



Deck the Carts

AI-driven strategies to engage holiday shoppers





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Introduction: The new holiday reality



You have two choices for peak-season shopping events:



1. Wait for AI to crash the holiday party.

Be prepared to watch as millions of customers use AI agents to rapidly shop, compare, and purchase—SAP research found that 21% of consumers already use AI systems to help make decisions and purchases (and among Gen Z, it's 43%).

21% **of consumers** already use
AI systems to help make
decisions and purchases

Agent-driven shopping will expose organizational weaknesses, such as fragmented systems, delayed data, and siloed governance.

2. Invite AI to your party.

Make it a core part of your strategy for creating truly personalized omnichannel workflows. Pull from your ERP data so you can respond in real-time to buyer intent signals at scale. Show customers you understand their needs and respect their preferences.

As autonomous enterprise capabilities redefine how businesses run, customer patience is disappearing. Only those brands with connected data, business context, and execution can keep up with the pace of agentic commerce.



Get ready to deck the carts!



Secure your holiday experience essentials

Wait just a second! Before you deck any carts or run any campaigns, make sure you've laid the foundation to make the marketing magic.



Context-aware, connected data

Fragmented systems make it impossible to unlock real-time insights, personalization, governance, and, most importantly, the ability to power AI agents. Get all your data integrated, including both customer and operational data, so you have visibility into inventory, customer purchase history, permissions, and beyond.



AI that's built-in, not bolted-on

Ground your fast-moving AI agents in unified data so they can autonomously turn insight into execution. AI shouldn't simply be an overlay across your solutions but instead be infused into ERP foundations. Context is shared, and your holiday campaigns stay aligned to real-time business conditions (like order management and fulfillment), leaving you with newfound confidence.



Scalable omnichannel personalization

Customers expect brands to treat them like VIPs and recognize their preferences, behaviors, and history. To truly personalize customer engagement, marketers must lean into agentic AI to address any fragmented interactions in the customer journey, turning them into cohesive, relevant experiences across channels and at scale.



Results-driven loyalty management

Measure customer lifetime value (CLV) ahead of the big event to inform your segmentation and messaging strategies. Surface the financial impact of your loyalty program at a moment's notice and grant visibility into campaign performance during the high peak event itself so you can optimize in real time. Your boss stays informed, and you stay cool under pressure.



Phase 1:

Pre-holiday preparation





Use actionable data to strategize engagement

Connecting your operational and customer data and then activating it is your path to fostering continuous loyalty through the peak seasonal event and beyond.

1 Score customers by behavioral signals

Agentic AI can help you break down complex data at scale.

Base your scoring rubric on key context-aware signals like:

- Customer lifetime value
- Purchase recency and frequency
- Loyalty program membership/tier
- Category affinity
- Price sensitivity
- Channel engagement

After the event, re-score contacts to measure impact.

2 Identify target segments

Segments will vary based on brand and business model. With an influx of engagement, seize the opportunity to capture data you didn't have before.

Use this methodology as your guide:

- Identify the outcomes you want to achieve with each segment.
- Consider where you have customer data gaps and what channels can help you fill them.
- Use dynamic and predictive segments for agility.

Dig deeper: Refer to the table of segments on the next page.

3 Make informed predictions about customers' needs

Run segments through predictive AI models that reference ERP data (inventory levels, order status, payment history, or supply chain).

Use AI to:

- Predict customers' next purchase category.
- Make predictions about responses to discounts—don't over-discount!
- Predict what different segments will shop for (and make sure it's in stock).

Use predictions to communicate internal needs around product stock, finance, staffing, etc.



Segment your shoppers

Audience segmentation enables you to deliver highly personalized messages. Long before the holiday event arrives, determine who you intend to engage so you can serve their needs.

Segment	Identifying signals	How to engage
VIPs	High lifetime value, frequent purchasers	Provide early access, exclusives, and premium offers.
Repeat buyers (non-VIPs)	Multiple infrequent purchases but low lifetime value	Provide early access and bundled offers to increase cart value.
Loyalty program members	Includes active members (<i>who claim points</i>) and inactive (<i>who don't claim</i>)	Give point bonuses and tier perks, and encourage inactive members to use points.
Advocates	Engaged in referral activity	Alert them in advance about holiday referral rewards and opportunities.
High intent to buy	Unified browsing, purchase, and engagement data showing strong interest in specific products or categories	Reach them quickly with real-time, personalized offers based on their latest signals.



