



HOLIDAY MARKETING BEST PRACTICES

MIKE GINGERICH

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
2015 HOLIDAY SHOPPING DATA:	4
LOOK AT THE PAST YEAR'S DATA	5
BEGIN YOUR CAMPAIGNS EARLY	6
PEOPLE LIKE DEALS ANYTIME	7
GO FOR THE HEARTSTRINGS	8
GIVE PEOPLE A GIFT	11
GO FOR FREQUENCY	12
DECORATE ONLINE.....	13
UP YOUR SERVICE.....	14
OPTIMIZE YOUR MARKETING TO GET FOUND	15
HAVE FUN!.....	16
YOUR HOLIDAY MARKETING.....	17

INTRODUCTION

In case you didn't know, the origin of the term "Black Friday" has nothing to do with how unpleasant you feel about humanity after waiting in line at dawn with thousands of others for a chance at a cheap TV!

Black Friday is when retailers kick off their holiday *sales* season. The Friday after Thanksgiving starts the season that retailers hope will drive their business "into the black" as they close out the year. Even though the rest of the year may have been a struggle -- thanks to customers opening their wallets and making purchases for the holidays, the goal is that businesses should be profitable for the year with a big, successful final holiday sales push.

Black Friday has also come to symbolize the kick-off of the major holiday *marketing* campaign season, whether retail, digital or deals. Smart B2B or B2C marketers use this opportunity to roll out their own campaigns or help clients organize and execute theirs to drive those end-of-year sales

Today we're going to talk about strategizing and planning for your holiday digital marketing, specifically using email marketing and Facebook marketing to convey your holiday message to your readers and fans.

First let's look at why this is important to consider...

2015 HOLIDAY SHOPPING DATA:

The National Retail Foundation is a key source of the latest data on consumer buying trends. It gives businesses critical insight from their extensive survey of consumers to help businesses plan ahead. Here's some of the highlights of the 2015 survey:

- Holiday shoppers plan to spend an average \$463 on family members, up from \$458 last year and the highest in survey history.
- Average spending per person is expected to reach \$805, with more than half of shoppers planning to splurge on non-gift items for themselves.
- Americans plan to do almost half of their holiday shopping online this year
- Online sales are forecast to increase between 6 and 8 percent to as much as \$105 billion
- Nearly half (46.7%) said free shipping/shipping promotions are important factors in their decision on where to shop.

See more at:

<https://nrf.com/resources/holiday-headquarters#sthash.gKTjdfbO.dpuf>

So how should you start planning your marketing strategy for the holidays? Here's some key tips to get you started.

LOOK AT THE PAST YEAR'S DATA

This does require some prep by aggregating and analyzing the data from any past holiday campaigns. What happened last year? Take a look at your planning and production process:

- Were there any obstacles?
- Did you give yourself and your team enough time to get things complete, or did sections have to be rushed out at the last minute?
- Was there any relevant feedback from customers/clients?
- What worked? What channels didn't? Have things changed?

BEGIN YOUR CAMPAIGNS EARLY

You may have seen retailers start to sneak in their Christmas stuff as early as mid-summer. (Not that we're talking about you *Costco!*) Though it's odd to see Christmas trees next to beach towels and back to school items, it's becoming more common in business. Halloween and Christmas are both shopping opportunities!

Rather than relying on the Thanksgiving-New Years period to make or break their profit year, retailers are starting the holiday season early, hoping to score some extra revenue. (*We all know that one person that has their Christmas shopping done in October and misses all the "fun" of the Black Friday sales.*)

By beginning early, you'll have extra time to prepare and design a marketing campaign, get everyone on board, try out different concepts, give it a few additional proofs, and be ready to roll out when prime-time comes.

Even if your campaign doesn't officially launch until around Thanksgiving, you can still preview parts of it in your communications – a “coming soon” or “sneak peek” message can really grow interest.

