



## **[Webinar] transcript: How to optimize your eCommerce site for Cyber Month and beyond**

### **LEXI MOSTEK:**

Okay everyone, we are gonna go ahead and get started. Welcome to our webinar today on how to optimize your site for cyber month and beyond. My name is Lexi, and if you're new to our webinars, I am one of our event managers here at WP Engine and I help lead our virtual events, if you're not new to our webinars, you've probably seen my face a time or 2. We are gonna change it up this month, and I am gonna co-host this webinar with my colleague, Josh Dailey, because we are gonna take more of a marketing stance. We wanna talk wordpress and we wanna talk e-commerce. But more than that, we wanna just focus on what trends we're seeing in e-commerce and the online industries.

So with that being said our agenda for today - we're gonna go over introductions and then talk just briefly about current trends we are seeing in e-commerce, and then we will move on to the real stars of the show. Which is this great panel to talk about E-commerce trends what we're seeing, what we're doing what we don't think works what we think works, what industries differ? And then we will open it up for question and answer to all of you and then we will kind of end out the webinar few housekeeping things. This webinar is being recorded. So we will share that recording with you all post event as well as the Transcript. So if we name drop anything or any references, you guys wanna go back to you can view that in the Transcript on our WP Engine Page, and we will share the recording out likely later today. Introductions. Again, my name is Lexi. I'm one of our lead event managers here at WP. Engine, and I would love to introduce. My fellow host Josh Josh, do you want to introduce yourself?

### **JOSH DAILEY:**

Yes, definitely, Lexi, I'm so stoked to be here with you today for sure. This is, gonna be a good time in the chat that we had with our panelists ahead just got me really amped up about the knowledge they're gonna be able to drop. So I am Josh Dailey, senior product marketing manager for the ecommerce solution, and I spend a lot of time in the woocommerce space. And just as we're coming up on this last 2 months of the year, i know how important this season is for everyone's business, whether it's a setup that propels us into our roadmaps, or like for the future, or for just closing out the year strong. So

Yeah, let's just go into it. Cause cause I think that's the critical part here. But before we do that we just wanted to take a second to have a shameless plug about the e-commerce solution. And this is not gonna be a big sales pitch time for us. But did wanna call out our e-commerce solution the way that we're helping to make Woo run better for you. If you get onto our e-commerce plans. We have special solutions for performance optimization through evercash and livecart. And then probably the most exciting, newest release that we have is we did expand our stripe connect integration with additional payment solutions in Europe in particular.



and then also buy now pay later, which we've seen. You know, some stores see a 20 to 30% increase when they have a buy. Now, pay later option. So that's exciting. But enough about our product cause. I think it's we've got a lot of good stuff to get into here.

So we'll just be able to dive into that now.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

totally. Yeah. So I'm gonna kick us off and just talk about cyber month, cyber week, black Friday in general. Just some stats. I've been talking with marketers on our team, and I've been talking with this panel? But what does this month mean, Why are we here and kinda things like that? So it is cyber season. We wanna do this November first. But we're here November second and last holiday season the e-commerce market generated roughly 211 billion dollars in revenue. So we know people are gonna spend money. We know there's a lot to spend money on, and shoppers on average will probably spend roughly \$325 on goods and things online over the Thanksgiving period. So that period between kind of Thanksgiving and cyber Monday.

And over 80% of people believe that they will partake in online cyber Monday and Black Friday events. And then just an interesting Stat, I wanted to pull as we talk with this panel. But 70% of cyber week sales now are coming from your smartphones. So we're gonna talk about digital strategy and how you're kind of like marketing your site. But mobile phones are here, and obviously here to stay.

Josh and I were talking about this, and I recently went to the apple store. I needed a new computer, my old computer had died. And I was talking to the Apple Store employees. And they were like, Yeah, people aren't really buying laptops for personal use anymore. A lot of people are using ipads and mobile phones. So this is gonna be huge. When you talk about your digital strategy. But we know the current state of the economy, Inflation is high, Prices are high on goods, and also just like groceries and things. So we expect to see this year that people are shopping for a good deal. There is a lot of price tracking going on. How can I get the best deal, and retailers are competing to have the best deal.

I'm gonna just introduce some trends here, and we are going to then open it up to the panel to talk about some of these trends. But what are we seeing in 2023? I am buying things online. Josh is buying things online. And these are just a couple of the trends that are really really big this year. And I would expect them to continue. One of those being social commerce you used to see like a lot of digital and like comic ads and not real people. We are really seeing the resurgence of people in ad campaigns coming back. In addition to that kind of like down on the bottom. But influencer marketing, influencers and personas are really marketing products, and they are selling products. The second kind of trend and something that I think is interesting is voice search. So, being able to have your platform or your e-commerce store adapt to voice search. People are using talk to text on their phone. But they're also using products like Alexa and Google home hopefully, mine doesn't go off right now to order things. The next. This is a trend that we are really just starting the surface on but artificial intelligence. You are going to continue to see this in wordpress in every industry, in our lives. That is artificial intelligence. So



chat bots on your site, content marketing and using AI to produce SEO results. Things like that. I think it is here and here to stay. Next omni-Channel marketing. This is really related to the mobile phone aspect. But how are you converting your marketing strategy across multiple channels, whether that's desktop mobile ipad, but also like different platforms. Paid media things like that. That's kind of on the Channel marketing and all of the places that you're marketing your e-commerce store are going to be very important

Influencers. I touched on there's a lot to say about influencers. They're making a lot more money than I am. But they are selling a lot of things online, and people are buying that. I also think influencers have an interesting perspective, because obviously, we know they are on social media apps and platforms. But you can now buy things directly in Instagram directly on Facebook without even going to an actual site. So I think that's inherently related to the omni-channel marketing. And then, lastly, SEO intent, we have several people on this call that add, know a lot more about SEO search engine optimization than I do. And how is that changing? And how is that change really in the last 12 months? And what do we expect is going to come from that?

