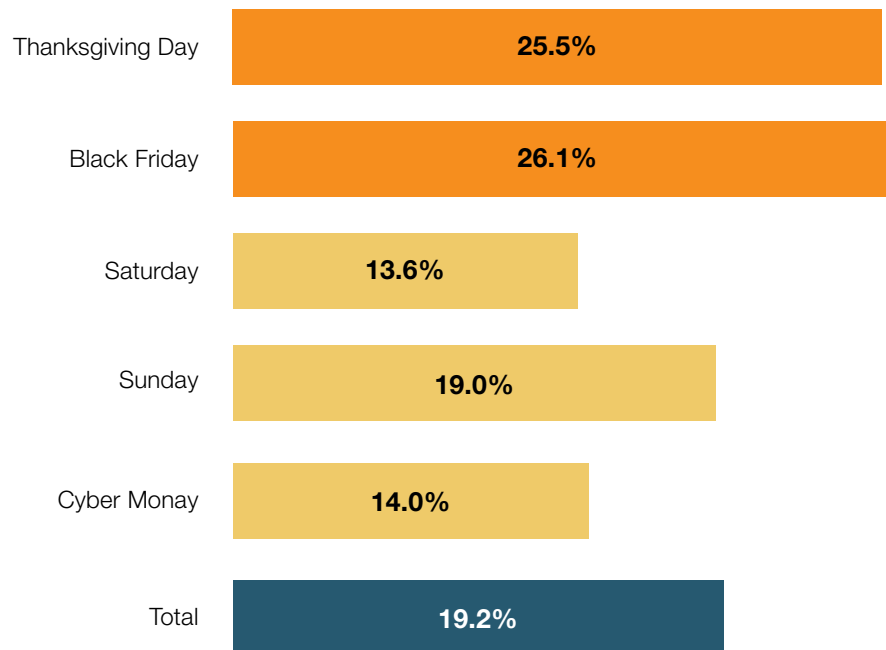




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The holidays are big sellers, in fact in 2018 US online sales for the holiday season amounted to \$123.73B for November and December with 16.6% growth year-over-year. And stuffed into every fourth quarter are some of the most lucrative opportunities for merchants from around the world to achieve record numbers.

ONLINE SALES GROWTH DURING CYBER 5 2018 year-over-year estimated growth, by day



We know one thing for sure: people buy a lot on holidays. But that doesn't mean that sellers won't need a practical plan to ensure they get the most out of each holiday. Reckless or mismanaged campaigns can just consume money, the opposite of the effect we're looking for. You should be focusing on the following ideals when rolling out your holiday campaign:

- ⊙ Know who you're selling to
- ⊙ Pick your battles
- ⊙ Make your products visible
- ⊙ Be everywhere
- ⊙ Make sure you can deliver

This might sound vague now, but you'll see how it all comes together by the conclusion. In this whitepaper, we will go through a comprehensive list of considerations that need to be made to carry out a winning, practical ecommerce promotional campaign.

COMPETITION IS EVERYWHERE, BUT DON'T FEAR IT

Even the most earnest of ecommerce brands can no longer just rely on the basics that worked in the past. Like the rigorous training regimes of modern athletes,etailers must strive to constantly push the envelope and sharpen their skills to come out ahead of the competition, for there is one thing you can be sure, there is a lot of competition and the number is increasing by the day.

Fact: [Nearly half of American small businesses](#) do not have an ecommerce website (this is not to neglect the rest of the world, only to illustrate a point).


While at face value this might make an ecommerce merchant say, "Great! More sales for me!", this statistic should also give rise to a foreboding feeling. In a market already saturated with competitors, there are loads left to join the party, each with their own unique perspective and disposition on how to get their fingers in your business' pockets. This doesn't only apply to small businesses either, the variety and volume of businesses yet to add ecommerce to their model also pose a threat to large brands and enterprises as discerning consumers seek better, more personal experiences.

Global Perspective of Competition:

- 🕒 Estimate 2-3 million ecommerce companies worldwide
- 🕒 Around 1.3 million in North America including marketplace sellers
- 🕒 Pure-play are only around 100,000, making it the exception to omnichannel

Now, it's certainly not our intention to sound jaded or scare anyone from joining the fray, but only to reiterate how necessary it is to have a solid, well-informed plan in place and be ever-knowledgeable of the breadth of options available for promoting products online.

Although getting ahead of your competitors is a priority, we must also stress that you should never feel it necessary for your business to stoop to the type of chicanery that might damage your brand's reputation. A few examples of these would be [hidden fees](#), [bait and switch](#), [misleading claims and ambiguous representation](#). These shady practises would be the ecommerce equivalent of a professional athlete using performance enhancing drugs. This can leave a mark on your brand that is tremendously difficult to reverse, so it's best to keep things squeaky clean.



The only true way to beat the competition is to outwork, outwit, and outperform them. The best way to do this is to pay very close attention to the slightest details within your customer base. After all, if you can positively influence your target market, you've got sales in the bag, which brings us to our next point.

THINKING LIKE A CUSTOMER - TRADITIONAL SEGMENTS TYPICALLY AREN'T ENOUGH ANYMORE



THINKING LIKE A CUSTOMER - TRADITIONAL SEGMENTS TYPICALLY AREN'T ENOUGH ANYMORE

If making sales and winning over the competition are the raison d'être for ecommerce businesses, then what's the best way to achieve them? What is the source of sales?

CUSTOMERS

Customers are the lifeblood of any company that sells products or services. Without them, the entire effort is for naught. Conventionally, it's easier to segment and identify broad groups of customers and tailor promotional efforts towards these classifications. But nowadays, the customer journey has become so complex, the expectations of a personalised experience so widespread that the words "Holiday Sale!" now trigger an almost pavlovian response inside their heads. These promotions now automatically kickstart the excitement and imagination of how they will research, locate, compare, experience, add to cart, abandon cart, sleep on it, relocate, add to cart again....

And (hopefully)
BUY!



This illustrates how delicately online merchants need to handle their customers, and demonstrates that the traditional demographics have become too vague. Individual human behaviour varies, so it's our responsibility as ecommerce merchants to do our best to understand these behaviours as best as we can. That's not to say there's no value in segmenting, of course you need to be realistic, it's impossible to know exactly how every potential customer will think and feel, but what this means is don't assume that every "male, 35, homeowner, married with 1 kid" will have the exact same purchasing behaviour.



KNOW HOW YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE BUYING

You need to know how your audience prefers to shop. With mobile device penetration growing exponentially, many users are conducting their research, browsing products and following through with purchases using a smartphone or other mobile device.

