



POWER UP YOUR **BLACK FRIDAY**

10 Omnichannel Strategies to Beat
Competitors and Make More \$\$\$

BLACK FRIDAY
BOOT CAMP

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Pre-Black Friday	5
1. Test, test, and TEST your discounting before the holidays	6
2. Fine-tune your automations early for smooth conversions later	9
3. Use progressive profiling to understand holiday shoppers' needs	12
4. Remind customers to treat themselves with holiday wishlists	16
During Black Friday	19
5. Create value-adding experiences to gather customer data	20
6. Target limited-time holiday customers with exceptional experiences	23
7. Go omnichannel to meet customers wherever they are	26
Post-Black Friday	30
8. Grow your contact list by creating a program for referrals	31
9. Reward your holiday shoppers to drive lasting customer loyalty	34
10. Make a post-holiday plan for retention and new customer engagement	37
Bonus Tip: Ensure You Have the Right Customer Engagement Platform for the Holidays... and Beyond	40

Introduction

Black Friday has a long and storied history as the year's most hotly anticipated shopping event. What began as a single day of post-Thanksgiving store-level sales promotions has elevated to a massive weekend-long omnichannel experience. Customers view Black Friday as a chance to engage with new brands and save big bucks on desired products or services (particularly for holiday shopping), while businesses view the event as a critical revenue- and growth-driving opportunity.

Both are right. Yet marketers are in a unique position where Black Friday is about serving the interest of both their customers and their business.

As a marketer, you're most likely already planning for this year's Black Friday, asking yourself *"How do I deliver omnichannel shopping experiences that will truly satisfy and delight new and existing customers? How do I differentiate our brand experience from competitors?"*

You're probably also asking yourself, *"How can I attract, convert, and retain more customers this Black Friday? How can I drive more growth and revenue for the business, and prove marketing's ability to make a positive business impact?"*

The answer lies in strategy.

In order to make Black Friday an exceptional event for customers and your business alike, you need to go beyond just planning what campaigns you'll run. You need to have a comprehensive strategy for all three stages of Black Friday — before, during, and after — to maximize your ability to engage more customers and deliver satisfying experiences that drive revenue.

Read on to discover the 10 omnichannel strategies guaranteed to help you beat your competitors and make more money this Black Friday.

"We actually **start Black Friday days before Black Friday**, and we have done that for the last couple of years, and it's been a huge success. If I could give any advice, then it's not to start Black Friday on Black Friday. Start it days before. We have a week[-long] Black Friday, and [...] **it's the best season of the year.**"



Marianne Colding Oxholm

Head of CRM & Retail Marketing, Hobbii

PRE -
BLACK FRIDAY



1. Test, Test, and TEST Your Discounting in Advance

We all know that discounting is a powerful way to increase brand awareness, incentivize customers to make a purchase, and drive upsell opportunities. But if you overuse coupons and discount-based promotions, you risk eroding margins — and you might end up discouraging customers from transacting when things are not on sale.

To ensure that you don't discount too much (or too often), have a strategy for testing your discounts.

Know The Right Discount for the Right Segment BEFORE Black Friday

The sooner you can start testing your discounting amongst segments, the better. Don't wait until Black Friday.

Instead, use the months leading up to the end-of-year shopping season as an opportunity to test and fine-tune your promotion strategy. Find out which customer segments are price sensitive, and which ones aren't. That way, there's no guesswork in knowing which segments respond to which discounts, and you won't lose out on revenue by unnecessarily over-discounting for your customer that would've responded to a much smaller incentive.

Almost all brands offer sales and promotions at year-end, but very few will take the time to optimize their programs. Take the time to test your discounts across all your channels prior to Black Friday, and you'll be able to protect your margins in a way your more discount-happy competitors can't.

Discounting Best Practices

By getting ahead of the curve and planning your discounting strategy earlier in the year, you are setting your business up for success during the holiday season. Here are five discounting best practices to consider as you prepare for the Black Friday shopping season:

1. Ask yourself, “Does this customer really need a discount?”

When thinking about discount programs, it's important to recognize that you may have a segment of customers that don't have as much sensitivity to price. No need to waste the resources selling to someone that will gladly pay full price.

