



E-TAILER TATTLES FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON: 5 SHORT Tips to maximize your holiday campaign

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Many online retailers can expect up to 20% or more of their total sales in December. Given the stakes, digital marketers need to test and optimize campaigns and site performance to the greatest extent possible. Optimization can drive 30% or more in incremental revenue in the short term*, and even more when you consider lifetime value of a customer. Here are 5 quick tips you should consider to help maximize your holiday campaign this season:

1. Seasons Matter

One of the biggest problems is the appearance of stale inventory in copy and imagery creative, whether as part of an online campaign, on a landing page, or the main web site. E-tailers need to stay relevant by seasonally-tuning their offers for existing inventory items. When offers or products are well-matched to what customers are actively seeking they will be much more effective. Often times it's as simple as tweaking the benefits to fit with lifestyle during the holiday season. Showing a turkey instead of a pizza, or products in a family setting versus a personal use setting could very well do the trick. By linking this kind of relevance to timely ad campaigns you are very likely to engage your target audience at the most appropriate time. Don't forget to provide enough incentive to order early!

From a testing perspective, compare seasonal lifestyle imagery against your standard product imagery to validate your audience's preferences. Don't assume the standard imagery is the most optimal during holiday shopping seasons. People might not be buying for themselves and may need to envision other people enjoying a gift. This might mean using a seasonal look to place a contextual narrative around the offer and product. Show very happy people receiving the product. The jewelry industry has this seasonal strategy down pat because their whole business revolves around gifts, so they know it works. Be creative and test it so you will know if it can work for you too!

2. Knowing Your Existing Customers

Existing customers are your best and most qualified audience, so reach out to them first and let them know you are in touch with their needs - create attractive offers with a high perceived value to thank them for their business. For those who indicated interest but never completed a purchase, consider providing stronger offers and thank yourself for gathering those email addresses along the way. These prospects are still more likely to be converted to actual customers than people who have never visited your site before. Take time to analyze what type of customer is buying your product. You may be advertising an office chair to a corporate audience, but your customers might want it for their home office instead at this time of year. Testing offer copy around home offices and describing the benefits with that audience in mind can greatly change how they convert. Finally, make sure the incentive makes sense in that same environment - for instance buy 4 get 1 free might appeal to corporate buyers, but the home office customer may just want a good deal on a non-slip floor mat to protect the rug.

3. Finding a New Audience

Paid Search Engine Marketing (SEM) keywords are the quickest and most effective way to drive seasonal traffic to a specific page. Make sure to use seasonal verbiage on the search ads and banners to set yourself apart from generic year-round ads. Talk about turkey, holidays, family, gift-giving – things that will resonate



this time of year and are appropriate to your products or services. And don't forget to have some special seasonal offers!

SEM campaigns typically cost more than Search Engine Optimization (SEO) efforts, so make sure you have strong success criteria to avoid overspending on generic keywords. SEO takes months of preparation, so it's harder to predict if seasonal SEO will be successful until the actual time comes. Don't rely solely on SEO for traffic, but once established, SEO benefits are long-lasting and will nicely complement your SEM and Email strategies. Companies with mature SEO/SEM typically get a 45%/55% mix of traffic outside of the holiday season, but many will increase SEM spend in November/December to better compete when buyer motivation is highest. Companies with less established SEO typically start with SEM-heavy strategies until SEO catches up.

If you haven't done any seasonal targeting yet this year, you should still look at what keywords were most successful in driving traffic to your site from both SEO and SEM. Start using these keywords in your SEO strategy for better organic results next year. Continue the cycle of testing and improving your conversion rates year after year!

4. Favor Offers over Branding

During the holidays, emphasize offers and product, and company branding second in your campaigns, communications, and web presence. Look at it from your customers' perspective; they are under the gun to shop for the holidays and need to get a lot done quickly. If you make it easy for them to succeed they will likely buy more. A direct incentive to buy trumps abstract benefits at this time of year.

5. Build Seasonal Landing Pages and optimize them with MVT

One of the most effective methods of testing seasonal messages and imagery is to use simple landing pages. A recent case study done by Widemile for a large Internet-based Cooking Recipe purveyor showed a *sustained 30% holiday season boost* from simply testing a seasonal recipe against the 4 recipes that performed the strongest in the summer. *** If you want to really make these landing pages perform, make sure to be consistent and match seasonal SEM copy messaging to the offers on your landing pages.

Nobody likes being misled, even if it was by accident. It's the best reason for people to hit the backspace button in near instantaneous reflexes. While you are at it, design Emails and Landing Pages so they work better together in terms of content and design. Place the keywords emphasizing your best offers and incentives in prominent spots on the page and avoid extraneous content – don't try to oversell because it typically leads to confusion.

While you're at it, optimize the landing pages using split or multivariate testing to remove all guesswork and really drive to get the best possible lift from your page elements. The chances of an initial page being the most optimal are one in a million! Even the best web page optimizers in the business would never try predicting what will work and consistently guess correctly, but instead they will test the best available ideas using a framework of best business practices to find that **one great idea and combination**. Trust your customers to tell you what they need, but make sure to ask the question first, and the only way to ask is to run a well-designed test!

* 30% is the average increase that Widemile provides for landing pages.

*** The Validation: A recent case study done by Widemile for a large Internet-based Cooking Recipe purveyor showed a *sustained 30% holiday season boost* from simply testing a seasonal recipe against the 4 recipes that performed the strongest in the summer. Widemile tested seasonal imagery on a landing page that had been perpetually optimized using a pizza or chocolate cake to show the benefits of downloading recipes. They did a split test to decide to test against the chocolate cake (slightly ahead in the split). They



then turned on and off some of the existing items on the page (features and a Google logo). Once we were done we saw that the new Turkey image and lack of technical features of the toolbar led to nearly 40 more conversion thanks to the lift incurred by the holiday season and the season-appropriate creative.

Quick stats:

- Baseline Test Conversion Rate: 10.62%
- Average Test Page Conversion Rate: 11.79%
- Actual Optimal Conversion Rate (11/7-11/19): 14.63%
- Actual Optimal Lift: **37.76%**

Bio on Frans Keylard:

Frans Keylard is the Director of Optimization at Widemile Inc. an emerging leader in [multivariate testing](#) and web optimization Frans has been designing and testing Web interfaces and pages since 1991. Frans' recent positions at TeamOn, Microsoft, MSN, and now at Widemile have established him as one of the foremost authorities on Search Marketing, Website usability, and Webpage optimization. His many achievements include the Search and Website optimization strategies for MSN Autos which resulted in a 50% increase in their top 10 measured objectives and Widemile's current website optimization methodologies and testing guidelines. Frans holds an MBA from Eastern Washington University and is fluent in many languages including English, Dutch, German, French, and Thai.

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