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# HOLIDAY MARKETING GUIDE



# CONTENT



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<b>01</b>	Your Holiday Marketing Campaign Checklist: 6 Essentials	6
<b>02</b>	How to Do Local SEO During the Holidays	14
<b>03</b>	Holiday PPC Strategy: 11 Steps to Drive Greater Profit in the Holiday Season	22
<b>04</b>	10 Email Marketing Tips to Boost Holiday Sales	38
<b>05</b>	Top Holiday Social Media Campaign Ideas to Try	52
<b>06</b>	Creative Ideas to Work with Influencers This Holiday	64
<b>07</b>	How to Create a Holiday Content Strategy	74
<b>08</b>	Seasonal Marketing	84

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# YOUR HOLIDAY MARKETING CAMPAIGN CHECKLIST: 6 ESSENTIALS

Americans spend billions of dollars on gifts, decorations, and food for Valentine's Day, Christmas, Easter, and other holidays throughout the year.

To cash in on holiday spending, take some time to set up a wellplanned holiday marketing campaign.

Developing a successful holiday marketing campaign involves tailoring your advertising channels, sales goals, and events to meet the temporary needs of shoppers looking for the perfect gift for friends and relatives.

**Don't miss your chance to attract new clients, skyrocket your sales, and gain high profits**



## ✦ 1. 'Holidize' Your Website

Setting a festive mood and tapping into holiday emotions are essential.

Visitors will stay longer on your website and explore it with greater enthusiasm if they sense the approaching holidays on each and every webpage.

Your holiday marketing campaign should be memorable, and not just in your ads and "special offer" sections.

Bring emotional context to all your website's elements, including footers, headers, CTAs, and other elements.

Decking your site with holiday cheer reinforces the connection users already have with your brand.

### Holiday Discounts First

If you offer holiday discounts, make sure they are the first things visitors see on your website.

Keep in mind that the average visitor doesn't have a lot of patience.

Show shoppers what they really need as soon as they click on your site, to keep them engaged and stop them from shopping elsewhere.



## ✦ 2. Email Campaign

A festive email is a must for every marketing campaign. Customers are eagerly waiting to receive

special email offers and save money on pre-holiday discounts.

Use colorful designs, beautiful pictures, and numbers that prominently display discounts.

No one wants to read large chunks of text, so keep it simple and to the point.

### Keep Your Most Loyal Customers Closer

You are probably planning to announce special holiday discounts and freebies, which is definitely a

great idea.

Consider expanding your offerings with a special email to your current clients.

Provide extra rewards to make them feel special and to encourage them to visit your website more often.

### Keep Cool & Be Helpful

Don't be too pushy, which could easily turn people off. Remember, you are not the only business out

there with festive Facebook posts and colorful campaigns.

Hundreds of brands put high hopes in the holiday season, and some remind their audience of special offers as often as four times a week.

However, if your strategy is well planned and your content is engaging, twice a week should be more than enough.

## Holiday Email Campaign Ideas

Although they may seem somewhat cliché, keep in mind that some people wait to receive exclusive

emails so they can shop with holiday discounts.

### Here are five ideas for your email campaign:

1. **Discounts for Early Birds:** Encourage shoppers to purchase holiday gifts early, offering attractive discounts for a limited period of time.
2. **Special Prices for Online Orders Only:** Capture your customers' attention with a tempting offer of extra discounts when they purchase gifts without leaving home.
3. **Exclusive Discount Code Inside:** Intrigue shoppers with an offer of exclusive bargains.
4. **Last Chance for Any Online Order:** Create a sense of urgency and engage shoppers to order before it's too late. Let them know the last possible date they can safely expect a package to be delivered on time.
5. **Greeting Card:** Send your final email on the eve of a holiday. Make it a simple message with a beautiful design.



## The final holiday email serves two goals:

1. It builds lasting relationships with your customers

2. It encourages last-minute shoppers to choose your store

### ✦ 3. Leverage the Power of Social Media

Use Facebook, Twitter, and similar social media platforms where your potential buyers are likely to

rest, have fun, and communicate with close people.