So you've heard like 5 min of me speaking. That's enough of me. I am going to introduce this amazing panel and instead of just introducing yourself, which I would love for you to do. Please tell us who you are, where you work and what you do there. But then, can you also tell us, like a fun story or a fun fact, or something that's happened to you in the e-commerce space that people might learn from. I'm gonna start with James, do you want to introduce yourself.

**JAMES BAVINGTON:**

Yeah, of course. Thank you. Lexi and Josh, so my name's James. I'm based in the UK. I've been agency side for 18 years. And I'm the CTO at StrategiQ. We're a fully integrated full service marketing agency. My background, personally, I used to be a developer and I work on a lot of strategy, and in particular a lot of e-commerce clients.

Our agency works with a whole variety of eCommerce brands. A lot of them are B to C, and also direct to consumer. And just to give a little bit of a flavour. We've got international brands as well as brands here in the UK brands operating in Europe, including an extreme weather, cycling and running brand hardware flooring, luxury furniture, luxury experiences right the way through to a brand new within London that sell streets art from Banksy so real great mix of things, and hoping that I can share some perspective from over here in Europe, because a lot of parallels, I think, with what we're seeing with with global brands.

Fun fact. I put it in there chat a moment ago, but I actually live in Rugby, which is where the the game of Rugby was supposedly founded and invented. I'm trying to remember what my fun funny story was from ecommerce, but I'll pass over to the next panelist while I remember. It's a really good one, but it's escaped from me.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**



we'll circle it back there. Perfect. I'm gonna move it on just alphabetical. But Max, introduce yourself?

**MAX DESMARAIS:**

Sure. Thanks so much for having me. Max DesMarais, director of strategy at Vital Design. Vital Design is a full service digital marketing agency. We basically build websites and brands and transition those websites and brands into digital marketing retainers where we're meant to drive traffic, drive leads, drive revenue. I've got a background in technical SEO, then transition to paid advertising online. And now sit in kind of a holistic digital marketing strategy, position and vital as well as a help, you know, manage our SEO department, our paid advertising department and our overall digital strategy department.

We've got clients all over the Us. All the world of all different sizes. We do a lot of B to B marketing, and we do some B to C marketing and a lot of my B to C e-commerce. Clients are also, interestingly enough, both B to C and B to B. So I have some expertise in that area as well. And then I've run an outdoors website on the side by myself.

Some fun facts with e-commerce, I don't know about fun, but one thing that I've noticed recently with a lot of our clients is the the extreme importance to add a personal touch to the selling process, especially when people can buy alternative products or the same products in store. So we've had a lot of success with our clients enabling customers to speak to sales representatives, or have consultations or chat with someone, live to help with e-commerce transactions. And this is especially the case with some of the higher value, e-commerce transactions as opposed to lower lower value products.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

Amazing. Yeah, you've definitely got interesting background and and industries you work in, so excited to dig in. And then last, but not least, Jennifer would love to hear who you are and what you do.

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**

Thank you, Lexi, and thanks everyone. I'm so excited to be part of such a great panel. So I'm Jennifer Shaheen. I'm founder and president of Technology Therapy group. We're a full Service digital marketing agency. But what makes us a little different is that we teach everything that we do. So from website development and shopify trainings all the way to Meta Ads training, which we just did 2 weeks ago and so we also work a lot with direct to consumer brands and stores. So we do work very much with not only local businesses, but driving traffic online and local. And to build on that with the story. I don't know if enough people know this, but mostly 80% of people like to buy within 20 miles of their home.

Which I think is really an important thing to keep in mind, because when we're marketing in the US, People still prefer to shop in store. But one of the biggest things that they do digitally is to discover if you have products and stop to shop in store. So I do want us to be thinking about. We think about e-commerce. There is shopping online, but there is also browsing to buy online



or in person. And I think that's an important thing we always have to think about when we're talking about Ecommerce.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

Totally. Thank you. Josh, I think I'm gonna hand to you

**JOSH DAILEY:**

yeah fantastic stuff, and maybe I'll kick this one to Jennifer to start with. We'll go back in the reverse order. But you know what are some of the lessons that you've learned over the years. With all of the experience you've had in different seasons and cycles of this stuff, and maybe even with the economy, the way that it is right now, things that people can be looking out for this holiday season.

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**

So first off, I love the things that Lexi brought up the very beginning. We really do want to remind people that our phones are really a big part of how we shop, and we don't just stop on our phones. We literally. I don't know if any of you have seen this, but you know we have this happen all the time. Right? People are in a store and they're on their phone cause they're comparing prices. So within the luxury market we have this all the time. I don't know if I should put prices up?