2. Use discounts to drive desired behaviors

Inspiring a purchase is often the primary goal of discounting, but there are other key performance indicators you should consider to drive customer engagement. Lean into discounts as a means to cross-sell products, reduce abandoned carts, encourage subscription sign-ups, and more.

3. Don't discount the golden egg

Most companies have their bread-and-butter products that are likely to sell regardless of coupons or flashy sale prices. We recommend using this as an opportunity to focus on complementary or alternative products that have yet to achieve the same level of awareness or conversion rates. Offer steeper discounts on these supplemental products to increase average order value and profitability.

4. Consider seasonality

Depending on your product set, what sold well in the summer for back-to-school season may not perform well in November and December when your customers are more focused on stocking stuffers and holiday gifting. Frame your promotions in a way that makes sense for the time of year, while optimizing things like discount presentation and timeliness.

5. Promotion duration is everything

One of the worst patterns your business can fall victim to is training your customers to wait for a discount before making a purchase. If promotions are seen as redundant or never-ending, you are drastically decreasing the customer's urgency to buy your product. That said, your optimal promotion length may differ depending on the campaign or product feature. For example, it's worth testing 24-hour flash sales for popular products during slower times, then experimenting with longer promotions during seasonal events.

2. Fine-Tune Your Automations Now for Smooth Conversions Later

Personalized omnichannel marketing is all about the right message to the right customer at the right time. Automations are an integral piece of the omnichannel customer engagement puzzle — without it, you can't deliver 1:1 messages in real time at scale.

Why Marketing Automation Is a Must-Have

If you're looking to drive customer growth and revenue during the holiday, you'll be leaning on automations to do the heavy lifting. Using automation in the sales cycle enables you to deliver highly-personalized customer experiences at scale while removing the mundane burden of deploying communications manually. It also reduces the margin for human error and frees your marketing team to focus on other critical tasks.

Keep the following automation tips in mind:

- ▶ Much like with discounting, you'll want to test and optimize your marketing automations before Black Friday begins — not during.
- ▶ Testing your essential always-on year-round automation tactics like "Price Drop" and "Back-In-Stack" early in the year, you gain a better understanding of which automations are most effective and useful for your marketing team.



- ▶ During Black Friday, customer attention spans are shorter and the overall sales cycle is faster. Account for this ahead of time to make your automation processes as efficient and engaging as possible.

Leverage Automation for Better Holiday Customer Engagement

Depending on your customer engagement solution, you'll have a host of automations at your fingertips. Here are some ways you can use automation to enhance your customers' shopping experience and make your team more efficient:

▶ Abandoned cart campaigns

You can use a combination of channels to re-engage your customers who failed to complete a purchase, including email, SMS, and social media advertising. For instance, set up an automation so that if a customer abandons their cart while shopping on your app or website, a push notification will be sent to their mobile device, encouraging them to return.

► **Simplify your checkout process**

To prevent cart abandonment, make it as easy as possible for customers to put product(s) into their cart and complete the checkout process. Requiring customers to fill in excessive information, or not enabling autofill, may cause friction, which decreases the chances they'll finish their purchase.

► **Use SMS to unite in-store and online**

Leading up to the holidays, experiment with entering leads into creative SMS campaigns. Invite customers into these campaigns via in-store QR codes, web push notifications, or in-app alerts. SMS messaging can be a powerful way to build awareness with your audience, reveal your most engaged customer segments, and increase purchase consideration.

3. Use Progressive Profiling to Understand Holiday Shoppers' Needs


As with any successful 1:1 marketing strategy, the key to engaging your customers is to uncover their motivations. This is especially true with holiday shoppers. However, the difference between holiday shoppers and your year-round customers is that you have a much smaller window of time in which to get to know them.

Progressive profiling is a great way to get to know your holiday shoppers. By building up their customer profiles, you can acquire the data necessary to send them more relevant and personalized content, and thus increase the likelihood of conversion.

