READY, SET, SELL

The Ultimate 2018 Holiday Checklist
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It’s inevitable that preparation for the holiday onslaught of traffic and orders is both exhilarating and spine-chilling. You cannot leave anything, no matter how insignificant it may seem, to chance. As you review this checklist, make sure to take a mobile-first focus to your overall prep. Whether your customers are checking inventory, shopping while riding a train, or placing a large order, your mobile experience has to be seamless.

We’ve worked with global brands for years and have done the prep work for you. Here is everything you need to consider over the next few months; things you can do now and right up to the last minute to drive business wins and operational efficiency over the holidays.

Print it out. Hang it on your wall. Share it with your colleagues. Bring it to your next meeting. It’s your ultimate checklist.
| UPDATE YOUR MERCHANDISING STRATEGY |

☐ **CREATE COORDINATING PRODUCT SETS.** For example, display mittens, hats, and boots that match a ski parka. Adding multiple products to your shopping cart from one page increases your average order value. Feature these sets in content slots, social, or top-level categories.

☐ **LAUNCH EINSTEIN PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS.** Begin gathering data for holiday optimization in the August time frame. For recommendations on pages with a global context (i.e., homepage), promote key categories so they align with off-platform marketing activities. Keep proven, context-specific recommendation zones untouched (category, cart, and product pages).

☐ **LAUNCH YOUR HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDES IN OCTOBER.** Create gift guides targeted to a theme (beach bum, jewelry lover, stocking stuffers, etc.), a person (Mom, Dad, hostess, etc.), and by price. Keep merchandising up-to-date on gift guide pages throughout the season. Feature gift guides on the homepage, in the navigation, in email, and on social.

☐ **TARGET FEMALE SHOPPERS EARLIER IN THE SEASON** and male shoppers in the last two weeks. (Experience tells us that women are early shoppers while men tend to procrastinate.)

☐ **IMPLEMENT HOLIDAY-SPECIFIC SORTING RULES.** Blending Einstein Predictive Sort with holiday sorting rules can add a personalized element that helps shoppers find relevant products more quickly, especially on mobile and categories with a large quantity of products.
| TUNE YOUR SITE SEARCH RESULTS |

- **TEST YOUR TOP 50 SITE SEARCH TERMS** from last holiday season – are the results optimized? What new products do you have this holiday season?

- **MAKE SURE TO AVOID THE DREADED “NO RESULTS FOUND” experience.** Update content slots on your “No Results” page to feature holiday gift guides.

- **EVEN MISSPELLINGS SHOULD TAKE YOUR SHOPPERS TO THEIR DESTINATION** so there is no money left on the table. Add the most common misspellings to your dictionaries, and review weekly not only during the weeks leading up to the holiday season but also throughout your peak shopping weeks. Keep an eye out for low-converting terms that display results. Are the correct items being returned?

- **TOGGLE DATA SHARING WITH Einstein Search Dictionaries.** By default, the Commerce Cloud Einstein engine uses only your site data to suggest Search Dictionary recommendations. The admin user can toggle the data sharing to share your dictionary data anonymously with the Commerce Cloud Community and participate in improved recommendations. Then, when you click on a term within a dictionary, a popup occurs, showing the current configured dictionary group and Einstein recommendations. You can choose to accept or decline these additions.

- **CONSIDER USING REDIRECTS FOR HOLIDAY-CURATED CATEGORIES** that take your customers directly to your dedicated landing pages for “holiday gifts,” “stocking stuffers,” “gift ideas,” and other popular search terms.
| UPDATE YOUR SEO |

☐ ANALYZE SEO AND SEM KEYWORDS that drove success last year.

☐ FACTOR THE SURGE IN VOICE-RELATED SEARCHES for your holiday SEO strategy; create targeted content to incorporate your highest-value question phrases, including searches for brick-and-mortar store information.

☐ CHECK THE HEALTH OF YOUR SITE – review 404 errors in Webmaster tools and check your site speed.

☐ CREATE SNEAK PEEK OR “COMING SOON” PAGES in September – perfect for when you are planning your gift guides. It provides a nice boost to your SEO rankings.