Segment	Identifying signals	How to engage
Price-sensitive buyers	Responsive to offers, sales, and price drops	Clarify savings, demonstrate value, and create urgency around personalized offers.
First-time buyers	Purchased in the past 6–12 months without a second purchase	Nurture them with product tips and recommendations based on purchase.
Browsers	Browsing holiday categories or offers	Offer incentives such as free shipping and extended gift-return policies.
At-risk	Use predictive churn models to identify	Nurture them with win-back and reactivation offers.
Inactive subscribers	Email or app subscribers who haven't made a purchase	Deliver introductory offers and educate on brand value.



Holiday hero: Now Optics

Tactic

Now Optics planned an omnichannel back-to-school campaign across email, SMS, web, and digital.

“We’re using AI for our segmentation, understanding who our customers are in each stage of the lifecycle. We are also using it with dynamic content, which is reducing the amount of time that our creative team is spending building these assets. Every patient and customer has a unique email or SMS that's going out to them, and we’re seeing that not only they enjoy it, but we also enjoy it because we can then spend our time putting more effort into strategy and coming up with different ideas.”



Chelsea Kramaritsch
Senior Manager, Customer
Marketing, Now Optics



[Learn how](#)

5.8 million

engagements from one multichannel
back-to-school campaign



65%

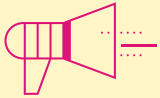
yoy increase
in win back rate





Optimize and test customer experiences

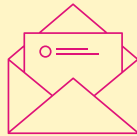
These best practices are essential for peak season prep, but they're also practical all year round:



Warm up your audience

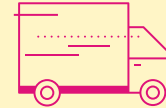
Do not wait until the last minute to email your entire customer base.

That's a great way to get flagged as spam and sink your deliverability. Instead, slowly ramp up your sending volume at least three months leading up to the event.



Test your discounting

Learn which customers are price-sensitive and exactly how much discount is necessary. Try increasing personalization, using product recommendations, and using AI-optimized content in place of discounts. Avoid discounting products that will sell regardless of promotion. Plus, with a data foundation built on your ERP, you'll have real-time access to pricing, inventory, and promotion eligibility.



Stress-test the journeys

Abandoned cart campaigns, checkout processes, shipping notifications—ensure everything is in order and address points of friction. Play the role of the customer, experience the journey, and don't just do it yourself. Get testers from outside your department and even outside your organization. Request feedback directly from customers, too. Bonus points if you can incentivize them.



Pre-holiday calendar

Weeks out	Actions
13–16	☐ Define goals (revenue, ROAS, retention, etc.) and align cross-functional teams like finance and supply chain so you can monitor inventory levels and assess the impact of promotions on ROI. ☐ Audit historical performance to identify top segments, products, and channels. ☐ Build initial audience segments (refer to the earlier “Segment your shoppers” table). ☐ Start warming up audiences with high-value messages to protect deliverability. ☐ Define your dynamic content strategy and map the omnichannel journey.
10–12	☐ Finalize campaign strategies by segment (offers, bundles, channels, early access). ☐ Align inventory and supply chain signals to avoid promoting low-stock items. ☐ Implement tracking for behavioral signals (browse, cart, affinity).
7–9	☐ Develop campaign creative and build automations (VIP, abandon flows, win-back). ☐ Conduct A/B testing (timing, discounting, creative). ☐ Deploy dynamic personalization (behavior, location, history) across channels. ☐ Drive opt-ins with incentives.



Pre-holiday calendar

Weeks out	Actions
5–6	☐ Create predictive segments (high-intent, deal seekers). ☐ Activate retargeting and lookalike audiences. ☐ Build predictive segments (high-intent, deal-seekers).
3–4	☐ Launch teaser campaigns (sneak peeks, discovery, gift guides, influencers). ☐ Drive email and SMS signups by promising access to early offers. ☐ Promote conveniences such as wish lists, pre-orders, and in-store pickup.
2	☐ Launch early access for VIP and loyalty segments. ☐ Increase ad retargeting and personalized offers. ☐ Finalize real-time reporting dashboards.



Phase 2:

In-flight holiday





Plan your real-time engagement strategy

When the big shopping event arrives, your campaign plan must shift from predictive planning to adaptive. The most successful brands don't just launch campaigns—they **react to customer intent signals in real time**, adjusting messaging, offers, and channels on the fly. Buyer intent signals can occur at any point along the purchase journey, from browsing to decision-making.

During peak shopping events, customer activity accelerates, so your ability to detect and respond in real time can often determine whether you convert demand or lose it.

Scale your real-time engagement with AI

- Score customers in real time
- Predict conversion or churn likelihood
- Trigger next-best actions instantly
- Continuously optimize journeys



Trigger faster

Your usual real-time triggers may be too slow during big events! Use event-driven automation to tighten your trigger timing, act on real-time business events, and monitor performance as it happens.

