

The 2021 Ecommerce

HOLIDAY SUCCESS PLAN FOR BRANDS





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Executive Summary

This holiday season is set up to be yet another challenge for brands looking to grow profitably. **Unpredictable shopping habits** and behaviors, the ever-present dangers of **another pandemic wave**, and the volatility of a market that soared unexpectedly last year will make this holiday season a time of **ecommerce instability**. The brands that don't proactively anticipate roadblocks or face challenges head-on will be left in the digital dust.

Luckily, we love challenges here at ROI - which is why we're so excited to share with you our executive holiday guide for 2021. Our **2021 Holiday Success Plan for Brands** reveals key insights to make sure you are prepared to thrive this holiday season. You'll uncover insights like:

- How to optimize the **4 crucial components of a successful holiday strategy**.
- Targeting strategies to reach new consumers and leverage new buying behaviors.
- The **most critical buying factor to shoppers this holiday season** & how your brand can dominate the competition.

Cheers to your brand's success!

Lasting Effects: How COVID-19 Transformed Holiday Shopping

This year, retailers and shoppers alike will navigate yet another unprecedented holiday shopping season. As we enter the uncharted territory of a post-pandemic marketplace, consumers' holiday shopping behavior will be a hybrid of what it once was and what the pandemic pushed to be different.

What does that mean for your brand this holiday season?

Ecommerce soared to new heights in 2020 as the pandemic drove consumers to shop online instead of in-store more than ever. Nearly 1 out of every 5 holiday purchases were made online last year¹. While that may not sound like much, it was a significant year-over-year jump and nearly twice what happened in 2016.



But what about this year? As pandemic restrictions have eased up and shoppers have become more comfortable shopping in-store, brands should expect more traffic to their brick-and-mortar locations than last year this holiday season.



ROI Definition

Cyber 5: The five-day holiday shopping period encompassing Thanksgiving through Cyber Monday. Also referred to as Cyber Week or Black Friday Cyber Monday (BFCM).

Brands with a presence both online and in-store will be positioned to thrive the most this holiday season. Whether it's offering hybrid shopping options like curbside pickup, using localized campaigns to target shoppers on their phone when they're near your physical store during the Cyber 5, or implementing augmented reality in your app for virtual try-ons, any way that your brand can connect your physical and digital experience this year will resonate with consumers.



ROI Tip

Nothailah Meehan

Programmatic Team Lead



According to the National Retail Federation, 52% of shoppers say that at least half of their purchases are influenced by convenience. Consider creating a gift guide to make this hectic time of year easier on your consumer. They serve as a great way to drive interest and site traffic.



ROI Tip

Carly Turpin

Marketplaces Team Lead



Make updates to your Amazon creative and copy focus on the seasonality of the holidays and gift-giving - for example, "The perfect gift for her this holiday season" or "Keep your pond protected from cold weather." This includes updates to your Amazon Store, Posts, and DSP.

Last year, shoppers were wary about spending discretionary income. Consumers planned to spend \$998 on holiday shopping in 2020 compared to \$1,048 in 2019².

As the pandemic has subsided, so have consumers' economic concerns, with consumer spend now accelerating past pre-pandemic levels³. Expect consumers to be more willing to part with their money this year to find the perfect gift.

² <https://nrf.com/insights/retail-holiday-and-seasonal-trends>

³ <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/PCE>



Supply Chain Strain? Shipping Is King

There's never a more important time than the holiday season for consumers' packages to arrive when they expect them to. Delivery times and shipping rates are always extremely important factors in consumers' online holiday purchase decisions.

But merchandising, fulfillment, and shipping have been major concerns of brands and retailers large and small since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. As the holiday season approaches, customers expect brands to have all of their ducks in a row to make sure their gifts arrive on time.

Many shoppers bought gifts earlier last year in hopes of avoiding shipping delays. This trend will continue into this year. Offering a promotion before Black Friday/Cyber Monday (BFCM) can entice them to purchase from your brand over your competitor.



ROI Tip

Brandon Howell

Director of Website Optimization



Use countdown timers to give users an extra psychological FOMO push. Countdown timers could apply to a specific sale (like during Cyber Monday) or could be related to shipping cut-offs for guaranteed holiday arrival.