Make enticing offers and create a warm holiday atmosphere to encourage web users to buy, share

posts with bright pictures and inspiring phrases, come up with a special hashtag, and provide gifts for mentioning it.

Also, pay attention to Instagram and Pinterest. Being visual is essential during the holiday season.

People are searching for handmade gifts, inspiration, ideas for food and entertaining, greeting cards, and more.

Don't just sell your product. Create a montage that depicts it in full holiday splendor. And don't forget to link to your website!

If you offer some professional services, LinkedIn would be of great use. Ecommerce companies should consider holding promotions on marketplaces and providing discounts to clients ordering several services at once.

## ✦ 4. Organize a Contest

Contests are great social media tools, and the holidays offer an especially perfect opportunity to entertain your customers, since everyone is happy to get an extra gift.

If you sponsor a photo contest on your website, don't just limit it to one or two winners. Use the best photos to create a special blog post, or to create a complete webpage.

You can really get creative with this one, and people will be pleased to see their photos online, even if they don't win first place.

Festive contests bring more traffic and engagement, and attract new subscribers.

This approach works perfectly for both large brands and local companies.

## ✦ 5. Posts with Last Minute Gift Ideas



Some people put off holiday shopping until the last minute.

Reach out to procrastinators who still need a gift or two just days before the holidays.

By offering last-minute gift ideas, you provide a valuable service to your customers,

and save late shoppers from the stress and embarrassment of not finding an appropriate gift.

Use phrases like "last minute gift ideas" in your posts as perfect triggers to get the attention of your audience.

## ✦ 6. Launch Your Holiday PPC

Don't limit your campaign to your existing audience. Let new customers discover your business – and buy from you.

Advertise your brand to the right people in need of your services during the holiday season. Find your target audience in Google Ads, come up with catchy phrases, and expand your business.

There are no rules for when to start your PPC campaign. Launch it any time before the holidays, or use the classic Advent theme to offer new items each day.

You can change your entire holiday ad campaign daily, or every few days.

If you have an online store on Amazon, this is a great place to realize your PPC strategy.

This platform offers ready solutions (Sponsored Products vs. Sponsored Brands) so that you do not even have to struggle to come up with something new.

Take advantage of all available resources.



# HOW TO DO LOCAL SEO DURING THE HOLIDAYS

I know plenty of people who begin planning their next Halloween costumes on November 1.

Others wait all year for Black Friday to roll around to mark the beginning of the Christmas shopping season.

When it comes to local SEO around the holidays, that word “season” is paramount.



## ★ 1. Ensure Your NAP Information Is Updated & Accurate

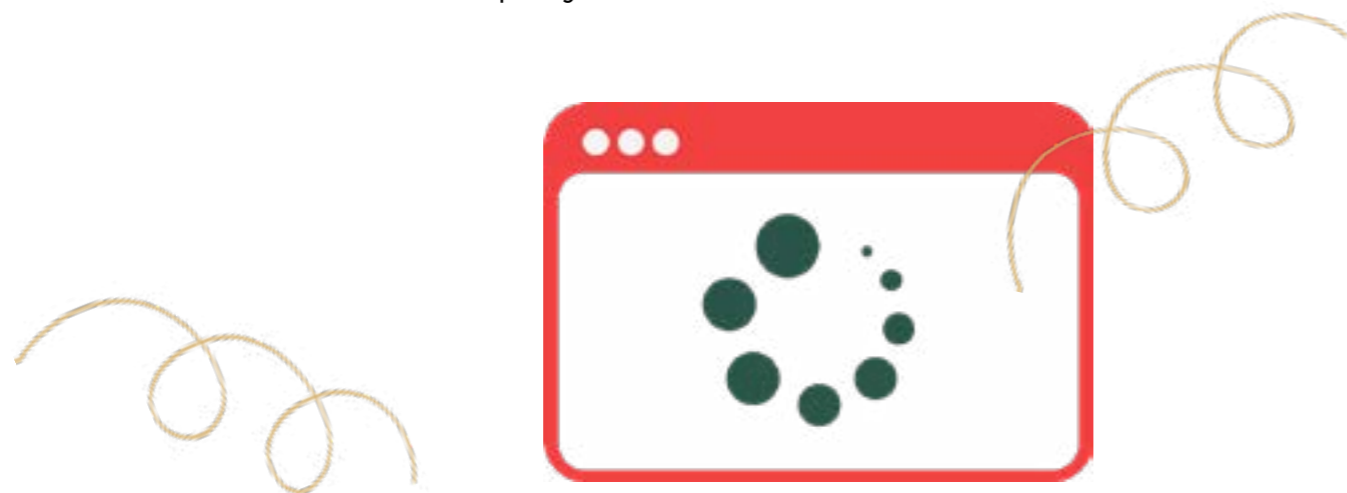
This one is a no-brainer, right?