Tighten that 3- or 4-hour cart abandonment trigger down to 15–20 minutes.



Understand and react to buyer intent signals

High-intent browsing



Signals

Repeat product views, time on page, category exploration

Buyer mindset

Actively evaluating

Engagement approach

- Trigger personalized recommendations
- Highlight reviews and bestsellers
- Send browse abandonment follow-ups

Cart activity



Signals

Add-to-cart, checkout starts, cart abandonment

Buyer mindset

Strong intent mixed with hesitation

Engagement approach

- Trigger cart recovery immediately
- Address friction (shipping, returns, delivery)
- Retarget with dynamic product ads

Price sensitivity



Signals

Engagement with discounts, price sort, deal browsing

Buyer mindset

Hopeful for a bargain

Engagement approach

- Personalize offers by segment
- Emphasize clear savings and urgency
- Balance price with value messaging



Understand and react to buyer intent signals

Drop-off 	Conversion 	High-value customer 
Signals Declining engagement, inactivity mid-event	Signals Purchase completed	Signals High order value, multiple purchases, loyalty status
Buyer mindset Distracted, fatigued, high churn risk	Buyer mindset Satisfied, ready to move on	Buyer mindset Positive brand affinity
Engagement approach • Refresh messaging with a different offer • Introduce new urgency for the event ending • Re-engage high-value customers with tailored offers	Engagement approach • Suppress new offers temporarily, reactivating them when appropriate for your audience • Invite to join your newsletter or loyalty program • Prompt a review or social media post	Engagement approach • Offer loyalty points or other perks • Avoid over-discounting for these customers • Nurture this segment into loyalty or subscription programs



In-flight holiday calendar

Days	Actions
3–7 days out	☐ Launch segmented countdown campaigns for (VIP, loyalty, high-intent). ☐ Activate dynamic product recommendations across channels. ☐ Begin monitoring your dashboards with AI assistants and agents to keep a close eye on hidden operational and engagement signals.
1–2 days out	☐ Launch early access for VIP and loyalty segments. ☐ Launch “starts tomorrow” campaigns with urgency-driven reminders about the limited time window for the event.
Event day 1	☐ Monitor conversion rates, AOV, and channel performance in real time. ☐ Optimize campaigns based on early trends (offers, timing, and creative). ☐ Adjust browse/cart abandonment journeys to trigger within 10–15 minutes.



In-flight holiday calendar

Days	Actions
Event day 2	☐ Increase retargeting activity for non-converters and high-intent browsers. ☐ Promote trending and fast-selling products dynamically. ☐ Apply AI predictions to identify at-risk customers and target them with highly personalized offers or recommendations.
Event day 3	☐ Extend or adjust top-performing offers or bundles. ☐ Recommend digital gift cards for last-minute shoppers. ☐ Suppress recent converters to reduce fatigue.
Event day 4	☐ Focus spending on the highest-performing segments and channels. ☐ Deploy “last chance” sales and hourly deals. ☐ Capture last-minute conversions with simplified offers and messaging.



Holiday hero: Arezzo & Co

Tactic

Arezzo & Co automated targeted product recommendations based on buyer intent signals.

“We need partners like SAP Engagement Cloud who help us understand this entire journey throughout the year so that on special days like Black Friday, we can reach the right customer at the right time and through the most appropriate channel.”



Nadiele Serpa da Silva
CRM Coordinator, Arezzo

**AREZZO
&CO**

[Learn how](#)

37%

increase in Black
Friday revenue
year over year



Phase 3:

Post-holiday





Welcome new customers...

You survived the holiday! Congratulations, and take a moment to breathe. After that, it's time to take the piles of data from this short-term event and start building long-term growth.

Goal

Turn first purchases into second purchases.

Relationship building

- **Welcome sequence:** Introduce your brand, values, product ecosystem, and community.
- **Progressive profiling:** Learn customer preferences (categories, channels, and intent) over time.
- **Personalize:** Make product recommendations based on what they purchased or browsed. Use AI to surface recommendations you might not have considered.





...and reward the loyal

Goal

Ensure loyal customers feel appreciated and rewarded.

Relationship building

- **Acknowledge:** Personalize the follow-up messaging and deliver exclusive perks, like point bonuses.
- **Encourage loyalty engagement:** Invite loyalty members to exclusive brand experiences and send reminders to redeem points or track progress.
- **Upsell intelligently:** Use AI predictive models to predict and recommend the customer's next purchase or category.