Put them up there, you know. If not, you're not going to have the sales, and I think we've seen a lot of change over to that. Another thing about Mobile I always explain to people is to make sure that you're understanding that people are doing this in their homes, too, cause most of the time we are shopping more and more on the phone. And so some of the user experience. Things we really should be paying attention to are going to be keeping in mind like the things that get in what they call that safe thumb zone right? And I jokingly posted this on LinkedIn. I'm like, remember, not everybody has big hands.

Which is a fun thing, and you know a couple of things that I think are really important. And I know we're gonna talk and I'm sure my colleagues here can chime in. But a sense of scale is something that I find so many people undervalue when they're putting up product photos, I mean, yes, the car. We all know how big a car is. But if you sell anything from a T-shirt to jewelry, anything a backpack, you know, we have no sense of scale, as humans don't put it next to a quarter. Put it on a person, and I love that. That's the one place AI is not going to be good for me is, I want real people with the product in use and really seeing it. And I think that has been something I've been on a soapbox about for years. So I think that's really important that we'd be talking about that, because when so many brands or businesses start their website, they get pictures from other people. And so this is like one of those things that I feel like is a big reason why businesses fail to sell well, online is sense of scale

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

totally. And I also think, we will see AI emerge in that market, and I think Target is doing it right now, and some other places like visualize this in your home, and you can literally picture a



cabinet. I don't think it's quite there, but I think we will get it to go there. I'd love to punt the same question. Over to you, James. Obviously being in the UK shopping season can be the same and different. But anything you're seeing kind of on your side of things that you've learned from, or that you're looking forward to this year.

**JAMES BAVINGTON:**

Yeah, I mean, firstly, I would completely agree with Jennifer's point on images. You know, we've we've just started doing some consulting for a furniture brand, and they lead all of their infantry imagery with this sort of white studio background shot. It gives you no ability to see the scale, and how those items sit in the home. And unbelievably they have this incredible photography that goes with it. That shows all of their products in a fully dressed room. You have to go onto the product page and then activate a hover effect to see that. And that's the image I want to see the original user interface was clearly designed by design. It wanted it to look great.

More form over function. So you know, it's incredibly important. Yes, we've also got brands that are starting to use augmented reality. With the flooring brand that I mentioned, Factory directflooring.co.uk. They have the ability to visualize your selected floor in their room. And that's had a huge uptake. And we're noticing, because of how we're tracking data, the use of images for use of augmented reality, that it is directly correlating with increases in conversion rate.

But some of the things that I can also share to add to that. You know, I completely agree with Josh's point early, particularly with the economy, the ability to buy now - pay later. We've recently this year rolled out. Klarna is pretty big here in the UK. But also Paypal's pay with 3. And again, everything we're doing. We have hypotheses with our clients that we implement. And then we look at the data to actually demonstrate the impact and performance.

So, you know, I think, whereby every 100 people that are using paypal to check out on the flooring website. We noticed that a huge 40% were actually then opting to do pay with 3, from the day that we launched that which was incredible observation. So there's a lot of other brands that aren't using this that we're talking to at the moment to ensure that those flexibility with payment options are there, and you know, and I don't think luxury brands need to. You know, sort of scoff at the prospect of that, either. I've seen quite a lot of big luxury brands also offering those payment plans, because, yes the ideal client that they want to maybe associate themselves with. Maybe they don't need to be able to pay later, but for everybody to have access to it. That's a big thing that I've seen 6, you know, working really well this year.

And then I mean, I've got a whole bunch of these, but I'll just sort of throw in one more lexi to your point, which is. Customers are genuinely looking for a good offer, a good promotion, particularly this time of year. Personally, I've got my eye on emails, you know. So you know, buying makeup for my wife for Christmas. I'm waiting for that Bobby Brown 25% offer, cause. I know it's gonna hit at some point, and I'll wait for it. You know, I've got no shame in waiting to get that. You know that sort of 10 pounds off the order, and I think I think customers are being trained to look for those offers. Look for those promotions. They know when brands are, gonna be there, and we've worked with a few brands at the minute that they are slipping into that



cadence of having regular promotion cycles that are very, very effective. So I kinda naturally drawn and focused around those 3 areas.

But I hadn't really thought about until Jennif just mentioned it, but that visual merchandising through imagery is incredibly important, and something that I think we take for granted that we really push with our clients.

I'll pause, cause I could just keep going otherwise, but might be some of those I can weave in later

**JOSH DAILEY:**

right on. Well, thanks for that, that's some great facts there insights and I appreciate. Let's talk a little bit about SEO. I think, Max, you have a lot of experience in that space. How are you approaching SEO in maybe the last 12 to 18 months, with the iteration on different things like, maybe the emerging technologies of AI and different things like that. But how are you approaching SEO right now?

**MAX DESMARAIS:**

Yeah, it's a great question. And to be honest, like. we're approaching SEO in the same foundational way as we were 12 to 18 months ago, meaning, we're still conducting tons of keyword research. We're still breaking down topics by the intent of how people are searching online, and we're still creating high quality content that's optimized to rank for those terms. And things like that.

The foundational side of SEO has kind of stayed the same. What has really changed in the last 12 to 18 months is like finding a way to position our clients as the foremost expert in their particular industry or topic. And finding new ways to try and do that.