Quick Progressive Profiling Tips

Progressive profiling is a method of collecting relevant information from your customers gradually through successive interactions, rather than asking for too much data all at once. Do it the right way, and you'll end up with more first-party data to improve your personalized marketing efforts.

Here are a few key tips to keep in mind when building your progressive profiling strategy:

- 
- ▶ **Start broad.** One of the first and most important strategies to progressive profiling is to start broad and gradually get more specific with your questions. For example, a cafe barista will ask “do you like coffee?” before asking “do you prefer it black or sweet?”
 - ▶ **Guide customers toward conversion.** A lot of holiday shoppers need help finding that perfect gift. Ask questions that will give you the insights you need to become a more effective guide, thus reducing their effort and streamlining their experience. This way, you can guide your shoppers to conversion.
 - ▶ **Lay the groundwork for lasting loyalty.** New holiday shoppers are more likely to become return shoppers for subsequent holiday seasons if you treat them to convenient and highly tailored experiences. Be mindful that your questions will get you the data you need for loyalty-building customer engagement.

Progressive Profiling Questions to Ask Holiday Shoppers

Time to get granular with *how* you craft your progressive profile questions. Here are a few ideas for pre-purchase progressive profiling questions to inspire your fact-finding mission.

Who are you shopping for this holiday season?

Answer type: *Check boxes*

The fewer options you can provide, the better, but include each essential option. Options might include kids, parents, partner, in-laws, pets, friends, colleagues, or everyone. Allow the shopper to select more than one option.

Your action:

The shopper's selection can trigger gift guides differentiated by gift recipient type.

What's your budget for this gift?

Answer type: *Range selection*

Let the shopper indicate an appropriate price range. Be sure to include an "I'm not sure" or "It depends" option in case people truly aren't ready to define their budget.

Your action:

Segment the customer into an appropriate spending category. Follow-up emails should include cost-appropriate product recommendations, and any discount should be tailored. (For instance, your high-budget spenders may not need those really juicy offers, so discount appropriately and spare your margins.)

Would you like to receive product updates?

Answer type: *Yes/No*

Give them the chance to opt in and learn more about your product.

Your action:

If they say “no,” store that data point and reach out again next holiday season. If they say “yes,” add them to your contact list and nurture them with a slow drip of quality content. As part of your nurture stream, include an invitation to your loyalty program if you have one.

4. Remind Customers to Treat Themselves with Holiday Wishlists

Although the majority of holiday shoppers are making purchases for friends, families, or significant others, there is one other person they need to consider for their holiday purchases — themselves.

In the course of shopping for everyone on their list, customers are sure to come across items they'd like for themselves. Whether they choose to treat themselves during the holiday or save ideas for later, adding holiday wishlists is a great way to capture your customers' wants in real time.

Benefit of the Holiday Wishlist

Wishlists can drive engagement during a season where many more people are browsing and shopping than usual. By inviting customers to save favorite items to a wishlist, you make it easier for them to purchase at a later date. These lists can be shared by the customer with people who will be shopping for them, which can bring new customers to your site.

While not everyone is ready to make a purchasing decision when they first encounter an item, especially during a potentially cash-strapped time like the holidays, letting them save items they want to a wishlist makes it far more likely that they'll return to

complete the purchase or let their loved ones know about the list. Make the process of adding to a wishlist easy and frictionless, and you're sure to increase purchase frequency and drive customer lifetime value.

Holiday Wishlists in Action

Wishlists are easy to set up, and they have the potential to open up an additional avenue of communication with customers and prospects. Here are a few ways to get the most out of holiday wishlists.

▶ **Connecting the online and offline experiences**

Extend a customer's journey from the store level to your digital channels. Have in-store associates encourage customers to visit your website or app to create (or add to) a wishlist. Upon successful registration, you can send customers a confirmation email containing the items that were recently added to their list, and ask them to opt-in for future product updates.

▶ **Wishlist “back in stock” or “price drop”**

Create an alert that informs customers when a wishlist item they added before or during the holiday season has dropped in price, or is back in stock. This helps drive conversions and brings a potentially one-and-done holiday shopper back to your website or stores.