PEOPLE LIKE DEALS ANYTIME

The mob scenes of Black Friday have created more opportunities for deals on other days, such as Cyber Monday or early-bird Thanksgiving day specials. *(Even though I think it's a huge mistake to do anything but eat turkey and watch football on Thanksgiving, I guess some people like getting the early, early bird deals.)*

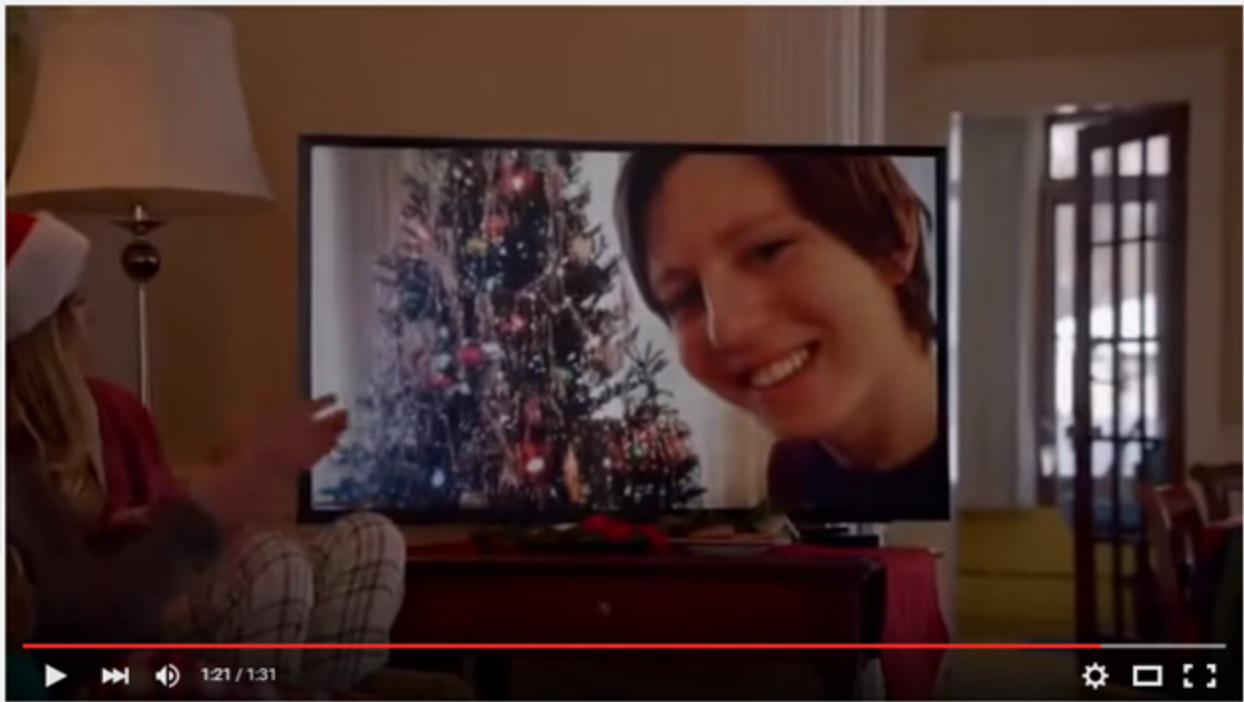
Customers eager for savings this time of year won't care what day a special offer is attached to, as long as it's what's promised. Offer special services that are only available during the holidays like, promo codes, gift wrapping, contests and limited-time offers.

Be sure to share these special items on social media and in your emails!

GO FOR THE HEARTSTRINGS

The holidays are a time for family and friends, home and community. For most of the year, it's not necessarily a good practice to pile on the sentiment. But during the "season of giving," you'll want to create emotional connections with your services or products.

Apple, for instance, did this memorably in 2013 with a commercial of the young man secretly making a video while his family thought he was playing on his phone.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v76f6KPSJ2w>

But be cautious of people's religious sensitivities, and those who already feel overwhelmed by the stresses of the holidays.

Here are some examples:



Stella Artois - [Give Beautifully](#)



Coca-Cola - [Happy Holidays](#)



[#MontyThePenguin](#)

GIVE PEOPLE A GIFT

The holidays are about giving. This is the time to show appreciation to your loyal customers during the holidays.

Here's an example from HubSpot. They gave away [250 holiday stock photos](#) in exchange for an email address. It's a win-win for everyone. HubSpot is growing their email marketing database and offering something of value to the subscribers.

What can you provide to potential customers to download as a thank you gift for their interest?

You'll be surprised how many of these leads will come back and become customers because they appreciate your gift.

