



10 WAYS TO MAKE ECOMMERCE HOLIDAY SALES JINGLE

INTRODUCTION

Now's the time to start preparing your site for holiday traffic. (The early bird always gets the worm—and the sales—right?)

Savvy surfers start Googling the term *"Christmas gift ideas"* as early as August, and changes you make to your ecommerce store need to be tested far in advance — waiting until the last minute to make site changes could be disastrous should an unexpected issue arise with little time to fix. (You don't want Santa to get stuck in the chimney, do you?) You also want to A/B test changes in advance to make sure any site changes don't detract visitors.

Therefore, get ahead of the game with these ecommerce optimization tips to guide your online store to sales success when online shopping picks up in the fall and throughout the holiday season.

Here are several tips to help you boost sales and make this holiday season the most successful yet!



1. GET RESPONSIVE

Responsive web design is incredibly important to ecommerce, and is a great way to gain an edge on your competition. To get responsive means adapting your site to different screen resolutions (desktop, tablet, smartphones, etc.) by having a defined layout for each.

Some sources report that a *third of all ecommerce sales* occur on mobile devices; therefore if your mobile site fails to load quick or isn't responsive, the user experience will diminish, resulting in page abandonment, and ultimately damaging your bottom line.

You should be able to tell if you site is responsive by making a test purchase, as well as testing the following across different devices and browsers:

- Make sure coupon codes work
- See if the product images load correctly
- Be sure the site looks ok in both horizontal and vertical views
- Test the contact page and ensure a ticket/email goes through
- Ensure images are crisp, clear and don't strain the page
- Ensure videos don't strain the page
- Make sure the checkout process is seamless
- Make sure copy isn't hard to read...longer paragraphs should be broken up and be at least 14-point font

So what can you do if your site isn't responsive? If you're ecommerce store is on WordPress, see this guide: [How to Make Any WordPress Theme Responsive](#). Also, check here for some additional tips on [creating a mobile-friendly site](#) and [5 simple hacks for an optimized mobile ecommerce design](#).



Source: wpengine.com/blog

A responsive website can mean the difference between a lump of coal and record-breaking holiday sales.

2. DETECT WHAT COULD BE SLOWING YOUR SITE DOWN

A faster site reduces bounce rate and helps search engine rankings. A slow site results in poor user experience and lost sales and conversions. How slow is too slow? According to studies, **47 percent** of consumers expect to wait no longer than **two seconds** for a web page to load.

It's a smart idea to run a diagnosis of your site to detect any roadblocks you can fix before the holiday shopping season starts.

Try running a speed test to determine how fast certain pages of your site load. You can go to wpengine.com/speed-tool to get WordPress specific tips regarding how to improve and optimize your site for faster page load times. If not on WordPress, Webpagetest.org is another good way to test the speed of your site.

Things like caching, optimizing images, using a CDN, and *more* can all help you attain faster page loads times for a smooth user experience that results in higher sales this holiday season, and you won't even need the help of Dasher, Dancer, Donner, Blitzen, et al.



Source: wpengine.com/blog

3. COMBAT THE CAUSES OF SHOPPING CART ABANDONMENT

The process of checking out plays a vital role in the completion of a purchase. Shopping cart abandonment, an instance where the user adds a product to cart but doesn't complete the purchase, occurs at around [68 percent](#) of all online shopping instances. Think of it like Santa stopping at your house and not leaving any presents under the tree.

Many factors play a role in an abandoned cart, but many of them can be avoided with a few simple tweaks.

When it comes to the checkout process, **strive for simplicity**. Don't make users create an account before the purchase. Don't surprise users with unexpected shipping fees. Don't make the shopping cart hard to find, or make users have to backtrack to alter their cart. A smooth checkout process means an easy to navigate interface, without any roadblocks or confusing messaging.

Check out these other essential tips on [how to reduce shopping cart abandons](#) so this holiday season is joyous for both you and your visitors, creating loyal fans.