Some examples of this are very simple examples. But like updating their biographies leveraging authors in different spaces that have expertise in this area. Whether you can, you know, interview a PhD in this particular topic, or or someone else of an expert in this particular industry. Updating company pages and about pages and team pages and things like this. They just establish more trust and position. This client is an expert in this particular, you know individual space, and then a lot more off site stuff than we did previously in the last couple of years. In the last, I guess, decade even making sure that we can get our clients in our clients, company or clients, personas or team on podcasts, on other websites, writing content on the websites. Basically doing everything that we can to position them as an expert or authority in their particular topics.

Because what we're noticing is, you know, when someone has an authority in a particular space they're much more likely to rank in for the keywords around those topics. And when we're kind of not showing off those trust building and an expertise building and authority building things across the web. We are finding it much harder to rank in search engines and drive traffic or



potentially with the the latest algorithm updates that have rolled out in the past few months, seen pretty substantial declines across a whole bunch of industries that you know aren't taking this off site authority based approach.

**JOSH DAILEY:**

That's that is a interesting thing, and 1 one follow up question to that would be, have you seen as somebody that's like tracking, you know, SEO rankings and that kind of stuff of volatility taking place that's different than before or is it the same? How's the algorithm looking?

**MAX DESMARAIS:**

Yeah. Well, I guess if you talk to any SEO. They're gonna tell you. The last 2 years have been the craziest years in SEO history. It's been extremely volatile, I think. Probably the biggest call out, and difference in some of the volatility that we've seen literally in the last 60 days about mid September.

Google kind of rolled out site wide changes that affected an entire website as opposed to individual pages. So your whole site can kind of be deemed as including tons of helpful content, or your whole site can be deemed as maybe more spammy or less helpful, and we see rankings and traffic drops across all your pages on your site as a as opposed to individual pages, or increases across all the pages as opposed to individual pages. And this is kind of a difference compared to a lot of the way Google has been working in the last, you know, couple of years where a lot of the changes caused individual pages to move up or down, up or down. And this, like, more recently, is about your overall site authority in a particular space. And that's something that's been really fascinating. And it's gonna be a interesting problem to solve for many organizations moving forward

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

totally. And I just wanna add, we've done a couple of webinars on SEO. We know this is a topic, and I think even Max, we were talking about this earlier, but we have seen such huge changes in SEO and Google search in the last year. If that's any indication of where things are headed. And that can really impact a business or a small business that's selling a good I want to kind of punt that question over to you, James.

Different industries and ranking, Obviously, we know it's very important to get your item, your e-commerce site to rank at the top. Do you have any strategies or recommendations that you give to clients in that SEO space?

**JAMES BAVINGTON:**

Yeah, I mean, there's a whole variety of things, and I don't want to use the SEO response, It depends, to try and be really sort of specific.

What we've been doing over the last particularly this year is just sort of trying to de optimize and refocus. We have a lot of brands that come to us with very over optimized websites, you know. You've only here in the UK. Got to do a Google search for mattresses, and you'll see that all the





people competing on page one have a wikipedia style page of content below the the product grid because they're all thinking. Well, everyone else has got it. So, therefore I need to have that amount of content. What we've seen great results on is really just simplifying and boiling down those pages to match the intent of the user. So getting products really kind of high above the fold, even on Mobile. You don't need that big block of text at the top to tell you what a pair of you know football trainers are. You know what they are. So if there's a little bit of detail at the bottom about how we've got waterproof ones, and you know, unisex ones, whatever great that can that can be there.

But we've seen an overallance on stuffing SEO, and what we've had great results with our clients is just really stripping it back, particularly for brands optimizing for their own brand terms. It's been really clear with, you know, distinct keywords in page titles and headings on the page. They're still very kind of key areas for us.

You know, but ultimately not not trying too hard the structure of any of any commerce site around the the plps the product landing pages. The category pages. Getting that infrastructure correct is kind of a key area. Because, you know my experience, the product pages the pl Pdps tend to take care of themselves if they're well optimized, because they're very distinct for what they are

For all of our clients. Their growth to take away from those really long tail product searches, or their brand search is that sweet spot in the middle of generic, tends to hinge on the quality of the SEO keyword research and how that kind of infrastructure of categories is put together. So that's where we typically tend to look with new clients and tend to refine our existing clients to get the best results.

MAX DESMARAIS:

I just wanted to piggy back on that, if possible.

Yeah, one of the things, user experience is extremely important on these pages, and understanding how people are leveraging your product pages, your category pages, or whatever pages on your site. One of the things that we're doing extremely heavily. That's really that's been impactful for our clients and us individually is just setting up tools to understand how people are behaving on the site. So we we pretty much are always setting up session recordings via tools like [hot jar](#) or crazyx, so that we can find we can literally watch people use the website, figure out the things that they're not finding where they're having like user experience issues on the site, things like this

And then other tips that we always do is, if you have chat like, read the Chat Transcripts. If you have search on your website, read all the search analytics from that. If you have phone calls coming in, listen to those recordings. And you start to learn really quickly the common questions that your website visitors have the common issues they're having with your website, the types of empathy points you may be missing upon your website, and maybe even issues that even in your own testing, you can't find on your website. So like using recording tools and things like



that can be really impactful to improve your user experience and find things that maybe you wouldn't have thought of otherwise. And that's been, you know, big for us in the last 6 months longer than that, but.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

cool. I'm muted, Jennifer. I'll let you. I make a the rookie mistake that I probably told you all not to make

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**

So I think what you're also referring to Max is we often refer to those as friction points, right? The things that keep someone from pushing that add to cart button. So I love that you brought up those up. And I know I even asked Lexi to make sure we talked about data. So since you've already started it, I'm gonna build on that which right now is actually the best time to put some of that these tools on your site because you're never gonna be able to fix everything between now and the end of the year.