GO FOR FREQUENCY

With so many marketers actively running campaigns, and so many deals out there, you don't want your messages to get missed.

You'll need to increase the places people see your message and your amount of touchpoints. Here's where you can build campaigns on top of each other. A social media campaign that leads to an email marketing subscription form with a unique coupon or discount for subscribers. Your readers will see you on more than 1 type of media.

Send a message, even if it's just a short greeting, a reminder to take some particular action or a quick deal. You can also increase the urgency, and the appeal of your offers, with a countdown.

By taking stock of your holiday email and social media campaigns earlier and mapping out your plan well in advance, you can have a more profitable, and less stressful, holiday shopping season!

DECORATE ONLINE

Just like you decorate your home, decorate your brand’s online sites. Have a creative plan and a launch plan for dressing up your company’s website, email templates, social media branding, and any other assets you have online.

This will get people in the spirit as they interact with your brand. Given their sentiment during the holidays, they’ll enjoy visiting your “online home” during this time of year.



For Facebook, change the theme of your business Facebook page by adding a holiday related profile picture or avatar. An easy way to do this is a photoshop a Santa hat or antlers on your profile pic. Change your Facebook Page cover image relay your sentiments of the holiday to your audience. Add a message of thanksgiving or holiday cheer or let people know of seasonal discounts or specials.



UP YOUR SERVICE

Make sure your customer service is at its best! Use Twitter for customer service if your audience is there by responding to tweet mentions of your brand. Also be sure to have the Facebook “Messages” button active on your Page so fans can message you right on Facebook.

People will have definitive needs regarding shipping, gift wrapping, etc. during this time of year. Make sure your marketing is synced with sales and customer service.

Your customer service team should have an empathetic attitude as they are spreading holiday cheer on phone calls, chats, or emails. If sales go up during the holidays, it might be a good idea to increase the number of customer service employees you have on hand for a positive experience for customers.

OPTIMIZE YOUR MARKETING TO GET FOUND

Research holiday hashtags; they will vary depending on the holiday, and what types of products, toys, topics, and news is popular during that season. Then ramp up the posts, include hashtags and look for ways to engage and be ready to respond!

Including the hashtags and trending holiday topics into your posts will push your Facebook page to a potentially larger audience and expose new users and potential consumers to your specific product or brand.

New posts should be holiday keyword optimized. New customers, who have the holiday on their mind, will search for terms, keywords, and products they normally wouldn't. This is a huge opportunity to increase your user base and snag new customers during this limited marketing opportunity.

Plan ahead to use Facebook Ads and potentially Google Ads to reach your target audience. With Facebook Ads you can get in front of exactly your ideal audience through the targeting options, and with Google Ads you can get in front of those searching right then for your product or service.

HAVE FUN!

Have fun and let your fun drive sales.

Let your creative team think outside of the box when you're planning your holiday campaign. Consider letting your brand's personality shine. Create assets that website visitors and customers will enjoy and turn those assets into sales drivers.

Kate Spade launched their first #MissAdventure episode, [The Waiting Game](#), during the holidays in 2014. In it, Anna Kendrick finds herself locked outside of her apartment and spends time going through her Kate Spade shopping bags.

The spot was originally clickable and would take viewers to the product pages in KateSpade.com, creating sales. It was fun, it captured your attention, and it flat out worked!

YOUR HOLIDAY MARKETING

Plan for the holiday before it happens by sharing tweets and posts, as well as trends about the holiday. Grab and hold your audience's attention with brilliantly planned and beautifully executed holiday posts and campaigns. Whichever holiday is celebrated; it will be on the consumer's minds in the weeks preceding. It's important to incorporate what's trending and capitalize on the holiday for sales opportunities.

Adapt to the holiday season, and you'll see an increase in Facebook activity and engagements and an opportunity for the holiday Facebook marketing campaign to be a huge and stunning "value-add" to your business bottom line. Adjusting your marketing campaign for the holidays is pretty straightforward. But don't just limit these steps to email or Facebook, you can use them for Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and all of your social media networks, email marketing and blog posts.

So what are you waiting for?

It's time to dig in and map out that plan for the holidays. They'll be here before you know it and you want to bring your "A Game" to finish the year strong!