And of course, if you do decide to make changes to your site's checkout process, be sure to test those changes far in advance. It would be a shame to streamline the checkout process only to find something breaks during peak shopping season. So, start early!

4. BRAINSTORM IDEAS FOR A HOLIDAY MARKETING CAMPAIGN

It's never too early to start thinking of unique ways to spread the word about your products and brand. There are many creative things you can do and it all starts with forming a promotional calendar and well-thought-out ideation list.

You'll first want to decided which channels you want to hit. If your marketing team is small, you may decide to focus on only a few things and do them extremely well. Or if your marketing team is bigger, a full-blown campaign is feasible.

Here's some marketing collateral to consider focusing on:

- Social media
- Blogs
- Video
- Graphics
- Giveaways
- Email
- Landing pages
- Print ads
- Digital ads (Facebook, Google, etc.)

In need of inspiration? To get started, check out these [retailers who nailed it with their holiday campaigns](#).



But even if your marketing campaign is a huge success, it's all for nothing if your site can't scale. Which leads to our next piece of advice for an ecommerce holiday season that's merry and bright.



5. ENSURE YOUR SITE CAN HANDLE LARGE AMOUNTS OF TRAFFIC

Can your site stay speedy amid a barrage of visitors? Scalability — the ability of your site to handle an increased number of site visitors—can make or break your ecommerce store’s shopping season.

High traffic puts stress on your servers — if tons of people are visiting your site and it crashes, think of all the sales you’ll lose, the support tickets you’ll receive, and the upset customers your business will have to deal with.

To ensure your site can scale, it’s important to run tests to figure out how many users your site can handle at once (try [Loadstorm.com](https://loadstorm.com) for free). If you find your site can’t scale as high needed, you may need to change your infrastructure and hosting.

For more information on scalability, see this ebook: [Scaling WordPress For High Traffic](#).

6. HARDEN YOUR SITE'S SECURITY

It never hurts to take additional precautions towards your site's security. Here are some actions you should always take to reduce the risk of security vulnerabilities so your store is safe from Grinches this holiday season, and trusted by visitors.

SSL certificates: Be sure to monitor the expiration date of your SSL certificate. This communicates to the customer your site is secure and instills trust with those who might be skeptical about entering their credential information.

Display security badges at checkout: Adding a security badge to your store's checkout page can instill trust in a shopper who might be fearful of data theft and the security of your site. The checkout page should clearly communicate the security measures you are taking to ensure a secure checkout process.

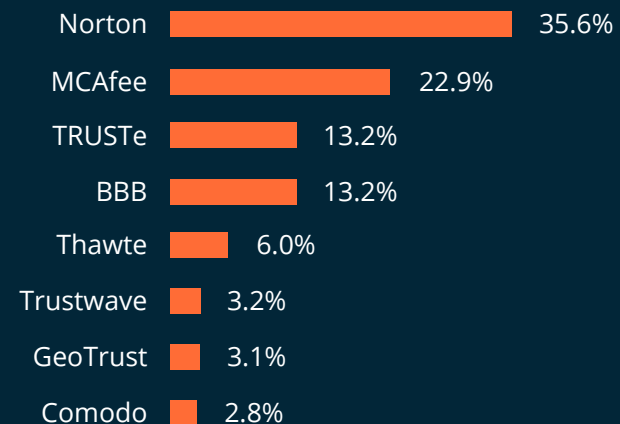
Change password(s): You should change your password periodically and enforce it to be strong. Brute force attacks by hackers can guess an easy password, store it, and not use it for some time. Even if you're not aware your password was stolen, changing it periodically will ensure a thief doesn't have the opportunity to use it.

Proactively update WordPress core, plugins and themes: Update outdated components of your WordPress site as soon as a new version is released. Within your dashboard, you'll see a notification whenever your site is due for an update.

For additional advice on hardening the security of your site, read the white paper, [10 Best Practices For A Secure And Successful WordPress Deployment](#).

The perceived security of your ecommerce site matters. Including a trust and/or SSL seal at checkout can help make a user feel more secure.