Fact: [Mobile ecommerce sales reached 1.8 trillion USD worldwide in 2018.](#)

Avoid missed opportunities by making sure you meet the customer wherever they are. Responsive, varied ads are one of the best ways to do this. More on these later.

| Thinking Like a Customer Traditional Segments Typically Aren't Enough Anymore

TARGET PERSONALLY

Google's Audience Manager tool does a great job of breaking the mould when targeting different audiences, and should be a consideration for any ecommerce merchant running a holiday campaign. From the top down, it helps users start by identifying their core audiences which advertisers should be familiar with, next would be the affinity audiences based on interests and behaviour, and finally detailed demographics that will determine qualified shoppers. The specific breakdown is as follows:

Core Audiences

- ⊙ Category Viewers
- ⊙ Product Viewers
- ⊙ Cart Abandoners
- ⊙ Past Purchasers
- ⊙ Customer Match Lists
- ⊙ Visitors to Holiday-Specific Landing Pages

Affinity Audiences

- ⊙ Shopper Type
 - ✓ Department Store Shoppers
 - ✓ Superstore Shoppers
 - ✓ Luxury Shoppers
 - ✓ Bargain Hunters
- ⊙ Lifestyle and Hobby
 - ✓ Fashionistas
 - ✓ Outdoor Enthusiasts
 - ✓ Home and Garden Enthusiasts
 - ✓ Sports and Fitness
 - ✓ Travellers
 - ✓ Media and Entertainment Lovers
 - ✓ Beauty Product Devotees
 - ✓ Technology Lovers

Detailed Demographics

- ⊙ Parents of Infants
- ⊙ Parents of Toddlers
- ⊙ Parents of Preschoolers
- ⊙ Parents of Grade Schoolers
- ⊙ Parents of Teens
- ⊙ College Students
- ⊙ High School Graduates
- ⊙ Bachelor's Degree Graduates
- ⊙ Advanced Degree Graduates
- ⊙ Single
- ⊙ In a Relationship
- ⊙ Married
- ⊙ Homeowner
- ⊙ Renter

Of course, this doesn't need to be taken as gospel when it comes to how you choose to diversify your audience, but it certainly offers a solid guideline.



Sizable and diverse audiences are the mediums of choice for many successful marketing agencies, brands, and [ecommerce] businesses. However, explicitly targeting niche audiences can be a prudent and profitable business strategy too.

Niche content caters to a particular topic or interest and doesn't worry about attracting folks who aren't interested in that subject matter. Think esoteric fields that preclude more mainstream audiences, typically found on niche content platforms.

These audiences are smaller than the ones you might find on websites trying to cover a vast range of topics. And that's okay. While it might feel counterproductive to conventional business principles to target fewer people, niche content can actually pave the way to a sustainable, profitable company. Here's a look at what it takes to successfully target a niche audience, plus three reasons why doing so is good for business.

Forbes

The best technique is instead of thinking why customer 'x' would buy and customer 'y' wouldn't, just think about what would make a human being attracted to your products - don't treat one customer differently based on dubious profiling, focus on how their personalities and interests might cause them to become intrigued. Better yet, think about the last time you personally purchased something online and dig deep into what moved you to make that decision.

Once you begin thinking like a customer, you'll be free to get creative when figuring out how to capture their attention.

DETERMINING A SCHEDULE AND BUDGET



DETERMINING A SCHEDULE AND BUDGET

First you'll need to identify when the peak selling periods are. In Q4 these would typically be

THANKSGIVING

Nov 28th



BLACK FRIDAY, CYBER MONDAY WEEKEND

Starting
Nov 29th



GREEN MONDAY

Usually the second Monday
in December when there are
only 10 shipping days remaining
until Christmas



BOXING DAY

Dec 26th

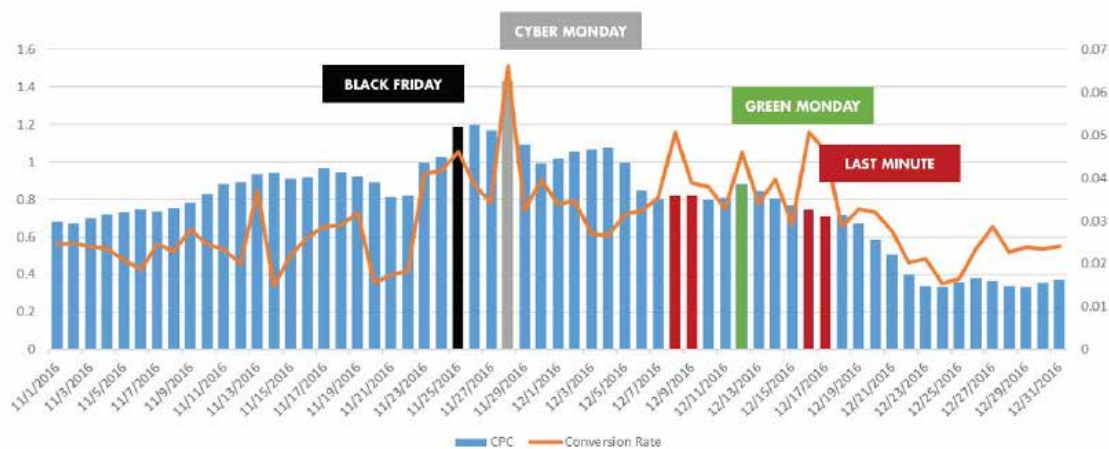


| *Determining a Schedule and Budget*

DON'T GO ALL-IN ON PEAK DAYS

It's basically guaranteed that most businesses will devote more resources to advertising during these times. But as we stated earlier, to supplant the competition, you need to think differently. Consider all of the potential sales taking place outside of these peak periods.

When allocating your advertising budget for the holiday season, it's unwise to go all-in only when the sales spike. Despite the sales increases for each holiday, there are certainly sales happening outside of them, and you stand a greater chance of capturing those if you reserve some spending to during those lower points - though the sales may falter from the peaks, the cost per click will also plummet, as ChannelAdvisor illustrates below:



This all contributes to a greater overall return on ad spend and will make sure you avoid any missed sales opportunities.



The CPCs dropped off significantly while the conversion rate increased. So perhaps this retailer could have been more competitive during this time. There were also additional opportunities to maximise exposure with last-minute shoppers.

Jennifer Doyle

ChannelAdvisor Client Strategy Director



MAKE A SCHEDULE FOR PROMOTIONAL PRICING

Automation can go a long way in streamlining your holiday price fluctuations. The best way to do this is to determine which products will go on sale at which time and use a predetermined schedule to initiate these changes automatically. Depending on the size of your catalog, this can be a painstaking process so make sure to take care of it ahead of time.



**PICK YOUR ADVERTISING CHANNELS
AND CREATE THE ADS**



PICK YOUR ADVERTISING CHANNELS AND CREATE THE ADS

Because holiday promotional advertising is quite specific and not an ongoing effort, there are 3 core channels that should be essential to e-commerce businesses. This isn't to say that merchants are limited to only these, but historically pay-per-click, social media and email marketing are the most auspicious as they complement clever targeting and inventiveness in ad content and are relatively easy to understand for new and seasoned sellers alike, especially for temporary promotions.