► **Non-invasive abandoned cart messaging**

Customers don't like to be pushed into making a purchase if they aren't ready. But instead of outright asking them to complete the purchase, another (gentler) way to salvage a sale is to give the customer the option to add that item to a wishlist instead. That way, they can always come back to the item at a later date (and it gives you an opportunity to follow up).

“When Price Drop first came in, I was so excited about it, and it was basically a no-brainer for us... [What] I love about it is the fact that you don't have to offer [the customer] a discount or anything for it. It's **automatically giving them a notification that the thing they love is now on sale.** [...] We've had some really great results across not only the conversion for price drop, but also the engagement rates as well.”



Lara Donnelly

Customer Lifecycle Manager, City Beach

DURING

BLACK FRIDAY



5. Create Value-Adding Experiences to Gather Customer Data

As swarms of new and existing customers hit your stores, website, and mobile app on Black Friday, your first thought might be: *here comes the revenue!* No doubt, shoppers will be looking to spend. But collecting their money isn't the only thing you should be thinking about. What's equally important, or arguably more important in terms of your long-term goals, is collecting their data.

Black Friday Means More Opt-Ins and Customer Data

Deals and discounts are undeniably a huge motivator for customers shopping during Black Friday. And because they're so eager to hear about the latest and greatest holiday sales promotions, they'll be much more likely to opt-in to your promotional channels, like email and SMS.

Black Friday is also a perfect time to gather more of the customer data that drives your 1:1 marketing efforts — not just throughout the holiday shopping season, but well beyond. You have your most loyal shoppers, your occasional shoppers, and brand new shoppers all exploring your brand, engaging with your products and services, and leaving behind a wealth of purchase and behavioral data.

You'll want to capture as much of that data as you can. But you'll also want the insights-rich self-disclosed data — zero-party data — that only the customer can provide you.

So how do you get this detailed customer data? You need to establish a value exchange.

Examples of Value-Adding Experiences

Customers are willing to share their data... but not for free.

And no, we aren't talking about a monetary exchange. We're talking about an **exchange of value**. Before a customer explicitly shares data about themselves and their preferences, they'll want to know: "What am I getting in return?"

When your brand offers value in the form of unique, highly relevant experiences that no other brand can provide, it is a tremendous benefit to the customer. In exchange, they will consent to giving you their data — data you couldn't have captured anyway or anywhere else.

Let's look at just a few examples of value-adding experiences you can provide customers during Black Friday in exchange for their data.

1. Exclusive Products/Services

Consider offering a unique product or one-time-only variation of a current product specifically during your Black Friday shopping event. In exchange, ask customers to take some form of action that yields data. This could be sharing their email, completing a quick survey, or signing up for your reward program.

2. Pre-Sale Access

In exchange for data or information, you can offer customers early access to all your Black Friday sales. Yes, technically this would happen before the big day. But you could easily use this approach for Cyber Monday, post-holiday sales events, or perhaps even early access for next year's Black Friday.

3. Priority Customer Service

Give select shoppers the experience of priority customer service, such as free shipping, free returns (or a longer return window), or gift wrapping. Going the extra mile to deliver exceptional customer service can be more rewarding than a simple discount, and for the customer, a worthwhile exchange for their data.

4. Special Events

Encourage customers to sign-up for exclusive in-store or digital events. Events elevate a customer's experience with your brand beyond transactional shopping, and do wonders for earning their loyalty. A worthy enough experience can prompt a customer to share valuable information or even join your membership program.

6. Target Limited-Time Holiday Customers with Exceptional Experiences

Well-seasoned holiday customers all know the drill — wait patiently for the holidays to come, and reap the benefits of hefty seasonal discounts and special product offers. These customers are programmed to get in at the most opportune times, when the savings are most ample, and they don't come around to your site or store much beyond that small window.

To make the most of your limited-time holiday customers while you have their attention, you'll need to have a strategy in place to specifically target and engage them.

Tips for Engaging Limited-Time Holiday Customers

First, think about how you'll target limited-time holiday customers. What are the strongest incentives to motivate a purchase? Here are a few ideas you can incorporate into your strategy:

- ▶ **Gift Cards:** Gift cards are an easy win — they make for great gifts (hence the name), and in the process, you can capture data about the holiday shopper who is buying them. With this insight, you can target those who've purchased gift cards with holiday-specific content.