Source: [Baymard](#)



7. REFINE PRODUCT PAGES

The way you display products on your site can make or break a sale. Going the extra mile to get your product content optimized will make a huge impact on the user experience and sales this season. Here are a few questions to ask yourself about your products and how to market them:

Are products shareable? Consider adding social share buttons to products, especially a Pinterest share button. [Pinterest drives online commerce](#) as a multichannel platform and can help your products reach a larger audience.

Does product photography accurately show what the product is? Can you zoom in and see the product at all angles? Products should be clear and sharp, as well have an identical or themed backdrop across the board. A common cause of returns is if the product looks different (e.g. color) than what's displayed in the photo, so keep this in mind as you're shooting and editing pics.

Are product descriptions keyword rich? A lack of text and description is a missed opportunity for SEO. An elaborate, well-written description can entice a purchase, as well as draw traffic to your store.

Should I make a video? It could help to show the product in action. Some reports say that after seeing a product video, visitors are [144 percent](#) more likely to make a purchase than those who did not see the video.

Do products contain reviews? [Seventy percent](#) of buyers look for a review before purchasing a product. It might be time to implement a review system for products and start asking loyal customers to leave their reviews.



Photo Source: [Crate & Barrel](#)

A product shown at different angles and in different settings makes it look more enticing and will vastly up its chances at being sold.

8. FOCUS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

It would be a shame to lose sales just because customer service is lacking. This season you might consider staffing up or hiring an intern to help with customer support.

This means you should have community managers or customer support representatives checking social media daily (yes, even on weekends) to ensure no questions go unattended.

“You might even scale up your support, offering 24/7 availability.”

This is especially important during a Black Friday / Cyber Monday sale when maxing sales is crucial to your bottom line.

9. CREATE CONTENT THAT SELLS

Tying in with tip No. 4, there are many ways to create compelling content. But most importantly, the content you create should focus on your products, incentivizing a purchase.

Consider a “what to buy guide to streamline customers’ shopping intentions towards a certain type of product.”

You can segment products by gender, age, etc. (e.g. “what to buy for her”) to help shoppers get gift ideas (it’s all about personalization). You can also create blogs and customized emails containing your products. For instance, if you own a candle company, you could feature “the holiday scent collection” on the homepage, write a blog about the top 10 holiday candles you sell, and then include a link to that content in a customer email.

Creativity is endless in this corridor of holiday marketing, and should be one of your main focuses to spread the word this holiday season.

10. ENCOURAGE IMPULSE PURCHASES

An impulse purchase is one that occurs without pre-planning. According to studies, impulse purchases account for *40 percent* of all money spent on ecommerce sites. Here are some top ways to encourage a spur of the moment sale.

Allow for in-store pickup: One way to encourage an impulse purchase is to offer “in-store pickup” where the customer can purchase online without shipping fees, and pick the product up in store. This gives you the opportunity to capture a customer’s email, and in-return you have a better chance of creating a returning customer to your online store.

Offer a deal-of-the-day: To stimulate extra spending during the holidays, try offering a discount on a product for a duration of 24 to 36 hours a few times a week.

Make sure your site is aesthetically pleasing: Site design plays the most crucial role in impulse shopping. Setting the mood is extremely important during the online shopping experience. You want shoppers to stay on your site, not be in a hurry to leave it. If a shopper is on your site longer, there’s more of a chance they’ll make an spontaneous decision to buy something else.

Distinguish products by categories: Studies show *87 percent* of the dollars spent on impulse purchases were a result of navigation via category links. In addition, using category links makes users three times more likely to continue browsing for more items once they’ve found the initial product they were looking for.



CONCLUSION

For ecommerce stores, the holiday season can be a make or break. These steps can help you dramatically improve your bottom line, as well as enrich the user experience, landing you on the nice list, not the naughty one.

For additional ways to improve the quality of your ecommerce site, see our ecommerce enterprise WordPress solutions:
www.wpengine.com/enterprise/ecommerce