PAY-PER-CLICK ADVERTISING (PPC)

Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC)

Pay-per-click advertising a.k.a. Cost-per-click (CPC) is a method where a business pays a publisher, typically a search engine like Google Ads, or a single or network of websites when an ad is clicked.

For search engines, advertisers will bid on relevant keywords and phrases while private sites will often use a fixed CPC. The goal is for ads to place above the organic results and appear like this:

Increase Your Ad Revenue | Promote Your Site with Us



Optimize Your Sales & Increase Your Web Traffic. Sign Up Now! Mobile Targeting. No Contracts. Join Free. Get Low Cost Impressions. Geo Targeting.

CPM Bidding

Be In Control Of Your Budget.
Get Started Now!

Precise Targeting

Reach Your Audience Globally.
Target Them Wherever They Are.

PPC Ads | - Push Ad Platform



EvaDav - we've achieved the highest conversion rate on the market. Make profit in any GEO...

Efficient PPC advertising | Get more potential clients |



Our solutions make **advertising** attractive to users and therefore even more effective. Advertis...

Here we see three companies competing over the “PPC Advertising” keyword. Alternatively, on websites PPC ads will appear as display or ‘banner’ ads that are displayed at the top or side of the webpage:



Free AdWords Performance Grader

Wasted Spend

\$49.81 in projected 12 month wasted
\$12.45 already wasted in the last 90 days

of Negative Keywords Added

39%

Find out if you're making mistakes in AdWords.

GET GRADED TODAY

PPC Strategy

Your mission when advertising your holiday promotions is to ensure you know what your audience is searching for, and create ads that are both attractive and useful to alleviating the pain points of potential customers. This strategy should be closely tied to your budget, as previously stated you'll want to make sure your ads show up during both peak periods and the in-betweens as well.

Fact: 85% of consumers conduct online research before buying online, most starting with search engines, so make sure you consistently leverage this method of advertising to drive traffic to your site and capture sales.

Your best bet for exposure to your ads is to conduct solid keyword research and, to reference the points above, understand what it is your audience is searching for at a personal level. [Google Keyword Planner](#) is a good starting point, and there are reputable paid sites like [Keyword Tool](#) that go into more advanced results including related keywords, questions, search-engine specific results and long-tail keyword suggestions.

| *Pick your Advertising Channels and Create the Ads*

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media is essentially synonymous with internet usage nowadays, so the value of advertising on various platforms is priceless. The unique aspect of social media marketing is that it provides a highly interactive opportunity for the community to comment and engage with the ad.

This is a double-edged sword, as the internet has enabled everyone to be a critic. But so long as you avoid any polarizing ad content and don't use intentionally provocative techniques, the positive responses should shine through, reinforcing your product and brand and providing you with valuable feedback on how to adjust and improve.

Social Media Strategy

Just How Many People Use Social Media **WORLDWIDE?**

There are 3.48 billion social media users worldwide as of January 2019, approximately 94% of which use social media on mobile devices. This number is growing at around 10% year-on-year.

You would need to stubbornly ignore this data to not see the value in advertising on social media. While PPC is closely tied to your budget and audience search behaviour, social media allows you to concentrate more on the affinities and interests of your customer base. Consider also the variety of platforms, which all offer analytics tools and built-in targeting:



Twitter



Facebook



LinkedIn



Yelp



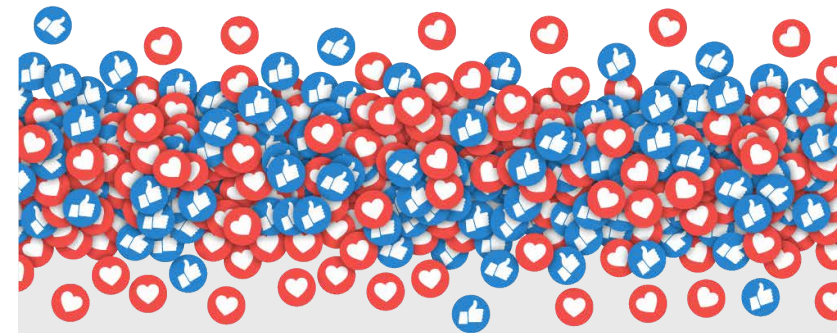
Instagram



Snapchat



Youtube



These platforms offer a range of stylistic opportunities in how you create your ads. Make sure you use the appropriate type of ad for each platform and remember that diversity will provide the greatest visibility. For example, it would be unwise to blow your entire production budget on a beautiful YouTube video ad while neglecting the more cost-effective and possibly better-performing chances at showcase ads on facebook or instagram. It really comes down to what you are promoting specifically and it's a judgement call as to which style of ad is most suitable to your brand and product.

| *Pick your Advertising Channels and Create the Ads*

EMAIL MARKETING

This form of advertising relies more on having an established audience. The most effective way of building that audience is through collecting subscriptions from content and website visitors we'll touch on this more later.

The key to great email marketing is consistency, relevancy and design. Sites like [MailChimp](#) are ubiquitous within the ecommerce community because they offer an all-in-one package for reaching out to your community with killer email marketing content and offers.

Email Marketing Strategy

Aside from keeping your audience informed of news and promotions, strategic email marketing is a great way of driving sales. Let's take a look at a couple examples of how crafty emails sent at the right time to the right people can have a tremendous impact on their decision to purchase or not.

SCENARIO 1

Customer has opened an email but not taken action.

So you've sent out your first wave of beautifully designed holiday promotion announcements with brilliant offers to boot. The sad part is, most of your audience doesn't even open the email!

Listen: According to MailChimp, [an average of only 15.66%](#) of ecommerce marketing emails are ever opened.

This number might seem small, but with an extensive audience it still holds a lot of value. It's important that you stay inside the heads of those who have opened the email, even if they haven't engaged with the content.

Reminder emails at specified intervals can serve as the jolt of persuasion needed for the customer to click inside the email and browse your site. It could be that the individual who opened the initial email opened it with the intention to revisit but then forgot, or that they didn't have a need for the product at that time. The reminder email can address both of these plus more, because you never know what situation each customer is at when they receive the first one.

Remaining tenacious, providing gentle yet exciting reminders of your holiday promotions is sure to help drive sales. Just be careful not to overdo it, you want to avoid any spammy email marketing practises.

SCENARIO 2

A customer has added several products to their cart then disappeared.

The sad reality is that, for whatever reason, [69% of ecommerce shopping carts are abandoned](#). But does this mean they are gone forever, consumed by the void of the internet and never to return? It could mean that, if you don't take action.

Email marketing is a great way to attempt to persuade these customers to come back and go through with their purchase. If they've made it as far as adding products to the cart, maybe they had last minute hesitation, and the more time they have to think about it, the more likely they are to not return.

At this point, you could send a follow-up email offering an additional incentive if the customer returns to complete their purchase. These follow-ups have a staggering [45% open rate](#), and can be automated for maximum effectiveness. We'll address this further in the marketing automation section later on.