- ▶ **Personalization:** Seasonal shoppers are not immune to the charm of 1:1 messaging. A personalized message that appeals to a holiday shopper's specific needs and interests will catch their attention, but one-size-fits-all content that you send to everyone on your list will fail to inspire any sort of action... other than clicking "delete."
- ▶ **Discounts:** Discounting is critical for capturing the attention of limited-time holiday shoppers. However, as discussed previously, you want to be judicious and discriminate with discounting. And to do that right, you'll need to lean into segmentation. Be conscious of which segments receive which discounts.

Intelligent Segmentation of Limited-Time Holiday Shoppers

To maximize engagement with limited-time holiday shoppers, skip the standard "one holiday email for all" approach. Consider which groups you'll want to segment, and then determine what kind of messages on which channel will make the greatest impact.

Remember, not every type of holiday shopper will respond to your content the same way. Leaning into intelligent segmentation will allow you to better personalize your holiday campaigns and boost conversions.



Last-Minute Shoppers

Necessity is the strongest motivator for last-minute shoppers. Use urgency in your content to prompt them to take action and complete a purchase, focusing on messages like “low in stock,” “while supplies last,” and “times almost up.” One note: these customers are less likely to be motivated by discounts, particularly if they are short on time.



Back-Again Shoppers

Maybe last year you won over a new customer with your company’s great product or service and irresistible marketing. For those customers who found a winning formula (turns out, Aunt Betty LOVES scarfs), make it even easier by offering a one-click buy-it-again option this year. Rely on data and segmentation to provide personalized offers that remove friction for the customer and you’ll increase the likelihood of a sale.



Loyal-for-the-Holidays Shoppers

Target and segment your loyal customers who are only active during the holidays, letting them know you appreciate their seasonal loyalty. Here’s where using a personalized “just for you” discount or a “close to next tier” campaign can be especially powerful.

7. Go Omnichannel to Meet Customers Wherever They Are

For decades, marketers talked about true omnichannel customer engagement as more of an aspiration rather than a reality. But tremendous advances in martech over the past several years have elevated omnichannel marketing from “wish we could do it” to “now we can do it” to “we MUST do it.”


Going omnichannel is essential not only for business results, but for improving the customer experience. Customers demand it, your brand must deliver. And if you think holiday shoppers are any less savvy or demanding when it comes to the best customer experiences possible, think again.

To really drive sales this holiday season, make sure you can meet customers wherever they're at with omnichannel experiences.

Deliver Seamless Omnichannel 1:1 Experiences for Seamless Holiday Shopping

No matter where they shop, customers see you as one complete brand. Whether they are in your stores, on your app, or your website, they want to be able to move seamlessly across your channels and have consistent, satisfying shopping experiences.

As you build your holiday campaigns, consider the following

- 
- ▶ First, are you personalizing your holiday campaigns and using segmentation to target your limited-time shoppers with tailored content? (Revisit the previous section for a refresh on this topic.)
 - ▶ Are your personalized holiday campaigns consistent in look and feel across all channels? If the look and feel of your offers or promotions differ wildly depending on the channel, you might confuse your customers.
 - ▶ Most importantly, are you personalizing for the customer (and NOT the channel)? Are your data sets and channels fully unified so that your customer receives the same personalized, continuous experience no matter which channel they choose?
 - ▶ Are your customers able to move seamlessly from online to offline experiences, and vice-versa? Think about how your channels can work together to form a complete journey. For example, you can use web personalization to present customers with a special offer or discount that must be redeemed in your store. This will bring digital-first or digital-only customers from your online channels to your physical locations, which ultimately helps drive foot traffic, increase average order value, and generate more leads.

Bear in mind how you're building a complete omnichannel 1:1 experience for a customer, rather than a single-channel experience.

