

How Digital Marketers Can Prepare for the Holidays:

10 E-Commerce Experts Weigh In

If you're a marketer in e-commerce or retail, you have a busy summer ahead of you, and it's not just the warm weather campaigns you already have underway. It's time to look ahead toward the winter months because the most lucrative time of the year – the Q4 holiday season – is only a few months away.

With online shopping for the 2018 holiday season projected to increase by 15.3% this year (Statista), the stakes are high for brands to capture a piece of these sales. According to BigCommerce, 89% of brands expect a Y-o-Y sales increase during the 2018 holidays, too, driving many of them to plan earlier than ever for the holiday rush.

And, for the first time ever in 2017, online holiday sales surpassed brick-and-mortar sales. That's right – more people are doing their holiday shopping from the comfort of their own homes than going in to physical stores. This means retailers must plan a strategy that focuses on customer experience both in-store and online.

We reached out to 10 digital marketing experts to bring you exclusive and insightful tips, tricks, and hacks to help you absolutely smash this upcoming holiday season and drive more sales than ever.

Enjoy, and happy holidays!



Lindsay Tjepkema

Global Head of Content, Emarsys

“Marketers haven’t started to explore how #AI can help them produce at scale like never before... so start testing AI now, before the #holiday rush”

says @MikeKaput



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What is something new this year (or in recent years) that many marketers have yet to include in their holiday marketing strategy?

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“All you want for Christmas is artificial intelligence. Trust me. Jokes aside, too many marketers haven’t started to explore how marketing AI tools can help them produce and perform at scale like never before. And that means marketers need to start testing out AI now—well before the big holiday rush. Some AI tools take time to

implement. Others work out of the box. If I’m a bigger commercial brand looking to get ahead this holiday season, I’d start looking at tools that can help you personalize email campaigns and improve open rates using AI for all those holiday ecommerce emails.”



Mike Kaput

Director, **Marketing Artificial Intelligence Institute**

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Mike Kaput runs marketingaiinstitute.com where he publishes content to help marketers understand and apply AI. He is passionate about AI’s potential to transform marketing.



What will differentiate the brands that “win” this holiday season?

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“The holidays are traditionally prime time for “batch-and-blast.” Many retailers will actually DOUBLE their email marketing send volume during November and December hoping that the additional “noise” they create will make a difference. The only way to truly cut through the clutter and maximize the relationship with the customer is

to double down on personalization. Retailers need to leverage data to understand the customer’s value to the brand, provide lifecycle-specific messaging, and maximize each interaction by implementing artificial intelligence strategies that deliver true 1:1 interactions across multiple channels.”




Colin Clark

Strategic Consultant, **Emarsys**

✉ email | **in** LinkedIn

“This #holiday season,
the brands that will
win are those that truly
know their #customer.
Spend time & money
researching your
audience, then create
targeted #content – like
video – based on what
they’re looking for”

says @wmharris101

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“Paid social competition is a lot more fierce. A couple years ago, you could get away with posting a gritty video to Facebook Ads, promote it to your ideal audience, and rake in revenue.

It's not that easy anymore.

The brands that will win this year are the ones that truly know their customer. That will translate into better

content, tailored to that audience. You might even need to spend some real money on a savvy video team to put it together. But regardless of the production quality, you need to have a more detailed plan of how you talk to your ideal customer. That means spending more time and money on actually researching them and what they are looking for in a product, ad, service, etc.”




William Harris

E-commerce Expert, Founder & CEO, **Elumynt**

 @wmharris101 |  LinkedIn

William Harris is a Top 35 E-commerce Expert and a Top 75 SaaS Influencer. He's helping savvy businesses grow through intelligent marketing strategy at the growth agency, Elumynt.

“Tis the #holiday season
for #personalization.
The right #marketing
technology lends
insights which you can
use for custom product
recommendations”
says @BarryFeldman

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“Tis the season to capitalize on personalization. If you have the right technology in place, you have access to insights about your customers and prospects. Respond with personalized recommendations for gifts. Ramp-up

your use of buyer behavior intelligence and you'll ramp up holiday sales by reducing the stress of making gift decisions.”



Barry Feldman

Online Marketing Super Freak, Owner, **Feldman Creative**

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Barry Feldman is a globally-renowned marketing consultant and strategist, and owner of Feldman Creative. He is a former agency creative director and has 25+ years of copywriting experience.

“Most #holiday #website traffic is first-time buyers – a proper post-holiday, engagement framework is something a lot of marketers neglect”

says @eisenhut_dan



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What is the one thing you think e-commerce and retail marketers neglect or fail to consider when planning for the holiday season?