But if this is the busiest time of year. You could actually take a review in January and figure out how to make it better for that next season. So do everything you can, but also keep in mind that you don't wanna do everything at once. I think one of the biggest things that we see happen is that people try and fix everything. And you really do need to do this very systematically, very much like we all learned in science class is, you know, do one thing and see if it impacts it and keep track of it, it becomes that very much like that hypothesis testing components. And the other point I wanted to make about SEO, which was really about.

I really want people to remember the power of their own story. Your story is so important, and it's usually what makes you different and why people buy is the why behind your business. So I know James mentioned a mattress, but like I fell in love with purple because they were fun and playful, and we discovered them on social and make sure that, personality persona of your own brand is translated back into your website because the brands that are most successful who've grown in social. They have that same personality on their website, and they keep the personality and the tonality in their copy. And your product detail pages are such an opportunity. Yes, we want the, you know, the high click items at the top

Right, but don't hesitate to put a little bit more story telling and usage, and things like that below, because people who are interested will dig in. And then, per, you know Max's point, if you have these screen recordings, you'll be able to see how much that impacts people reviewing it. But then also, how many of those people have actually added to cart?

**JOSH DAILEY:**

That's fantastic stuff, Jennifer. I want to stay with you for a second on this conversation because you talked a little bit about data there. But how do you use this time, as let's say, a building block for rolling into next year, and not the end, all of like. If I don't succeed right now, the business is over, you know, and using these moments as a way to think strategically into the future cause I



know if they haven't. If we haven't made decisions yet, it's a little late in the game right now. So, looking past November, December.

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**

Absolutely so. I think one of the things that I find to be so important right now is it's we're in AI world - even with advertisers. So we have to remember that second is, anyone who has Google analytics knows that you have GA4, which, if you didn't put it on your site a year ago. You're now lacking year over year data. So you now have to start fresh with new data. And I think that's important. Because, remember, Google's universal analytics did not track things the same way that Google analytics 4, GA4 as you hear it coined often.

So there's also this multi attribution, which means, basically, if you set up your analytics properly, not only can you use tools that were mentioned by Max, but in there you should be able to see the multi-touch points that people have come in. So right now that foundation is so important, and what I would recommend right now is to make sure that the structure is strong through the holiday and make sure everything is properly connected to your partners, your Google ad account really grows off of that conversion tracking from analytics. Don't forget about your pixels with Meta, your pixels with pinterest, so that you can have that data so that you can then learn and apply those learnings forward.

And then, looking back, you'll be able to start, you know, doing some more predictive analysis, which is what you know. There's another version of AI coming as generative right? But then you can start to use all this data in the New Year for predictions.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

Totally, and I kind of want to take that as like, if we bring this back to Wordpress like you should have your site set up, you should be ready. You should have done your load. Test things like that. James, I'm gonna hand this question to you, but as someone that manages as an agency that manages tons of sites, wordpress, and not what is your like backup plan? What are you doing for this next month to gear up for lots of visits. That someone can maybe prep for. Now, if they haven't already and we know, like sites going down is a major issue. We talked about this in our kickoff call, but I noticed before a site was down for roughly 40 h. That's big, that's impacting sales like, what? How are you prepping your team to be able to handle potential emergencies and things like that?

And sorry I'm gonna ask you to unmute?

**JAMES BAVINGTON:**

How about that? Yes. I've got a little speaker, and usually I can unmute off that, but didn't work. But here we go. As long as it's working now.

It's a really important point. And you know, we've got some clients on the WP Engine eCommerce offering the ability to scale up with that platform is essential. It sounds like that was



a pre planned plug. It's not. It's a really key point. And you know, of course, we have clients that are using. You know, bigcommerce magento, other platforms that have resilience, that ability to have the ability to scale up. If there is something that's, you know, unexpected in demand.

We have monitoring setup. So our development team have downtime monitoring and we get pinged in a slack group. If a website returns you know critical error, and that prompts our team to go and investigate it. But you know I can't emphasize enough as well, particularly from an SEO perspective, how bad downtime can be. There was a competitor to one of our clients whose website went offline.

Our theory is that they had a security issue, and they were down for 7 days. So they've lost 7 days of trading. They've managed to get up. A logo and a little statement. But again, I don't want to name names, but if you know, when we're looking at this brand in [Sistrix](#), which is an SEO visibility tool. They haven't fully recovered. 3 weeks after bringing their website back online. They've lost about half of their SEO visibility because they weren't returning the right. What's called a 503 temporarily unavailable response code.