☐ GET A HEAD START ON INDEXING CHRISTMAS-SPECIFIC QUERIES with keywords included in the page metadata and copy.
| PERFECT YOUR CAMPAIGNS |

☐ CREATE AND SHARE YOUR HOLIDAY PROMOTIONAL AND COMMUNICATION CALENDAR with your internal teams. Let your support team know if there will be peak traffic days beyond the norm – for example, a flash sale.

☐ MAP OUT AN EMAIL STRATEGY to ensure that the right segmentation and frequency of messages are being used.

☐ KEEP IN MIND THAT MORE MARKETING MESSAGES ARE OPENED ON MOBILE DEVICES than full websites, so it’s important to use your most compelling promotions in your subject lines to drive higher open rates.

☐ BUILD A PAGE TO CLEARLY COMMUNICATE DELIVERY DATES for holiday and push this out through social media and email.

☐ EXPERIMENT WITH TIERED PROMOTIONS to help drive average order value (AOV) and customer engagement. For example, “Buy More, Save More” or free shipping thresholds.

☐ MAKE SURE PROMOTIONS COMMUNICATE URGENCY and FOMO (fear of missing out): “Online Only,” “Limited Quantities,” “Ends Tonight!”

☐ A FREE SHIPPING PROMOTION IS A MUST. This is widely expected by customers, and not offering it for at least some portion of the holiday season will put you at a disadvantage.

☐ OFFER A “GIFT WITH PURCHASE” PROMOTION – this is one of the most successful and highest-converting promotions a retailer can offer during the holiday season.

☐ USE SOURCE CODES and customer groups to offer “holiday previews” to your most loyal customers.
ADDRESS CONTENT AND COMMERCE

- **SET UP INTEGRATION OF FACEBOOK DYNAMIC ADS AND INSTAGRAM SHOPPING**, both supported by Commerce Cloud, to promote products on social and drive conversion.

- **DEVELOP AN INFLUENCER PROGRAM** for the holidays that extends your reach to new audiences on social and gets the word out about key products and top gifts.

- **LAUNCH A SINGLE HOLIDAY HASHTAG** for consistent social interactions in November, and create a holiday social campaign that encourages customers to share images of themselves engaging with your products and brand.

- **LAUNCH SEASONAL AND HOLIDAY GIFT-GIVING THEMED PINTEREST BOARDS** for your best-selling products.

- **INVESTIGATE POTENTIAL TIE-INS WITH CHARITIES FOR A “GIVING TUESDAY” promotion.**

- **BUILD OR UPDATE A HOLIDAY GIFT FINDER TOOL** that asks shoppers interactive questions to help them narrow gift options and find the right gift.

- **CREATE A DIGITAL VERSION OF YOUR PRINT CATALOG** that gives shoppers an interactive experience to explore your products and find inspiration.
| PREP SERVICE AGENTS AND KNOWLEDGE CENTERS |

☐ Identify peak shopping days and staff customer service teams appropriately.

☐ Enable two-way mobile messaging for a more comprehensive customer service experience.

☐ Implement chatbots for high volume, low-touch service requests.

☐ Empower customers to quickly find answers on their own with knowledge articles. This means that agents can deal with more complex service requests.

☐ Use intelligent search to surface the most relevant articles so customers find what they're looking for fast.

☐ Make it easy for customers who need more help to submit cases through a web-to-case online form.

☐ Do not require customers to log in to access knowledge articles or web-to-case; you need to enable easy self-service for everyone.
| GET READY FOR THE 11TH HOUR |

☐ Put together “12 Deals of Christmas.” Offer a new deal each day leading up to your shipping cutoff. Reveal one deal each day to drive repeat visits. Schedule content slots in advance to relieve the burden of daily content slot swaps.

☐ Last-minute holiday shopping is a given. Call out available shipping upgrades, extended shipping deadlines, etc.

☐ Push these through affiliates and social media. Create a sense of urgency: “Only three days left;” “There is still time!”

☐ Push gift cards after the holiday shipping cutoffs, including redirecting key site search queries.

☐ Use content slot scheduling and the Commerce Cloud Storefront Toolkit to preview and test promotions to ensure everything is functioning properly — and your staff can have a few days off!

☐ Have a contingency plan ready if Cyber Week promotions aren’t performing as expected.