ECOMMERCE HOLIDAY ADVERTISING BEST PRACTISES - PRACTICAL WAYS OF REFINING YOUR CAMPAIGNS



ECOMMERCE HOLIDAY ADVERTISING BEST PRACTISES - PRACTICAL WAYS OF REFINING YOUR CAMPAIGNS

Implementing and understanding these methods can make or break your ecommerce holiday activity. Let's take a look at some fundamental practises for pumping up your promotional activity this holiday season.

Analytics

These are the insights that formulate nearly all marketing stratagem for ecommerce gurus. There are no guarantees in ecommerce, but understanding how to interpret data and then utilise it in a practical manner is, for lack of a better word, the best way to make a predictive and high-performing campaign. If you feel this is a weak point for you and your business, the [Google Analytics Academy](#) is a great free resource for getting started.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is usually thought of as a way to drive organic traffic based on keywords. This is a great way to keep your site ranking long term and remain relevant to your audience. But, couple the organic aspect with a targeted, paid advertising campaign and the results will skyrocket.

Strongly researching search terms that your audience are seeking and including them in your ad copy will ensure that your ads are visible and beat out the competition. SEO techniques can also be used heavily on product and collection pages for greatest penetration.

Landing Pages

You want visitors to arrive at a page on your site that will further influence the potential customer to buy. The best way to do this is to design holiday-specific landing pages as a destination for the links in your ads. Landing pages should cater to a certain buyer persona, and should contain a specific call to action (CTA).

Listen: Landing pages cause people to remain on the page longer, with a [72% higher bounce rate](#) on regular product pages versus tailored landing pages.

Because the visitor has already demonstrated their interest by clicking the ad, the landing page should simply provide more information on exactly what the ad offered, and the CTA will motivate them to take action. It's good practice to create one landing page for new visitors and a separate page for existing subscribers as well, as you can offer additional incentives to repeat customers on one while collecting additional subs from the other page.



| Ecommerce Holiday Advertising Best Practises - Practical Ways of Refining your Campaigns

Types of Ads

Using the right type of ad for the right type of screen and right type of search is crucial to boosting its effectiveness.

Responsive Search Ads (RSAs)

The best part about RSAs is that they will automatically change their size and format depending on how much ad space is available. This means that if viewed on a mobile device, the ad will be smaller but better-positioned for that interface. Inversely, this same ad could appear on a large monitor as a banner ad with a large image.

The trick to responsive search ads is to vary the ad copy and content. From [ChannelAdvisor](#):

- 🕒 Provide between 5 and 15 distinct headlines
- 🕒 Write at least 2 product descriptions
- 🕒 Create headlines that don't repeat themselves
- 🕒 Make sure the headlines and descriptions are all coordinated

Mobile Optimisation

A mobile-friendly site makes it [67% more likely](#) for a user to make a purchase. This stat proves decisively that the era of mobile is upon us. Most major ecommerce platform are inherently responsive across all major devices, but making sure your ads and your full website display properly regardless of how they're viewed is an absolute necessity for promotional and big-picture ecommerce success.

Showcase Ads

Because a lot of search terms are vague and broad, simply having a text advertisement doesn't always cut it. You'll want something that makes your ad stand out from the crowd, especially when you're advertising products. These showcase ads will show a preview image of products or collections so searchers have an idea of what you offer without having to click on the ad and visit your site.

Ad Extensions

Google Ad Extensions allow you to add information to the add that will further compel the viewer to interact and/or provide more information about the offer. Two examples would be price extensions and promotion extensions. The first places an accordion element below the add that will list a certain number of prices, the latter allowing for an active element such as a timer to be added to create a sense of urgency.

| Ecommerce Holiday Advertising Best Practises - Practical Ways of Refining your Campaigns

Prioritise Campaigns

Identifying which products will be your best sellers this holiday season is the best way of determining how to allocate your promotional resources. Top sellers should have dedicated campaigns, while mid-priority should be reserved for brands or categories. The rest of your products should all fall under low priority while still having some exposure through ads, these will serve the times between peak selling periods and make sure to capture some of those missed opportunities we discussed earlier.

Subscriptions

Make sure you give visitors the chance to subscribe to your email audience everywhere. A subscriber is a qualified lead that has a vastly higher chance of buying from you than any cold visitor ever would. Make sure you're placing those subscription forms everywhere your customers are going on your site. This will bolster your email audiences and give you the chance to engage with them ongoing through content.

Test Ads

With the foresight of analytics and strategic targeting, you've given yourself a pretty good idea of what types of ads to use. Now there's only one way to prove what will work - testing. Design different ad types that are distinct from one another and launch both on a limited basis to test the waters. The one that performs the best, keep, the other, discard. Repeat this as necessary until you're confident you've found the optimal ad for whichever channel you're testing.