Win back lapsed customers

Some shoppers may have gotten distracted, while others compared options and chose differently. Don't be discouraged! They've already shown interest, so you have a head start on engagement.

The next peak season is always closer than it feels, so turn your attention to winning back their hearts (and dollars).

1.

Use smart segmentation.

AI agents can help you identify the lapsed segments based on browsing, cart activity, and past purchases. Prioritize your high-value customers.

2.

Trigger timely, behavior-based re-engagement.

Rather than reaching for discounts, focus on value. Deploy win-back journeys triggered by inactivity thresholds or site behavior (e.g., abandon browse/cart) and optimize the timing to send when customers are most likely to engage.

3.

Retarget across channels.

Use social media retargeting ads to feature products the customer viewed or abandoned. Coordinate messages across email, SMS, and paid media to tell a consistent story of value and connection.

4.

Re-engage and retain.

After a conversion, trigger post-conversion journeys or promote loyalty program enrollment. Capture preferences through progressive profiling to further improve future personalization.



Pro tip:

A post-holiday clearance can be a premium win-back campaign. Give exhausted holiday shoppers perfect excuse to treat themselves!



Post-holiday calendar

Days after the event	Actions
0–1 days	☐ Launch post-purchase journeys (thank you, follow-ups, and shipping updates). ☐ Welcome new customers with a soft onboarding series focused on brand story and value. ☐ Score customers based on engagement (purchases, browsing, and responsiveness). ☐ Launch satisfaction surveys and request reviews while the experience is fresh.
2–3 days	☐ Segment customers based on scoring results (VIP, repeat buyer, and lapsed). ☐ Personalize cross-sell and replenishment campaigns using purchase data. ☐ Respond to returns/exchanges with personalized recommendations.
4–6 days	☐ Launch re-engagement campaigns for first-time buyers. ☐ Promote loyalty benefits (point balances, tier progress, and exclusive perks). ☐ Activate referral campaigns to convert satisfied buyers into advocates.
7–10 days	☐ Deepen customer understanding with progressive profiling (preferences, categories, channels). ☐ Test new messaging strategies (value vs. discount) for sustained engagement.
11–12 days	☐ Finalize event analysis (revenue, retention, CLV impact, and channel performance). ☐ Feed insights back into segmentation and predictive models for the next event. ☐ Optimize lifecycle automations based on learnings. ☐ Transition customers to always-on nurture programs (content, loyalty, and subscriptions).



Holiday hero: Home Depot

Tactic

Home Depot serves personalized content during the brand's Hot Sale period, building its database of new and prospective buyers.

"Most customers when they're going to shop online during the holidays or major events already know what they want.

They have that one big thing they're looking for. What we do in those situations is, on the landing pages and any other pages we have on our website, we ask them through a sign-up form, 'hey, what category are you interested in on this event, and I'll send you the latest info day one on the deals you're looking for.' That's really worked for us."



Mauricio Gonzalez

Online Experience
Manager,
The Home Depot



[Learn more](#)

8%

conversion
during Hot Sale
promotion



Go deck those carts

The holiday season will always come with pressure, which is why laying the foundation for growth is the top holiday strategy. With your data connected, AI working autonomously alongside you, and campaigns centered around real customer and operational signals, you're positioned to lead the market.

SAP Engagement Cloud is built to power AI-enhanced segments, triggers, and journeys using trusted SAP and ERP data. By helping marketers combine a real-time understanding of customers (what they need and love) with core business processes (inventory, order status, etc.), Engagement Cloud gives brands the power to engage in meaningful ways, increasing trust and driving measurable business outcomes.

As you head into your next big shopping event, take a breath and remember: this is your moment to turn peak-season pressure into lasting growth.

Engagement Cloud

Good morning, Alex!

Business Area

Search to filter results

US
DE
EU
FR

Create a segment from our salon owners in US who are not engaging

Creating segment

Message rules

AI Product Finder

Top 2 hair dryers

Search

Raise the Bar for Your Salon

Exceptional results your Clients can feel.

Vintage design HD

Cordless HD

Buy Now

Buy Now

\$115k Revenue from email recommendations

Show me weekly sales by revenue

Discover SAP Engagement Cloud
Our Product Hub offers 50+ walkthroughs, deep dives, and use cases

[Learn more](#)



SAP Engagement Cloud helps organizations power unique engagement by connecting real-time customer insights with the operational signals that run the business. As part of the SAP Customer Experience (CX) portfolio, Engagement Cloud enables personalized, AI-driven interactions across every channel—turning moments like orders, service events, and loyalty milestones into timely, relevant experiences that build trust, strengthen relationships, and drive growth. For more information, visit emarsys.com.

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