This year more than ever, the ability to have speed and flexibility in your decision-making will be paramount. Do as much of your planning ahead of time as you can so that when your peak days hit, you have time to focus on performance and making quick, strategic decisions instead of whether or not your customers are able to buy and receive your product in the first place.

Make your last ship dates extremely clear to the customer. If you feel confident in your inventory supply, consider promoting “quick shipping” incentives to target your loyal customers. If warehouse and supply chain delays mean you’ll be able to ship less of your product, consider promoting virtual gift cards.



Preparing for an Extended Shopping Season



ROI Tip

Michelle Jereb

Paid Search Team Lead



Finalize campaign structures by October to be ready to fully leverage automation. CPCs will continue to climb into Q4, so take that into consideration when determining budgets for October through December.

How can your brand capitalize on a lengthier holiday shopping season without sacrificing your sanity? Determine your goals and start testing, planning, and discussing budgets as early as possible. Are you willing to sacrifice return if it means you scale your year-over-year revenue? Will inventory issues that you experienced last year or are experiencing now impact your yearly growth? Asking these questions early will make it easier for your brand to know what to expect and measure success in the right way.

Last year, brands and retailers started pushing holiday deals earlier than ever to both discourage large swaths of shoppers from coming to their stores during the pandemic and mitigate supply chain concerns.

And shoppers followed suit: 40% of consumers started shopping for holiday gifts earlier than they normally would⁴.



ROI Tip

Andrew Flinchum

SEO Team Lead



Optimize your pages ahead of time for products that are more likely to be given as gifts. If you have any seasonal pages, don't delete them and create a new page every year. Keep the same page, update it, and reuse it with an evergreen URL. And make sure any dedicated pages you create for email marketing are tied into your current navigation or redirected to the most relevant page once the event ends.



Brand awareness will also be a critical component of your brand's holiday strategy. On Amazon, your brand can create Posts to not only highlight key products throughout the season but also grow followers and increase awareness.

With a longer holiday shopping season comes the opportunity for brands to run Cyber Week promotions earlier and longer. Black Friday saw a huge spike last year that carried through Cyber 5 weekend, compared to previous years when Cyber Monday saw the biggest spikes. Offering a promotion before Cyber Week can entice them to purchase from your brand over your competitor.

During the busiest shopping season of the year, remarketing is a must. Only 4% of website visitors are ready to make a purchase, meaning that 96% of website visitors haven't decided if they want to buy from you yet⁵. Ensure your brand is top-of-mind during that critical purchase decision process. Build up your remarketing lists for Cyber 5 shopping by running brand awareness strategies starting in late Q3 or early Q4 (or even earlier).



ROI Tip

Stephen Smith

Product Feeds Team Lead



Get the most out of your promotions by using a promotions feed to submit them ahead of time. You can utilize the Promotion Effective Date attribute to have Google test your promotion before it goes live and the promotion display date to indicate when you actually want it to be shown in ads. This will help reduce any lag time in your promotion being approved by Google after going live.



4 Pillars of a Successful Holiday Strategy

Your brand's holiday strategy can't succeed without a secure foundation in place. These tips will help you ensure that your brand is set up for success this holiday season.



1

Keep a Close Eye on Your Product Feeds

Providing your shoppers with accurate information is step zero. Ensuring the data in your live product feed stays up-to-date is absolutely critical, especially if holiday seasonality brings lots of changes to your pricing and availability. Utilize the Product Data Alerts feature in the Google Merchant Center to get alerts if something unexpected happens and a certain percentage of products are removed.

Be Proactive About Supply Chain Strain

Product availability is top-of-mind for brands selling on Amazon this holiday season. Consider using FBM or direct fulfillment as a backup method to ensure you have strong inventory before Cyber 5 and throughout the holiday season. Off Amazon, make sure to call out shipping details in your ad copy. Emphasize your product availability and inventory with copy that encourages shoppers to make a purchase. Countdown timers can be used to show customers how much time they have left to make a purchase to guarantee their gift arrives in time for the holidays.