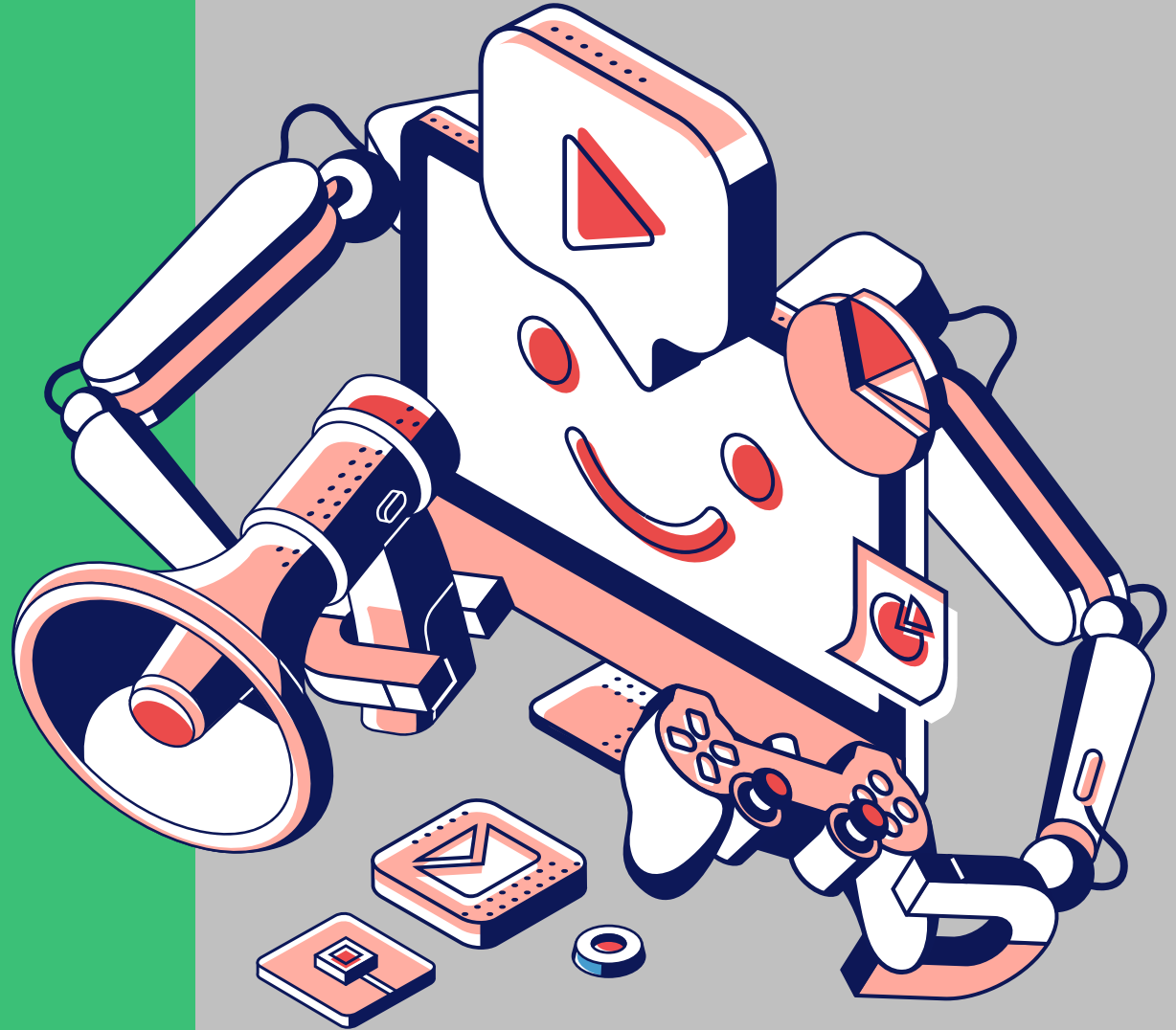
Optimise Content

Not only should you implement SEO techniques in your ads, but you should also focus on optimising the content on your product pages. This will lead to organic discovery of your products even outside of promotional campaigns, and the best part is it won't cost you anything.

- 🕒 Use SEO product titles and make all titles uniform
- 🕒 Get creative and use relevant keywords in description
- 🕒 Invest in quality product images
- 🕒 Make product information easy to consume (use lists, numerical figures, etc)



AUTOMATE YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS



AUTOMATE YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS

Marketers focus hard on the year-end holidays for a good reason: a holiday week can produce three to four times the revenue of a regular week, but it's not easy. From an overemphasis on pursuing leads and offering blanket discounts to the real-time difficulties of capturing data and tracking changes in shopping habits, marketers struggle to overcome tough obstacles.

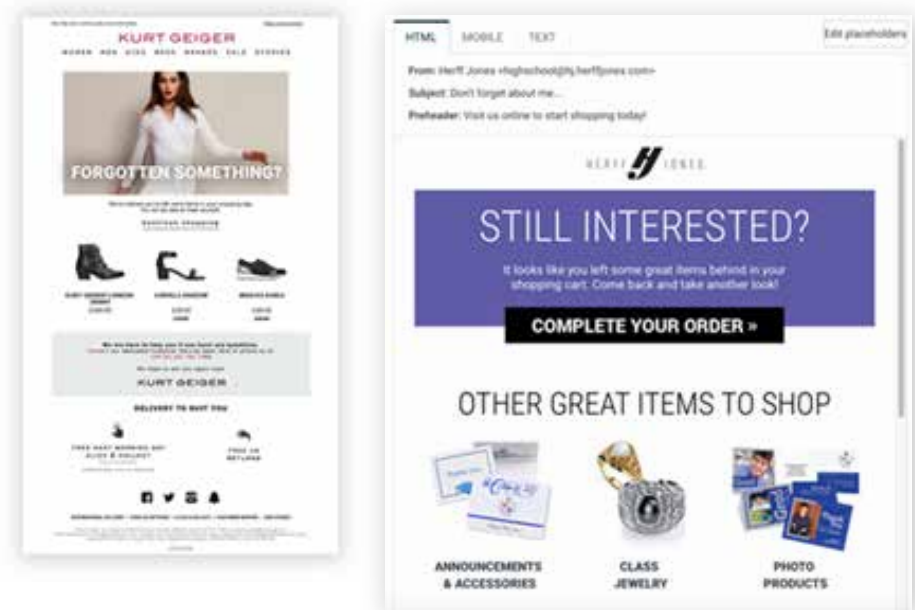
That's where automation can save your holiday season. By letting the machine take on time-consuming tasks and make your customer data work for you, marketers have more time and energy to really strategize a winning holiday plan.

Increase Leads to First-Time Buyers

Most brands spend 90% of their budget on acquisition, in some cases blindly throwing money at business-as-usual campaigns that are aimed at leads but produce low conversions. However, by using the following automated approaches, you can optimize your program so that you're more effective at attracting new customers during the holidays:

Abandoned Cart Campaigns

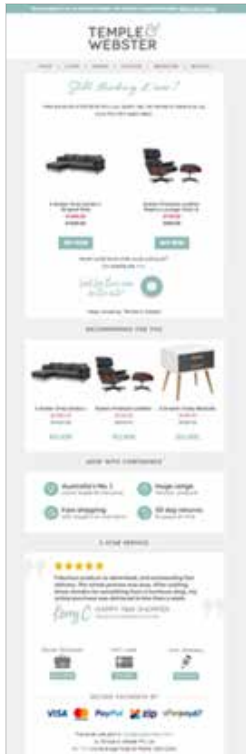
One of the best ways to get a lead to convert is to reach out to customers who have left items in their shopping carts and give them a good reason to come back and complete the purchase.



For the greatest impact possible, you need to tailor each message to the individual shopper. It only takes one Abandoned Cart email at the right time with the right message to convert visitors into customers.

| Automate Your Marketing Efforts | Increase Leads to First-Time Buyers

Abandoned Browse Campaigns

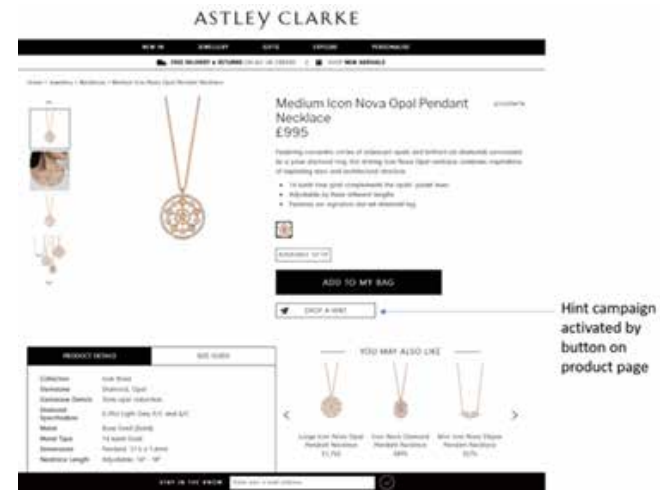


Considering how much budget brands spend on driving new customers to the website, you have to seize the opportunity to get the customer to convert while she's there. Similar to Abandoned Cart campaigns, Abandoned Browse automations allow you to reach out to shoppers who have spent time browsing the website without buying anything and give them an incentive — 10% off or free shipping — to come back and purchase.