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“The holiday season is different due to the large volumes of traffic that are hitting sites across the globe.

It's true that most e-commerce businesses drive a large portion of their revenue during the holidays, but most don't think about keeping these new customers

continually engaged with their brand the rest of the year (as the majority of the holiday traffic is first-time buyers). Having a proper post-holiday engagement framework to create more active buyers is something a lot of marketers tend to neglect.”



Daniel Eisenhut

VP, Services & Support, **Emarsys**

 @eisenhut_dan |  LinkedIn

“We all want to get
into the #holiday
mood – and emotion
beats promotion
every time”
says @BrennerMichael



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What is the one thing you think e-commerce and retail marketers neglect or fail to consider when planning for the holiday season?

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“The one thing retailers neglect over the holidays is the holiday mood – we all want to get into the holiday spirit. And it’s fun to buy and receive gifts. Help your customers

to get in the mood. Don’t always go straight for the sale. And remember that emotion beats promotion every time.”



Michael Brenner

Keynote Speaker, Author and CEO, **Marketing Insider Group**

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Michael Brenner is a globally-renowned consultant, speaker, and author. He is founder and CEO of Marketing Insider Group and former VP of Content Marketing at SAP.

What is the one thing you think e-commerce and retail marketers neglect or fail to consider when planning for the holiday season?

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Let's be honest. The holiday season is a time for celebration and confrontation. Every family has that relative who you only see on Thanksgiving or Christmas and rightfully so. As a marketer, the holiday season presents a unique opportunity to engage with your consumer family, but don't be that relative, i.e. annoying (you send too many emails) and a time-waster (you send

irrelevant emails), who everyone loathes and tries to avoid. Interact with your customers now in an authentic and meaningful way and continue strengthening and enriching your relationship throughout the holiday season. After all, the quality not quantity of time spent with your family is what matters the most.”



Cameron Halcomb

Customer Experience Consultant, **Emarsys**

✉ email | 🐦 @camhassler | in LinkedIn

“Use historic #data to push #holiday sales, & match your audience to each promotion”

says @crestodina



CLICK TO TWEET

What is the one thing you think e-commerce and retail marketers neglect or fail to consider when planning for the holiday season?

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“A lot of e-commerce companies don't think about using their historic data when pushing holiday sales. The key is to look at every promotion and ask, 'who would be most interested in this?' Who do you have on your list that buys

in that category? Who shops early? Who buys at the last minute? Match your audience to the promotion for better conversions.”



Andy Crestodina

Strategic Director, **Orbit Media Studios**

 @crestodina |  LinkedIn

Andy Crestodina is a cofounder and the strategic director of Orbit Media Studios, an award-winning web design company. He is a speaker and author, covering topics including SEO, social media, analytics, and content strategy.

What is the one thing you think e-commerce and retail marketers neglect or fail to consider when planning for the holiday season?

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"I think the e-commerce industry as a whole doesn't A/B test or customize their shopping experience enough for the holiday season. The truth is, shopping behaviors are completely different during this crucial time of the year. Simple things like making special collections around themes like "gifts for mom" are some measures to put in place that can win big time.

Another thing is customized landing pages. The rules for how each traffic source interacts are thrown out of the window during the holidays. It's very common to have your best source become your worst during the holidays.

A lot of people tell me that their Facebook ads have had much less impact during that time of the year, but that organic traffic suddenly becomes a conversion beast. It's important to look at those changes, and make sure that you optimize the landing pages for the sources of traffic that suddenly convert less, and minimize your losses.

As always, preconceptions don't make money in e-commerce, data does. And the data changes a lot during the holidays, so keep a very close eye on those analytics dashboards, and test things often."



Max Doucet-Benoit

Founder, **HeyMaxDB** - Content Strategy

in [LinkedIn](#)

Max is an entrepreneur at heart. After 10 years of ad agency and tech startup experience, Max co-founded an online dog treat brand, and later, his own agency HeyMaxDB in an effort to teach other entrepreneurs how to not make the dumb mistakes he made on his way to success.



What will differentiate the brands that “win” this holiday season?

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“To win this holiday season, have a plan (start planning early) and look at marketing channels your competition may be ignoring. Fill these gaps and make sure your

strategy is truly omnichannel. Finally, create a fantastic end-to-end brand experience across all your channels.”



Brenda Stoltz

CEO at **Ariad Partners, LLC**

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Brenda Stoltz is CEO/Founder at Ariad Partners and has a 20-year track record of consulting companies in strategy, sales, marketing and product innovation to unleash their true potential.