Prime Time for Mobile

Let's face it, we're all attached to our mobile devices. Rightfully so, this technology is what allows us to connect with our favorite people, websites, and more. The majority of your customers carry their mobile devices with them at all times. This makes your mobile channels the most direct way to reach your customer.

Although email is currently — and perhaps always will be — the most critical channel in your omnichannel strategy, don't shy away from mobile as one of your primary channels for customer engagement. QR codes, push notifications, and in-app messages are a great way to send holiday communications, and are generally less expensive than a typical SMS campaign.

For example, do you have new customers shopping in your store? Great! Use QR codes to identify them and move them further along their journey with your brand. By incentivizing a customer to scan a QR code with their mobile device, you can get a great deal of data and insight about your customer that will help you drive further engagement, and begin the steps to turn them into a loyal, lifelong customer.

“If you're a physical retailer, the way to handle Black Friday is to **give insider access to your loyal customers** and have them not getting crushed in the queue and not waiting. And I think online is very similar. [...] Give them the chance to **get the products before they're at a store**, particularly when there are bundles and packages of incredible value that are also quite limited. [...] We've got 48 stores that have digital kiosks and 100 stores that have **mobile point of sale, and that allows us to give customers a much better experience.**”



Stuart Freer

Former CTO, Strandbags



POST-
BLACK FRIDAY



8. Grow Your Contacts by Creating a Program for Referrals

The big day was a success. You delivered countless satisfying experiences to customers. Now is the time to ride the wave of your success and lean into the goodwill you've built with customers. A well-designed referral program is a natural extension of the work you've done in the lead-up and implementation phases of your Black Friday plan.

Keep That Database Growing

Even after the Black Friday rush, new and existing contacts are shopping, and so are their friends and family. Referrals and social proof are among the best ways to spread the word about your brand and your offerings.

While many referrals happen organically, you can accelerate the process using a referral program that rewards customers for telling others about their wonderful experience with your brand. Of course, you have to give people a satisfying experience worth sharing, so make sure you're providing tailored, 1:1 experiences that truly delight customers.

Referral Content Examples

A “refer-a-friend” campaign can have a huge impact on customer growth. With the right customer engagement solution, they are simple to set up and automate, and the result can be increased brand loyalty and loads of new customers (without the heavier cost of traditional customer acquisition done through advertising).

Let’s look at a few ways to approach your “refer-a-friend” campaigns to maximize post-holiday growth and revenue:

▶ **Limited-Time Coupon**

Follow up a purchase by offering customers a limited-time coupon in exchange for referring a friend. This not only helps you increase new customers, but it creates an additional revenue opportunity by driving that existing customer to make another purchase using the coupon they just earned.

▶ **Reward Points**

You can eschew discounts or coupons in favor of reward points for customers who refer a friend. You’ll need a member or rewards program in place to take advantage of this strategy, but it’s a great way to incentivize referrals without hurting your margins.

▶ **Drive First Purchase**

Your existing customers aren't the only ones who will benefit from a "refer-a-friend" campaign. Greet your newly referred customers with a discount or other incentive that encourages them to make their first purchase and convert.

▶ **Leave a Review**

Not all referrals have to be direct. When a customer leaves a positive review of a product or experience, they are essentially referring others to your brand. A post-purchase "leave a review" SMS campaign is a great way to follow up with customers, and possibly attract new customers to your brand.

9. Reward Your Holiday Shoppers to Drive Lasting Customer Loyalty

Black Friday is over. You've gained a lot of new customers who have experienced your brand for the first time. You also reconnected with your limited-time holiday shoppers. But now it's time to keep the momentum going. Continue to engage customers in ways that are meaningful and actionable so you can secure long-term loyalty.

Build Relationships, Build Customer Loyalty

The holiday shopping season can be stressful. During this crucial shopping period, customers are particularly sensitive to the experiences they have with a brand. How you nurture the relationship during this time will impact the customer's relationship with you well into the future.

How do you cement and secure those positive relationships?
Relevant, contextual personalization and value-adding experiences.

Creating positive, meaningful experiences across multiple touchpoints will build loyalty well beyond the holiday season. The more you know about a customer, the more accurately you can tailor your communications to them.