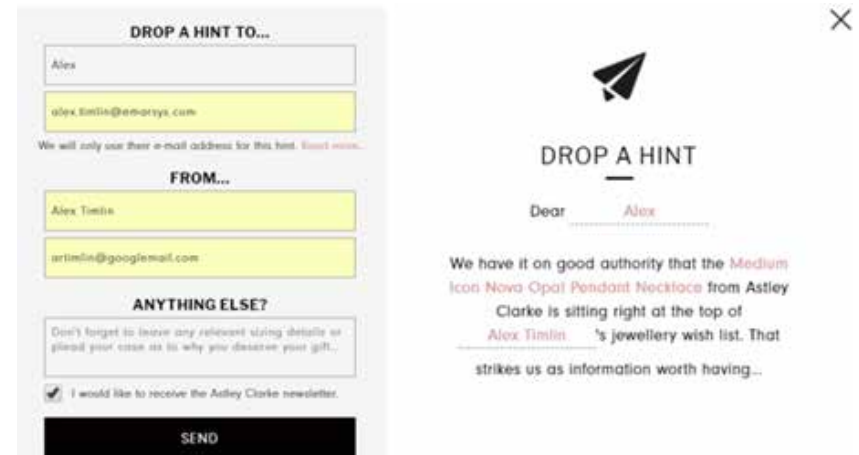
But it's not just about the discount. It's really about the relevancy of the offer. If you are not going to give visitors a discount for registering or purchasing, you can still use a web channel popup to highlight your free delivery and return policy — or even better, recommend similar products to the ones they have browsed.

Send a Hint

The Send a Hint tactic is an effective way to identify seasonal browsers who are looking for something special for a friend or family member. These browsers might not qualify as your ideal customer, so you'd have no other way to identify or engage with them. However, Send a Hint is hugely beneficial for gifting holidays, be it Christmas, Hanukkah, Diwali, or any special occasion. The way this works is that a family member wants to make sure he's going to get a present he actually wants. He simply goes to a brand's website, selects the product he wants, and clicks a Send a Hint button.



Then the shopper chooses the channel he wants to send the hint through (email, Facebook, Twitter, or SMS) and includes a personalized message to the recipient. The next time his family and friends log in to the channel, they'll get the gift idea. Since this may involve consumers who have never bought from your brand before, you may pick up a crowd of first-time buyers.

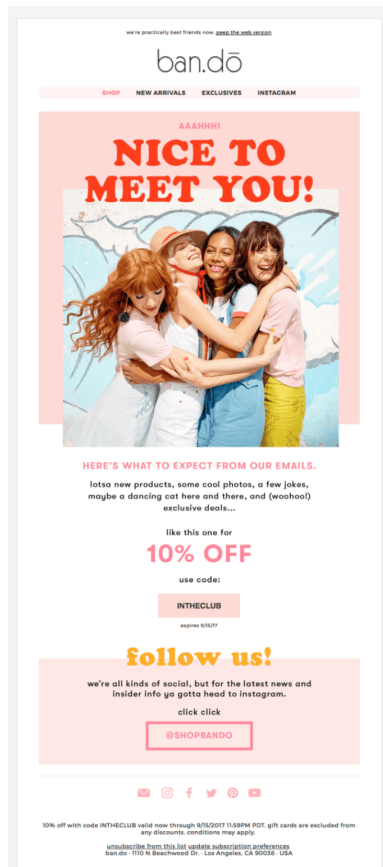


| Automate Your Marketing Efforts

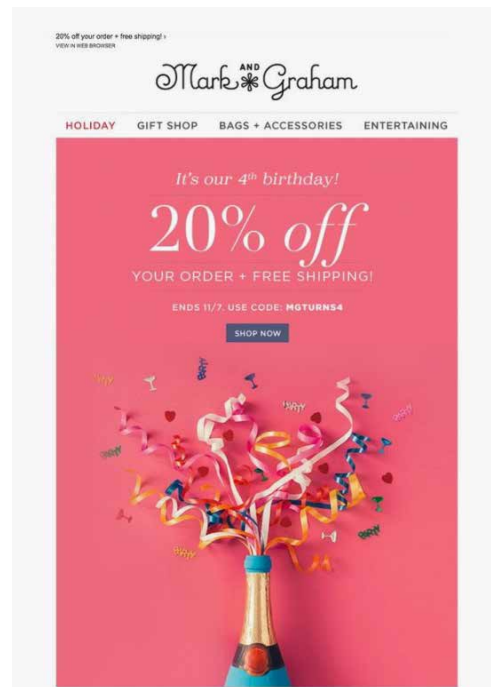
Increase First-Time Buyers to Repeat Buyers

An Accenture study finds that 75% of shoppers only buy once from an e-commerce brand or retailer. Driving that second purchase is key to increasing long-term Customer Lifetime Value (CLV), and it can be done with something as simple as automated campaigns.

Price Drop Campaigns

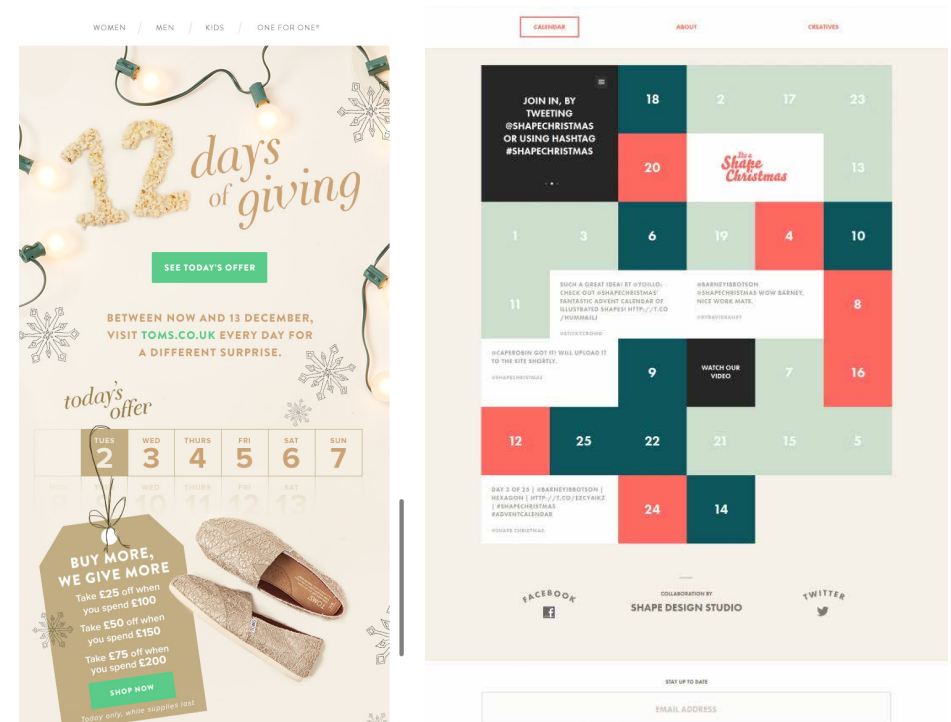


Price Drop campaigns are super-effective at getting the attention of opportunists and bargain hunters ready to seize deals that pop up. But you can also use Price Drops to convert any shopper who has shown interest in a specific product. Many Price Drops have a time limit that strongly encourages immediate action.