Well, you might be surprised at how many local businesses I myself have searched online that didn't reflect accurate NAPs (names, addresses, and phone numbers) or business hours, including holiday hours!

**It is important to ensure this information is available and correct across all digital platforms, including:**

- ◆ Google My Business.
- ◆ Social media.
- ◆ Moz Local.
- ◆ Any other local-business directories you use

While you're at it, make sure you also update any on-site landing pages that contain outdated company information.



**You can see the problems that may arise from any of your business's online information being wrong – customers:**

- ◆ Call an old phone number.
- ◆ Travel to a location you moved out of years ago.
- ◆ Show up when you've already closed for the day.

The trouble isn't only that none of these actions would convert to a sale.

You are actually in danger of losing those customers forever, as they may develop a negative image of your brand and see your business as unreliable.

Taking the time to update and correct your NAP, business hours, and any other relevant company information will go a long way toward getting yourself into a prime organic-search position.

## ★ 2. Optimize On-Page Content for Holiday Keywords

Another local holiday SEO guideline is to optimize your on-page content for holiday keywords.

Use Google Analytics, Google Search Console, Google Keyword Planner, and SEMrush to see what keywords are driving users to your website,



and what pages people are going to after they arrive.

It's always important to remember that SEO is not an evergreen product.

"Holiday window decals" may have been a top-performing keyword for you last year, but many things may have changed in the last 365 days.

Maybe holiday decoration trends have changed. Maybe there's a brand new Easter decoration product out there that's become the new craze in springtime window adornments.

You must stay current on seasonal keywords from year to year, or you'll risk becoming stale, and users simply won't find your site.

The other element to keep in mind here is that typical holiday shoppers likely have some idea of what they're looking for.

Perhaps they've collected wish lists from their family members and are simply looking for a specific product from the company with the best price and most convenient location near them.

In that case, you may want to optimize your landing pages for a good mix of general holiday and brand-specific keywords that will lead organic searchers directly to your site. This one is a no-brainer, right?

Well, you might be surprised at how many local businesses I myself have searched online that didn't reflect accurate NAPs (names, addresses, and phone numbers) or business hours, including holiday hours!



## ✦ 3. Stand Out From the Crowd

As long as we are talking about standing out from your competitors, don't forget that unique content alone can't generate your holiday sales.

People will be more likely to bring their business to your website if the site itself is easy to use and appealing to look at.

Yes, you will need some solid, optimized content on your pages, but if the pages themselves are cluttered with flash material, ads, blocks of text, or problems with your JavaScript, it will neither load quickly nor look attractive.

And the data shows that problematic web pages tend to lead to higher bounce rates and, of course, reduced sales.

Instead, keep your web pages relatively simplistic, with visually striking images that do just about as much to communicate with your customers as your written content does.

The optimized content should be to-the-point and broken up visually to create a kind of hierarchy of images and words.

Users should immediately know where to look for the most relevant information, and each successive element should contrast with the element closest to it to make for a smooth flow of content segments.

A basic example: suppose your holiday decoration store is gearing up for the Fourth of July.

You may want to use a large image on your homepage that shows an assortment of picnic and patriotic items you offer for sale.

Then display some visually contrasting buttons that users can click on to access certain categories of decorations.

As an aside, remember to update your site with holiday-appropriate images and other visuals. Showing customers you are engaged with the current holiday season will make them feel good about buying from your store.

Keyword-optimized content near these visuals can use pleasant, succinct language to inform users of what is available and also link them to additional items in your inventory.