Keep in mind, it costs 500% more to acquire a customer than it does to retain one who just made a purchase. You just had a huge boost in newly acquired customers during Black Friday, so be diligent in your efforts to retain them.

Let's look at a few ways you can reward customers and secure their loyalty.

Loyalty-Building Customer Experiences

When it comes to building lasting loyalty that increases CLTV, one-of-a-kind experiences are key. You can use things like exclusivity, special perks, events or reward opportunities to delight your customers and make them feel special. Here are some ideas to try:

- ▶ **Exclusive or early access**

Rewarding clients with exclusive items, or early access to new products and sales, makes them feel special. This will drive them to act on a purchase while access to a limited resource is exclusively available to them, but more importantly, ensures they feel valued by your brand.

► **Status upgrade**

We've seen brands large and small use this technique to great advantage. Whether you offer your top-tier customers access to expedited shipping or VIP seating at an event, status is often a strong motivator for driving a purchase and securing loyalty.

► **Event-based reward**

While birthday coupons are some of the most common event-based rewards, registration or purchase anniversaries are another way to connect with customers, reward them, and remind them of the ongoing relationship you are building.

10. Make a Post-Holiday Plan for Retention and New Customer Engagement

The holiday rush is over. Your relationship with new customers is just getting started. Now, you need a strategy to further engage them, or retain them, or lead them to their next purchase.

Navigating Returns

Let's face it: returns are inevitable. When handled poorly, or if you don't have a strategy to try and save the sale, you'll risk hurting your margins, not to mention wasted customer acquisition costs. Keep the following in mind as you prepare for post-holiday returns:

- ▶ **Frictionless exchanges can save a sale.** Why is the customer returning the product? For example, if you're a clothing retailer, does the customer just have the wrong size? Make exchanges frictionless (and free if possible) so you can salvage the return, provide them with another product (or two) and make your customer happy.
- ▶ **Prevention is the best strategy.** Perhaps a customer bought a product that wasn't really right for them (or the person they were buying for). Use segmentation and personalization to make sure you're targeting the right

customers with the most relevant recommendations, which will increase the likelihood they end up with the right product or service.

- ▶ **A positive return experience may lead to more sales.**

Returns can happen for a myriad of reasons, not all of them having to do with your brand. Thus, some returns are simply unavoidable. In these instances, easy and pleasant return experiences are much more likely to encourage customers to shop with you again in the future.

Focus on New Customer Engagement and Continue Their Journey with Your Brand

A first purchase, or even signing up as a new subscriber, is really just the first step in a new customer's journey with your brand. Map out what their continued journey will look like, and plan out your automations so you can continue building your relationship with them.

- ▶ What offers will they get and when?
- ▶ What will you do to keep them continuously engaged without overdoing it?
- ▶ What milestones with your brand will you use as a reason to follow-up with them?
- ▶ How can you continue the conversation without asking for a purchase?
- ▶ How can you instill a sense of community and foster loyalty?



Having a plan for extending your customer's journey beyond the initial purchase will help you reduce churn and save you from spending money to re-acquire them. However, you'll need to rely on the creativity of your marketing humans to come up with interesting ways to engage customers. If every time you reach out to a customer you're only asking them to buy something, you won't be able to nurture that relationship and earn their loyalty.

"So as we look toward Black Friday, it's really [about] getting out in front of it. **It's really all about the consumer.** [...] It's less about Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Cyber Week, and **it's more about a collective Q4 and holiday season**, and how do we just maximize that and **make sure that we're not leaving any money on the table**? So I think that's really our biggest takeaway... That's how we're coming up with our strategy."



Lindsay Ball

Director, Direct To Consumer (DTC), Instant Brands

Bonus Tip: Ensure You Have the Right Customer Engagement Solution for the Holidays... and Beyond

We've given you 10 tips to make sure you're getting the best results from your customer engagement strategy this holiday season. **But even the best customer engagement strategy in the world won't succeed if you don't have technology that supports it.**

If you have any doubts about your current tech stack, *now* is the time to evaluate... before the holiday madness is upon you. Only with the right customer engagement solution can you fully enable your marketing team and position your brand as a go-to resource for holiday shoppers.