Drive Engagement with Holiday Automations

Customers don't just want promotional material, especially come November and December. They also want content that entertains or educates. For example, an automated "12 Days of Christmas" campaign could show a different product every day, but it would be even more engaging to share a relevant blog post each day (about your Christmas checklist, different recipes to try, or any holiday-themed content that could drive traffic).



| Automate Your Marketing Efforts

Increase Average Order Value (AOV)

A small change in AOV can make a big difference. For example, an increase of \$1 in AOV for 100,000 orders leads to a \$100K uplift in revenue directly attributed to marketing efforts.

And it's not that difficult to do. In addition to gift cards, you have several ways to persuade customers to add another item or two to their cart and drive up revenue.

Product Recommendations

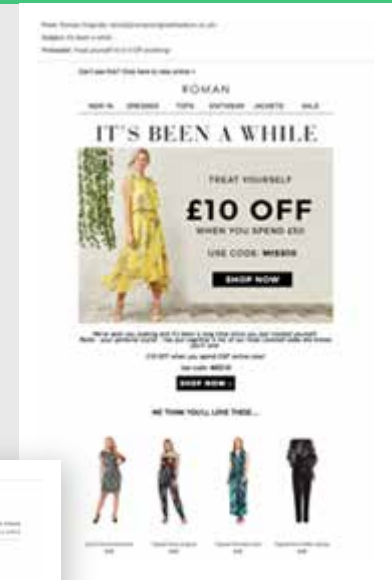
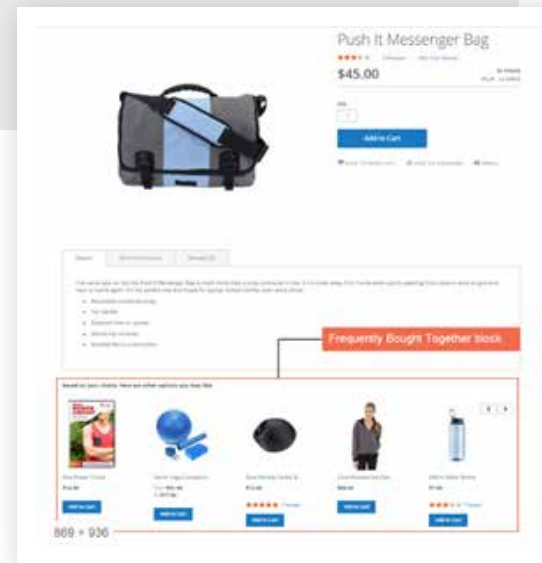
By using AI to track what other people have looked at and converted on, a lot of brands can recommend products that could be a great alternative or complementary to the product a customer's looking at.

For example, an "Also Bought" widget (or a "Frequently Bought Together" widget as shown in the Push It Messenger Bag message) is a reliable way to recommend other products that your data tells you this unique customer is most likely interested in. Any time you can help customers find similar or additional items, you can increase the number of items purchased.

The Q4 holidays are a prime opportunity for ecommerce and retail brands to build deeper relationships with existing customers and catch the attention of new ones. However, this is challenging every year because customer habits continue to change.

The good news is that marketing automation is the best solution for keeping up with that change. You gain more data about a single customer with every purchase she makes. That data feeds the machine learning that underlies your platform or software. Then all the insights gained go right back into the automated messages that will reach your customers at the right moment.

For more on how marketing technology can substantially make your holiday season brighter, check out [Emarsys' holiday playbook](#).





DIVERSIFY SALES CHANNELS



DIVERSIFY SALES CHANNELS

Putting all your eggs in one basket is often not the best strategy for ecommerce. The trick is to [offer a uniform experience across all channels](#). There are so many ways that online shoppers can find products today that it would be criminal to think one sales channel is sufficient.

Brand.com Site - Your Pride and Joy

Your branded site is your sanctum - your place of zen and peace and a playground for creativity and brand personality. This should consume most of your time as you want the site to perfectly convey your brand message and why customers should continue coming back for more. The key word here is branding. There's no better place to build that brand image than your website, then once it's established, spread that image across other channels. [87% of consumers](#) place utmost importance on consistent multichannel branding.

This might seem like obvious advice, and the traffic and sales opportunities might at first seem larger elsewhere, but it's best to focus on optimising your homebase before moving on to other channels to avoid spreading your resources too thin.

Driving sales through your branded site grants you the most control and opportunity for building a loyal customer base. The cost of marketing and acquiring customers on marketplaces will always be greater than return purchases to your online store. Major ecommerce platforms offer tremendous support on the development, design, and functionality of your ecommerce storefront. The sense of ownership over a branded site should outweigh the hunger for marketplace sales once you've spent some time building it.



| *Diversify Sales Channels*

Ecommerce Marketplaces - If Ya Can't Beat 'Em, Join 'Em

While it's great to romanticise your brand overtaking the big names and becoming the top ecommerce business in your category, the likelihood of that happening is slim to none. The good news is that most major ecommerce platforms integrate with major marketplaces like Amazon and Ebay painlessly, offering a new channel through which to advertise and sell.

But wait, why would you want to compromise the integrity of your brand by selling out to these soulless corporations?

Well, first of all, it wouldn't be selling out because you possess everything proprietary relating to your brand even when you sell on their platform. Secondly, when you consider that [as much as 80% of shoppers have been shown to rely on amazon for holiday purchases](#), that might paint the marketplaces in a better light. Regardless of your sentiments, it's a good idea to have at least some presence on major marketplaces, 'cause you can bet that your competitors will.

Rise of Omnichannel

Fact: [52% of ecommerce stores](#) have omnichannel capabilities.