### **Just remember to keep things simple.**

A novella-sized piece of content is neither needed nor wanted. Customers want to know what you have and why your website is the best place to buy it, be it for your large product selection or competitive prices.

## **4. Don't Forget the 'Local'**

Remember when I called these holiday-themed local SEO tips “common sense”?

Nowhere is that more applicable than in this final pointer: to remember that you are a local business trying to optimize your online presence for local SEO.

While it's important to make the online checkout process easy for internet users, you're also going to have a significant percentage of the population that actually prefers shopping in-store than online.

In March of 2019, Forbes contributor Greg Petro cited a First Insight study finding that 71% of survey respondents stated they tend to spend \$50 or more when shopping in a brick-and-mortar location, as compared to only 54% of respondents who said they usually spend \$50

or more online.

Petro goes on to say this is likely due to the simple fact of the brick-and-mortar offering more of a human element to the shopping experience. And it's hard to argue with that logic.

People like browsing in stores. You can see the latest products up close and personal. You can read their details and specs and hold them in your hands.

When you're in-store, you are better able to see yourself owning that product, and you may very well become emotionally attached to it.

Given this human psychological dynamic, it is of the utmost importance that any and all website users know that you do in fact have a physical location.

I mentioned in the first point that your NAP has to be updated and accurate across all directory platforms and on your web pages.

You may want to consider having a separate “Contact Us” or “About Us” page to call attention to your location, provide all your contact information, and show an image of your store.

As far as actual SEO goes for emphasizing your local presence, use Google Analytics, Search Console, Keyword Planner, and SEMrush to find high-volume, long-tail keywords such as “madison wisconsin christmas trees” or “father's day gifts carlsbad california.”

Then, of course, optimize your on-page content with such keywords, and do this well in advance of the holiday to give search engines time to pick up on your freshly revamped SEO.

Try to drive customers into your physical store with incentives such as an in-store-only coupon discount, or a limited-edition item available only to the first 100 customers through the doors on a given day.

Feel free to get creative with this.

# HOLIDAY PPC STRATEGY: 11 STEPS TO DRIVE GREATER PROFIT IN THE HOLIDAY SEASON

You know what that means: holiday season is upon us.

If you haven't already planned your holiday strategy, now is the time!

Don't fret, we've got you covered with the steps that you need to take to ensure that you're ready to hit the ground running with your holiday efforts.



## ✦ 1. Review Last Year's Results Accurate

### Performing a post-mortem on last year's results can be a great place to start.

Which channels and campaign types worked that should be revisited?

- ◆ Which creative was most impactful?
- ◆ What audiences performed best?
- ◆ Which promotions drove the most purchases?
- ◆ Where did you outperform competitors? Where did they outperform you? (Customer service? Promos? Reliability? Experience?)

If you don't have this data from last year, it might be a little late to acquire it but a great time to start gathering intel on how competitors are performing now for present and future purposes.

If something worked really well last year, then there's no need to fix what isn't broke.

That said, it's still worth testing new tactics, in addition and in replacement of those things that didn't work.

## ✦ 2. Choose Your Channels and Plan Some Tests

Although looking at last year's results is a great place to start, reorchestrating the same plan over and over is sort of like jogging in place when all other retailers are running forward.

Every year, digital marketing grows and evolves very quickly.

While there are parts of last year's campaigns that you should keep (or grow and evolve), it would likely be a big mistake to rely solely on the success of things that have worked in the past.

I'd suggest allocating some small percentage of your budget (say 5-10%) on testing new platforms, channels, strategies, tools, or tactics.

You just might find something worth incorporating into your strategy year-round.

## ✦ 3. Plan Your Funnels

There's no time like the present to start preparing your campaign mix.

As you think about the campaigns that you'd like to run, consider how you'll move each prospect all the way through the funnel.

Since some of the folks that you might want to target may not be regular shoppers but rather gift-givers, and since the holidays are typically a huge opportunity to grab revenue; there will likely be a fair amount of prospecting.