So if you know, if you do have downtime, if you're rolling out an upgrade, it's important to have a you know, a sort of quick response and what's called a 503 status to tell Google, we'll be right back. That's part of the contingency planning, but uptime monitoring really important, and having a sort of scalable service, so that if there's a huge boom in traffic. Let's just say, you know, you're on television. Someone's promoting your brand and also some traffic spikes or something. You've got to be with a hosting partner that's prepared to help you scale through that process.

**MAX DESMARAIS:**

And I would just add to that other. Aside from just downtime, it's also important to be periodically checking your speed, because sometimes these servers can get loaded, cause you have a ton of extra people on your site, or there's way more people on the e-commerce portion of your site, or anything like that, can slow down your load times pretty substantially. So, making sure that you're running tests periodically, you might need to scale up, even if things aren't going down just because things are going substantially slower.

And I think we've all heard, you know, about how much conversion loss you can have by having a slow site, especially if you, if you're having people on mobile devices that are, you know, not connected to Wi-fi, and they're searching on the road, whether it's a 3g or 4g type connection. You, basically, there's no way that they're gonna convert if your sites loading too slow, so always be prepared to look at both downtime as well as site speed issues that may occur. If you're not scaling.

**JAMES BAVINGTON:**

Yes, I would agree.

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**



That's okay. I think both of you might wanna even chime in a little bit more on this, too, because one thing that I find is we get clients who will often ask us, well, you know, what do I do? If I sell out a product do I take it down, or do I leave it up? And you know, I know as a consumer I'm really frustrated when I run down, someone's scan and everything is sold out like you'll, I'll leave. I won't even bother. So you know, if you're going to remove things. I think part of your planning also needs to remember that as you take things down, you have to point or redirect items, so that if it is in an ad that you forgot was on cause, we're human, right? We're not as always organized as we'd like to be. I'd like to say we're really like meticulous, but we're going to forget something, that you don't have it going to that oops page and it's a silly little thing. But again, you spend so much money, and you're competing at this time of year. Those small little things are that big difference between, you know, converting and losing them for good. Hence, you know, some of the other comments completely agree.

**JAMES BAVINGTON:**

It's it's a really, it's a really key point that you raise, Jennifer, because you know, for me. If a product's out of stock and it may be coming back. It's out of stock, and we're expecting stock back soon. You don't want to lose the visibility for that page. If it's out of stock and it's not coming back.

You can say as such, but you can also show similar recommended products, or sure you can close it down, and 301 redirect it to another suitable product. This is a very real thing. It happens a lot happens with very big brands. I saw an instance of this just last week in the UK. So you know, in the UK. We have, I think just one astronaut that's been to the space station, Tim Peak. He's kind of a big deal over his just wrote new book, cool space, and they were offering signed editions of this book.

And that's just a personal story, this one I shared a copy of the link where you can buy this book to my to my partner, and then I could tell she was trying to work out where to buy from. But the the big, huge UK book retailer had simply sold out. So they just deleted the page. They didn't redirect it to the non signed version, or even the space category. They just completely killed it.

And then, if you think of all the links point to that page, then redundant from the Ci perspective. But the user experience. It's just it's it sounds crazy when you know you know how important it is. But so many commerce brands don't have an out of stock strategy for user experience. For SEO. It's a really, it's a really key area. It often gets overlooked at this busy time of the year.

**Max DESMARAIS:**

Absolutely, I would go a step further, and I would say you should never take down a product. I've seen literally dozens of examples where all you need to do is keep that product page up, explain. It's out of stock, and you could do some fancy things like show the most closely related next product, or even better yet, ask people to provide their email address so that we can tell you when it gets back in stock. And suddenly you can get a whole bunch of leads in that direction there, some of the, even, even products that are sunset forever. We've seen some that ha! Especially if they're products that are well known and have brand awareness, like people are



searching for them online. If you remove that page, you're never gonna find it again. And it represents an opportunity that someone else is gonna take advantage of.

If people are searching for a product that you used to offer or that used to exist, they, you likely have an alternative, and you should take advantage of the people that are searching that way. So I would always say, keep a product page up, no matter what add it an email Address, for when it goes back in stock and if it's never going back in stock, makes you highlight the most important products. These have been areas and wins for our clients.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

Yeah, I saw a recent stat that Amazon's product recommendations are actually generating 35% of their revenue. Not necessarily sold out items - but things like that. So that's a little crazy. I want to. Bring it back to kind of our strategy in cyber month. I know all of you kind of work across different industries, and your strategy might be a little bit different and discounting matters.

But can we talk about acquisition of new and repeat clients? So I'm a potential prospect. How are you, then, taking the next step with these customers? To make sure they come back to your site. And Jennifer, I'll start with you?

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**

Thank you. So A couple of things, I think, are really important that we understand is every brand at this point is doing something from an acquisition with a percentage off even high end luxury brands. They're not doing it because they're trying to cheapen their brand. They're doing it because they want your data. Once you opt in to these sign up forms. Remember, you've basically said, you are okay with being tracked. And so I do think that's one of the things that you have to keep in mind. And I'm okay with that as a consumer 1 If I want the discount but 2, then that's where that's nurturing. Programs come in where you can then start to do setting up of browse abandonment emails or abandoned card emails. But also taking it not in just the email side of it.

