



Bring the Heat This Holiday: 24 Tips for Seasonal Success

Fall just got underway, but it's the home stretch to holiday season — and we can't wait. Why? Aside from it being a perfect reason to connect with customers, the holidays give you an opportunity to flex the digital, social and mobile skills you need to know because:

- Shopping habits are changing (customers are buying earlier and across every screen *and* channel, whether mobile to PC or mobile to store).
- Competition is growing (do you know how to rise above the noise? We do. And in a minute, so will you.).
- Social pressure rules (it's changing everything, but we have a plan).

To help you have a more *holy cow!* kind of holiday, here are 24 tips to super-size your success.

Got a question
or need help?
[Drop us a line.](#)

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1. Start with the end in mind.

Before you dive in, review what worked and what didn't from your 2013 holiday season:

- **Paid Search:** Best keywords, landers, call-to-actions, bidding strategies, Quality Score issues
- **Email:** Review subscribes/unsubscribes, clicks, conversions-to-clicks
- **Display:** How did your creative & offers perform?

2. Get started early.

Well...as early as you can. Talk to your agency partners and get the ball rolling before Q3 (good advice for next year). Lay out holiday schedules for offers/promotions, landing pages, seasonal ad copy and creative updates. Don't forget to strategize bidding budgets for SEM.

3. Cyber high five!

Cyber Monday isn't just one day. Not anymore. In fact, the days around it can now *outperform* it. In 2013, the most online sales (in one day) occurred the Tuesday after Cyber Monday and the second most on that Wednesday. Cyber Monday sales ranked third.

Learn — and plan for — your brand's Cyber Five!



4. Make the funnel go down easy.

Your customer expects consistency in your messaging and offers – they don't care about your internal silos. So give 'em what they want this holiday: align email, paid SEM, SEO, social & display initiatives — and don't forget offline efforts (in-store, catalog, broadcast).

5. Help customers share the love.

A whopping 84% of customers value word-of-mouth recommendations (way more than marketing messages) when choosing products. Include sharing links in emails & landing pages, and offer incentives to build relationships with your audience.

6. Think about mailbox clutter.

View your emails critically; competition for opens and clicks is fierce — especially considering that in 2013 retailers sent 77% more push communications between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday than the daily averages in September and October. Think: is my subject line, pre-header and offer compelling to my core demo or segment? Not sure? TEST!



7. All social content is not equal.

Engage customers early on with strong social content — which may be different from mid- and late-season content. 87% of social interactions were mid-touch for buyers, so be sure to get social messaging out early in the shopping phase.

8. Is that coal in Santa's bag!?

Know if the season is negatively impacting your business. If your SEM campaigns are wasting dollars on non-qualified matches, adjust your negative matches accordingly. Unqualified traffic at an all-time high? Set display retargeting campaigns to require more than 1 page view.

9. Keep watching the competition.

Assign a team at your agency to report on competitive analysis daily — it's a month of time well spent. If a competitor offers a great deal, be prepared to combat it.

10. Put display fraud on the naughty list!

Talk to your agency about fraud protection and monitoring. It's important in measuring your results accurately — and paying only for qualified traffic. Fraud increases during the holidays, so be extra vigilant.



11. Grinch happens.

Not every customer is going to be jolly. So be ready to respond to complaints & questions quickly on social. Add extra staff so you can be as fast and relevant (fewer machine driven answers) as possible.

12. Tis the gift-giving season

Make your customer's life easier by ensuring your brand's products are easy to share with loved ones and are top-of-mind. Promote wish lists and gift guides.



13. Push the pros of shopping online.

Ex: Don't wait in lines! Shop online.

Ex: Offer free shipping (expedited is even better) or free return shipping.

Ex: The convenience of reviews and comparison shopping

14. Always be selling.

Use every opportunity to stay top-of-mind and bring in more revenue. Consider ways to upsell, cross sell, address abandoned carts and more.



15. Establish budgets & check daily.

You don't want days to pass before you discover you're hitting caps. Don't be so busy that you don't check your budgets and end up leaving sales on the table.

16. Optimize your site for mobile.

In 2013, 26.2% of eCommerce sales were from mobile. But it's not enough to just optimize your site for mobile; your mobile strategy should be radically different if you have bricks as well as clicks.



17. Get local.

Even if you don't have bricks, it's key to get in front of local shoppers. Work with your agency to create a hyper-local campaign with SEO, SEM, display and social.

18. Show your product feed some love!

Optimize (or create) your Google Shopping Campaign to promote your individual products and offers online. Don't overlook beacons, visual search and local inventory ads.



19. Mix it up.

Integrate email and mailing lists to leverage targeting in paid social & display. Use your current lists to reach customers on Twitter and Facebook – and create lookalike audiences to attract new ones.

20. Pick paid social & display — early.

Paid social yields 25% more conversions than organic posts. Plus, paid allows for more ad types, targeting, relevance and testing. Break it out early to beat the competition.

21. Use reviews and top 10 lists.

Santa's not the only guy who appreciates a list: 57% of holiday shoppers don't have a specific product or brand in mind when they begin shopping. Leverage product reviews and top 10 shop lists to put your brand front and center.



22. Audit & re-audit holiday campaigns.

December 31st is too late to find out something's broken! So check for broken links, incorrect ad copy, proper tagging, etc. Mark your calendar for re-audits.

23. Amazon isn't everything.

Go beyond Amazon and consider partnerships such as ShopRunner (free for shoppers with an AmEx card). And don't be afraid to promote them to your customers!



24. Remarket like a wise man.

Remarketing should be part of any robust media plan. But even if someone abandoned your site on a particular product page, it shouldn't stalk them across the Internet for 14-30 days. Think about what else they'd be interested in!



That's it! And remember, as you use these tips, you should be tracking performance across every. single. channel. like NORAD tracking Santa on Christmas Eve.

You'll find out which tactics were a hit, which need work — and which you can apply beyond Q4 to raise profits all year (not to mention lay the foundation for a smash-hit holiday 2015).

So take these tips and talk to your team or agency about how you can use them to get your audience's attention and drive serious sales this year.

Want to put a particular plan in action? See the kind of creative that brings the heat during the holidays? Contact the experts at BKV today!

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