Your Tech Stack Checklist for Holiday Readiness

You already have a tech stack in place, but is it meeting your needs? Can you connect with your customers in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them? Can you deliver messages on the most effective channels and at times when customers are likely to engage?

To double-check whether your customer engagement solution meets your needs this holiday season (and every other season), use this checklist:

Your Martech Shopping List



Integrated Tech Stack

Can't check this box? If you're losing time moving among platforms and lack a clear 360-degree view of your customers, you need a customer engagement solution that consolidates your tech stack. Or as we like to say, "Get your stack together!"

Personalization Engine

Can't check this box? A personalization engine is necessary to deliver tailored content that goes above and beyond using a first name in an email. Perhaps you've outgrown your current personalization engine. You might be overdue for an upgrade.

Marketing Automation

Can't check this box? Without automation, you'll have to do a lot more work to reach fewer customers than you could with automation doing the heavy lifting. You're likely also missing out on cross-channel marketing revenue.

Strategies & Tactics

Can't check this box? Your tech stack should have more than basic functionality. The best customer engagement solutions not only give you features, but also, the inspiration and tools to quickly and flexibly apply your ideas. Look for software that makes your marketing efficiency a top priority.

AI & Analytics

Can't check this box? Reactive marketing is often too little too late. AI should be like a hero on your marketing team who ensures your marketing is proactive. AI is always thinking one step ahead of the customer so that you can boost revenue and loyalty.

How Emarsys Gives More Power to Marketers

Emarsys ticks all the boxes on your omnichannel shopping list. We make it our mission to put more power in your hands with the tools you need for engagement.

- ✓ Our customer engagement solution brings your data together into one **single, integrated source**. You not only save time but gain insights about customer behaviors and preferences, which you can apply to better understand the customer lifecycle and deliver more personalized recommendations, offers, and other content.
- ✓ The Emarsys **personalization engine** helps you view and understand rich customer profiles, build and modify 1:1 campaigns on the fly, add product recommendations to messages, use predictive segmentation, and review the impact of your efforts.
- ✓ With our **marketing automation**, you can quickly and flexibly launch campaigns, modify them, apply them across multiple channels, and automatically trigger time-sensitive messages. Our customers use more channels than any other platform provider.
- ✓ We also believe you shouldn't have to reinvent the wheel, which is why we include **pre-built strategies and tactics**. When you want to create a basic campaign and then quickly customize it to meet your unique needs, we have you covered.





Our platform's **AI and analytics** capabilities give your engagement an extra edge. Our analytics provide accurate measurement of the market landscape, give guidance based on the results of previous efforts, and clearly lay out your impact on revenue. And with AI, you have the power to predict the future — by anticipating your customers' needs, AI enables messaging that is timely and personalized, increasing the likelihood of conversion.

Now's the time to think ahead for the holidays and ensure you have everything on your marketing wish list. That way when the season comes around, you'll be more than ready to engage holiday shoppers, boost loyalty, and drive seasonal revenue that makes the whole year brighter.

"We wanted a single marketing solution that could scale up with our business. **Emarsys helped us join the dots across an increasingly complex customer journey** with touchpoints from stores to website to customer service interactions. **Implementing AI was a perfect fit** for our retention and reactivation activities. AI was able to predict where people were churning or defecting at a 1:1 level, and this allowed us to **send campaigns based on customers' individual life cycle.**"



Mike Cheng

Head of Digital, City Beach



EMARSYS HAS ALL YOUR CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT NEEDS COVERED

Treat Yourself to a 3-Minute Demo



© 2022 Emarsys. All rights reserved. Emarsys, the Emarsys Marketing Platform, Emarsys Artificial Intelligence Marketing and others are trademarks of Emarsys. The Emarsys logo and other creative assets are owned and protected under copyright and/or trademark law.

[f www.facebook.com/emarsys](https://www.facebook.com/emarsys) [t www.twitter.com/emarsys](https://www.twitter.com/emarsys) [in www.linkedin.com/company/emarsys](https://www.linkedin.com/company/emarsys)