But do remember to make sure you're leveraging your pixels and doing very much more dynamic advertising. So you know, you're getting the product seen in that person's Instagram feed in their pinterest feed of the exact one that they were interested in. And you know, add in those little additional mentions about, you know, they're going to be out of stock or things along those lines so that you can you know have Fomo? Right? We all say fear of missing out, but at this time of year. It is more realistic because in stock things go out of quickly. So I do think it's important that you be thinking about that from the acquisition in capture, and then also the leaving of the site. And, you know, continuing to nurture them not only through emails but other digital platforms.

**MAX DESMARAIS:**

Yeah, I would. I would add, from an acquisition standpoint, that especially from e-commerce space people often get stuck on e-commerce transactions only as the way to acquire, and there's such an opportunity that's still missed by tons of brands, even though there's thousands



of brands doing this. But just go a step higher in the buyers journey one step or 2 steps higher produce content that helps them make a decision on the best product. Give them a buyers guide in the form of an ebook, instead of going for that by now term that you're bidding on in Google, or that you're trying to rank for. Go a little higher up in the funnel and try to rank for something organically, or run even potentially much lower cost per click ads on keywords that are higher up in the buyers. Funnel offer an ebook or a buyers guide or something along those lines to help to make decisions. And suddenly you're capturing email addresses from the ideal target audience that have buyer intent, even though they aren't necessarily purchasing right now, they're in that decision-making phase and considering options.

And this is particularly helpful for any high value product. Think I don't know. Like mountain bikes as an example, something where you're talking multiple thousands of dollars people. This buyers journey is substantially longer than you know, a water bottle that you might buy online. And these types of situations really important to go up in the in the buyers journey, because you can differentiate and beat your competition in ways that you know they're forgetting about

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

totally we, we got kind of a question that I'm gonna take into a couple of pieces. And, James, I'm gonna direct this to you as you have a little bit of international experience. But shipping costs. Obviously, we know shipping costs a lot right now. And shipping costs can deter customers. So like you, I wanna buy a shirt online and it's gonna be \$12 to ship it like that, that impacts my decision. Do you make any recommendations to brands or retailers on shipping. And ha! How are you mitigating the current landscape of that?

**JAMES BAVINGTON:**

Yeah, I mean, it's a great great question. Shipping impacts everybody. I mean. Firstly, 'd say that we've had some great success over the last 12 months with 2 clients actually bringing a digital product to the forefront of e-commerce digital experience codes.

They don't require shipping. You've got instant fulfillment. And we've seen record sales on Christmas morning. Believe it or not with people writing down redemption codes in Christmas cards as they head out to go and see family.

But yeah, I mean, shipping is a very real thing. We I think I've mentioned work with a hardwood flooring supply and these palettes of flooring packs weigh a lot. And we were doing some analysis within their checkout funnel just over the last year, because they've massively uplifted their shipping costs, and that has had a consequence on conversion, because customers are shopping around, and they're a little bit, you know, sort of stumped and put off when they see a you know, \$30 \$40 equivalent shipping charge that's brought in when it's not really been made very clear early on.

So we're advising to be upfront with shipping. So we have little you know us piece by the navigation. We have it on the product pages to make sure that it's clear, because, you know, we have clients that we talk to about making it into the cost of the product overall, and therefore



allowing free shipping. But then it can really bring up the cost of the product that makes it look you know, uncompetitive. So you know, advice I would give is, if you've got sort of quite high shipping charges like in the example in the question around, you know, shipping perishable goods like cheese.

How do you provide a premium service? So can you maybe select the day, select the time of day? Are there some elements you can do to demonstrate? What is the delivery, you know. Does it come in a nice basket? Is it a nice presentation? For a hardwood flooring company? We show photographs of the lorry, actually, or truck arriving at the house, and how it gets unloaded, and what the whole process is. So it makes a bit of a thing about the value of what it is that you're paying for with the shipping, the service that you're getting the, you know the the sort of truck to door you know, and they'll unload it, aspect so adding value if you have to charge for it and demonstrating you know what it is, and making it very clear that, you know you're not passing. You know someone's got to pick the shipping right? Whether it's bound and hidden or it's there and clear. That's something that we've tried to make clear and articulate with some of our clients that have. They've got these very separated shipping costs

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

Totally, and I think it really varies by industry, too. Some shipping is astronomical, and some industries really set the standard of like free shipping. That's there. I think, Jennifer, you mentioned you have a couple of restaurants in your portfolio. But do you have anything to add on this?

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**

Well, one thing I was, gonna say specifically, about shipping is, I mean also at this time of year becomes a great promotional element, too. So you will see that it is a way to differentiate like, if you're going to instead of doing a substantial discount on your product, you can also offer that like a 2 day free shipping. It's one of those nudge items to get people through.

Did you wanna read me specifically the question apologies, Lexi, cause I was sort of half reading so I could listen.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

No, it's okay. I think the question just centered around e-commerce within the food industry and perishable food shipping? Is there anything you keep in mind? As you approach those topics.

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**

So we actually did a webinar last year for all these food based businesses here in Rhode Island. And interesting one of the things that we make sure that if you're running a perishable food business right now, you should be putting out really clearly on your website all the drop dates.

So everyone knows when everything has and can, and Christmas whether you celebrate it, if that's your major holiday, but it's on a Monday. So you have no, you know, very rare day before I know there will be some of that here in the States. I'm not sure. If in the Uk they they ship on





they'll drop on a Sunday. But Sunday is going to be much more expensive. So it's, I think, for perishable foods. We have to be really clear and upfront about what those drop deadlines are.