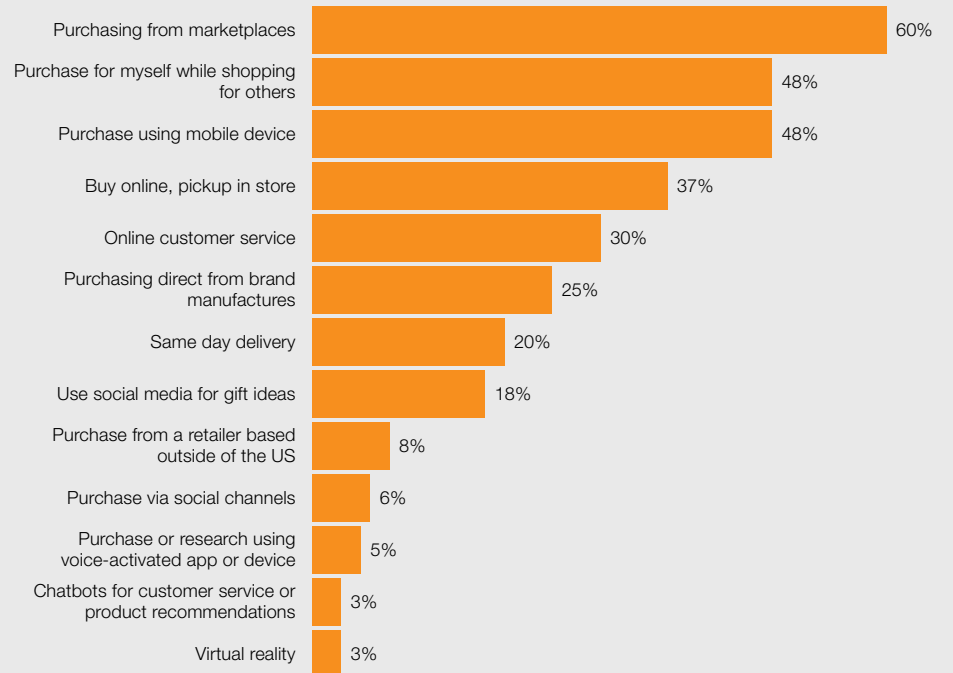
For some businesses, ecommerce is favourable because of its flexible and low-overhead nature. That being said, the majority of retail purchases are still made at brick and mortar locations.

If your business has the means, it would be wise to invest in having a physical storefront and an online store. This opens up a whole new level of ways to promote, interact with customers, and sell your products. It's food for thought, but as we are focussing primarily on ecommerce holiday promotion, we won't go into any more detail on the benefits of physical shelf space at this time.

CASE IN POINT

Which of the following have you used or plan to use this holiday season?

Respondents could select multiple options





AVOID LOGISTICAL OVERLOAD



AVOID LOGISTICAL OVERLOAD

In the final leg of the journey, after your customers have seen your ads, chosen a channel to buy through, and placed an order, you need to make sure those products arrive safely and efficiently. Make sure that you have a solid distribution network and method, overstock product to avoid selling out, and use integrations to help you manage logistics through the holiday season and beyond.

Because of the extreme increase in order volumes through holiday events, ecommerce businesses can be put through the wringer logistically. You must have a plan in place to avoid submitting buyers to poor customer experiences. After all, the holidays are a stressful time, and already short patiences can be exacerbated by any hiccups in the supply chain. Even one or two days late can be disastrous and leave a lasting effect on a customer.

Methodically Plan Distribution

Relying on analytics and an understanding of your audience will be a good indicator of how to ensure that your products can be delivered in a timely fashion. Try not to centralise your entire stock in one place - this could figuratively back you into a corner - instead use warehouses spread out regionally to ship the product from nearer to where they are meant to arrive.

Third Party Logistics (3PL)

Outsourcing the more tedious aspects of your supply chain can take a huge weight off your shoulders during high-volume events. Many 3PL companies already have the infrastructure and systems in place to efficiently distribute, meaning that it's a viable solution for any ecommerce business if they can afford it.



| *Avoid Logistical Overload*

Order Management System (OMS)

An order management system tracks sales, orders, inventory, and fulfillment. It also enables the people, processes, and partnerships necessary for products to make their way to customers. An effective OMS provides one centralized place to manage orders from all sales channels.

With a unified order management system, you can manage customer information and interactions, access your accounting data, customize your retail point of sale system, and update your warehouse inventory — all from one system.

Merchants should jump at any opportunity to simplify and consolidate their order processing during holidays. Integrating with an OMS can relieve the administrative headaches and let you focus on marketing and selling.

Ensure Stock Availability

It's a good idea to ramp up production in preparation for the holidays. It would be catastrophic to receive orders without the stock to fulfill them. This can also leave a bitter taste in the consumers mouth, and surely they'll remember the bad experience for next time.

Even if you've got consistent inventory management, the holidays should be the exception. You shouldn't rely on the usual schedule for when to produce/reorder stock. It's better to have some leftover inventory sitting in a warehouse post-holiday season than it is to run out and miss any further sales. This practise is called [safety stock](#) and should be maintained at all times - excessively during high volume periods.

Adjust Shipping Times



*“The only thing more important to online consumers than time is money, evidenced by the fact that **70% OF SHOPPERS** will seek a product elsewhere rather than waiting for any length of time for back orders, but **87% OF CUSTOMERS** are willing to wait two or more days for free shipping.”*



This runs parallel to maintaining stock availability. The simple fact is that customers don't want to wait longer for back orders, but if you've already prevented this by stockpiling inventory, you still need to consider the strain on distribution channels during holidays.

It's best to under-promise and over-deliver. What I mean is you should increase the shipping times stated on your site and product pages to a timeframe you can guarantee. This mitigates the risk of products arriving late, and if they are delivered early, the customer will be thrilled. If you normally promise 5 day shipping, a safe bet would be to increase by an additional 2 or 3 days for the holidays.

'TIS THE SEASON FOR BRAND AND SALES GROWTH



'TIS THE SEASON FOR BRAND AND SALES GROWTH

The ultimate goal would be to apply these strategies year-on-year with consistent positive results. The bottom line is that ecommerce is a massive and multifaceted industry where there are few solutions that are absolute. Be prepared, and anticipate all variables that might impact your promotion to achieve the best outcome. To revisit the points at the beginning of this paper:

1. Know who you're selling to

Think like a customer to better understand their behaviour

2. Pick your battles

Don't go all in on specific days, allocate for capturing sales during the in-between

3. Make your products visible

Use techniques to increase exposure and create ads with relevant, evocative content

4. Be everywhere

Focus on a multichannel approach so customers can find your products across a variety of mediums and platforms

5. Make sure you can deliver

Avoid making customers wait by maintaining excess inventory and using proximity distribution



Remember that a customer's behaviour around [the holidays] will probably be different from other times in the year. And that's because this kind of shopping is likely motivated by a want/luxury rather than a need/necessity. Customers will be looking for the biggest discounts and browsing sites looking for where they can gain the most value. Also, if they're buying Christmas gifts for friends and family, then they'll be browsing products that they might not know much about.



- Precisely how to run the best possible ecommerce holiday campaign is a divisive topic and it's easy to be misguided, but we've addressed and discussed what's proven and beyond speculation. Be mindful of the contents of this whitepaper as they apply to your business and you'll be in a good position for designing and delivering a practical ecommerce holiday promotion.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



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