2





3

Optimize Your Organic Presence

There are lots of things you can do to proactively ensure your SEO is in top shape for the holidays, like optimizing your pages ahead of time for products that are more likely to be given as gifts. Make sure any dedicated pages you create for email marketing are tied into your current navigation or redirected to the most relevant page once the event ends. If you have any seasonal pages, don't delete them and create a new page every year. Keep the same page, update it, and reuse it with an evergreen URL. You'll also want to submit your page to Google Search Console at least one month prior to your big sale, including promotional dates in your copy in case it shows up prior to the beginning of the sale.

Use Personalization to Connect With Customers

Provide personalized recommendations to shoppers. Many sites utilize recommendation sections like "You May Also Like" or "Customers Also Shopped For" on their product pages. If you don't use this feature already, be sure to enable it before the holidays to boost your average order value (AOV) for each order. Already using this functionality? Consider modifying the language to match the intent of the user by relabeling these sections as "Additional Gift Options," "One For You, One For Them," or the like.

4



Tying It All Together: Key Takeaways

The holiday shopping journey is a long, winding path from beginning to end. The key to successfully navigating 2021's unprecedented shopping season is to take an omnichannel approach and make it as convenient as possible for shoppers to buy from your brand.

With the insights you've gleaned from this guide, you can help guide consumers down their path to purchase from your brand this holiday season. Keep these 4 key takeaways in mind as you form and execute your holiday strategy:

Consumers' holiday shopping behavior will be a hybrid of the old and the new this year.

Brands that optimize and align both their online and in-store presence will be positioned to thrive the most this holiday season.

There's never a more important time than the holiday season for consumers' packages to arrive when they expect them to.

Plan ahead so that when your peak days hit, you have time to focus on making quick, strategic decisions instead of worrying about whether your customers are able to buy and receive your product.





Like last year, this year's holiday shopping season will start earlier than ever.

Be prepared for shoppers to expect early deals and to start buying products sooner than they did in previous years.

A solid foundation is critical to a successful holiday strategy.

Keep a close eye on your product feeds, be proactive about supply chain strain, optimize your organic presence, and use personalization to help ensure your brand is set up for success this holiday season.



We're here to help!

Is your brand prepared to exceed your goals not just this holiday season but into 2022 and beyond? Our proven digital experts can help you uncover profitable advertising opportunities, optimize your website, or generate leads to accelerate your ecommerce growth momentum.



You can connect with our digital experts and scale your marketing strategy by emailing us at wlassiter@roirevolution.com.

Additional Resources

The 2021 Tech + Trends Guidebook *White Paper*



Ecommerce sales are projected to reach a record \$843 billion this year, surpassing levels that weren't expected until 2025 due to the pandemic¹. With the rapid shifts that took place last

year, 2021 will be about finding ways to reach wary consumers and filling your marketing toolbox with innovative strategies to stand out.

Download at:

roirevolution.com/2021-Tech-Trends

The State of Paid Search *Webinar Replay*



Paid search revenue was up 101.3% YoY at the height of the pandemic in 2020. The most unpredictable year since the inception of digital marketing has left many brands and retailers

wondering what the lasting impact will be. We invite you to join us as we look back on the elusive year and look ahead at what the data suggests is in store for paid search.

Watch at:

roirevolution.com/Paid-Search-Video

Report Contributors



Author

Sarah Davis
Senior Content
Marketing Specialist



Dave Stone
Group Marketing
Manager



Katherine Dull
Graphic
Designer



ROI REVOLUTION[®]





ROI's proven digital experts have been amplifying brand growth since the dawn of digital. We have a reputation for helping brands identify untapped potential through custom multi-channel strategies. Our best-in-class teams and technology empower hundreds of brands to drive billions in annual revenue.

No matter the obstacles and opportunities your brand faces, we're here to act as a trusted extension of your team. We don't have a "set it and forget it" approach to account management. We drive profitable revenue and new customer acquisition at scale through consistent communication and ongoing campaign optimization.

- Full-funnel advertising strategies to supercharge profitable customer acquisition on Amazon, Google, Facebook, & more.
- ROI's RevolutionSuite, combining the hybrid intelligence of smart technology & human logic to accelerate your return on investment.
- Optimization of your website to boost conversion rates, optimize content strategy, & grow your organic search presence.
- Strategic partnerships with Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Amazon, Snapchat, Feedonomics, & more.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP! Visit us anytime at roirevolution.com