You also want to be really clear about you know, if they have to be home or not to receive things. Again, different parts of the country. Be very clear and upfront. Put it right in the product purchase like as they're buying. But also don't forget on the checkout page to remember Remind people of things that relate to food. Because I think they always have to remember a little. Things like this comes with dry ice or certain things along those lines so that the consumer expectation is really really clear. And then as strange as I would also require opting in for SMS for food based products, not just email, because when you're shipping, you do want them to be mindful of like exactly when they're gonna get certain things, especially food.

**MAX DESMARAIS:**

I think you both nailed it. I think, James, you talked about transparency, and transparency in the cost is extremely important. I also think it's really impactful. Just be transparent about why, it's costing your organization so much to Ship it.

Have a shipping page that explains that they can read when they're going. Oh, my, why is this block of cheese, this much shipping? And you can explain it thoroughly. I think that's key. And if you do that just transparently, it. It goes a long ways. We have a lot of clients where, you know, like James, we have to ship on pallets, and they're asking, why is this 100 plus dollar shipping cost here. And you know, we have a page there that explains it. And that helps a lot of a lot of people understand exactly why it's happening.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

totally. I also think sustainability less in the Us. But it's becoming more important, very much so in the UK. And in the EU also matters with shipping. And when you're shipping large items, or even like perishable items like those boxes and the dried ice and all the stuff that comes with it is a lot. So I think companies are are putting a sustainable note on that a lot of times. Saying like this is all recyclable or things like that.

So, Josh, I think I'll pass to you, and you can hit us home with our final question.

**JOSH DAILEY:**

Yeah, I mean, this has been a fantastic and fascinating to hear some of these insights, especially around even things like the food-based industry. I think that's been awesome to hear. your thought process there. And to your point, just it's it's easy to like. Try to almost trick people into getting to that last step, you know. You see these like black hat marketing tricks, and people try to get them to the last step, and then it just turns them off by the end. They're not going to come back to you after that, so you might get an extra click. But you might lose somebody for the long haul with those kinds of things so over communicate. I love that.

I guess, for my last question it would just be, is there something that you're doing different in 2023 than you did in 2022? Is there something that's shifted from your learnings? Maybe in



years past that you're trying to approach differently this year, and I think we can go around the Horn with this one. But we only have you know a minute or 2 each for this one.

And let's start with Max this time.

**MAX DESMARAIS:**

Yeah, sure. So, obviously, everyone's talking about AI and leveraging, leveraging some of the new technologies. Is really what I see big in 2024. So, finding a way to leverage AI in particular, to customize the experience, particularly with the ecommerce. So whether it's actually customizing the content on the page to improve the user experience or creating a chat bot that can answer questions that's much more human for the user. That addresses all their questions and empathy points before they buy a product like finding ways to incorporate AI technologies, to better customize websites and better enhance the user experience to help differentiate.

That's about as succinct as I can get it. Knowing a few minutes left

**JOSH DAILEY:**

awesome. Jennifer, you want to take that one next?

**JENNIFER SHAHEEN:**

Sure. So one thing that I'm trying to get so many clients to understand is, it's really time to be very clear and segmented so that, you're not sending everyone everything in the marketing materials. Make sure you're really stepping back and starting to group your customers so that they don't feel overwhelmed. And then there's not opting out.

So it's a simple one, but it's a very important one. That you really, it's just it's time.

**JOSH DAILEY:**

James.

**JAMES BAVINGTON:**

Yeah, I mean, Jennifer's just taken mine. So I'm Gonna go for my second one. Literally. I, looking at my notes. It says, you know, hyper segment don't show people things that they don't need to see if you've already got the Lego Darth vader us don't show it to me. Show me, Bob, a fit or something, my one. We're seeing this a lot in the UK. It started in fashion quite heavily. And this is sort of trying to get around the always having a promotion.

Lots of brands are starting or are continuing to do this, new customer get 10% off, get 5 off. Give us your email address, and you can have that off. Now, obviously, you can. Most people these days have got more than one email address. It's very easy to get 10% off every time we've been trying this this year with 3 brands that we work with.

And results have been phenomenal better than we expected, and, as I say, you know, I've seen it a lot in the fashion industry, but I'm starting to see it move into various other industries where



there's this always on new customer offer new customer promotion, and we've had tremendous success out of that, because in the UK there's there's the advertising standards authority, and they've been hitting a few brands by always having a set of always having reduced prices when really they're not. And the advantage of having this new customer offer is that technically, it's only available for new customers to use an email address to get a code.

So that's been a nice way of testing discounting, testing promotions as always on, that's been really really quite effective for a few of our clients. So I'd urge people to have a look at that, because it's you know, it's worked really well.

**LEXI MOSTEK:**

amazing. Well, with just a minute left. I'm gonna close. Thank you. Max James Jennifer. This was a great panel. I think they are all on LinkedIn. If anyone wants to connect with them. And thank you for your time. Josh. It was really fun to host this with you and welcome to cybermonth, happy shopping, and I wish everyone that has an e-commerce store, whether it's your clients or it's your business. Best of luck this season, and we can't wait to hear how it went.

Thank you. Thanks everyone. It was great thanks. Everyone.