With this, you'll want to consider how you can create funnels so that the prospecting campaigns will drive volume and build remarketing pools without losing your shirt as cold audiences are likely to have

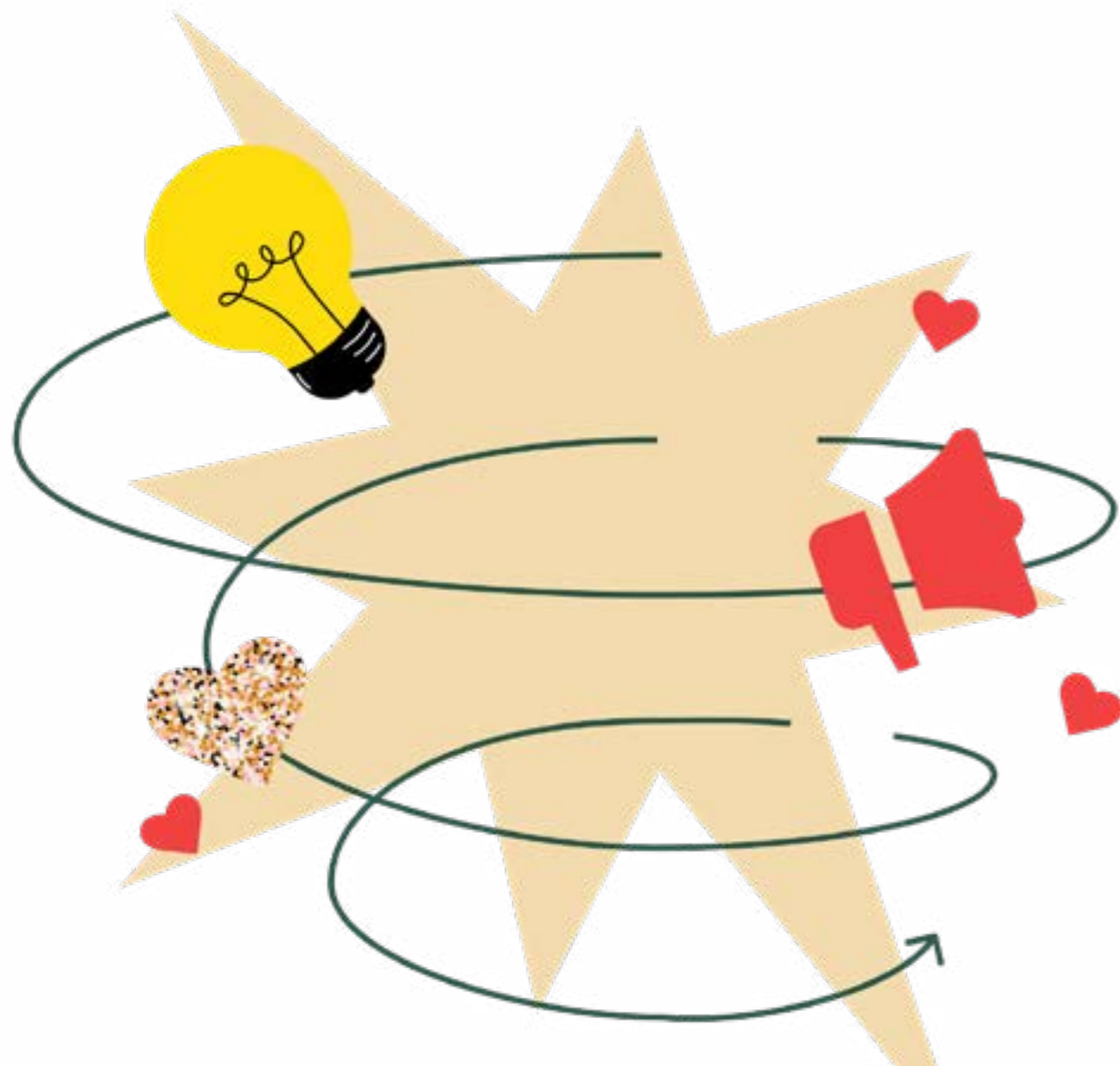
lower conversion rates.

For instance, with Facebook and Instagram ads, make sure you're thinking outside of the box with the ways that you choose your campaign objectives at each stage of the funnel in order to drive the highest ROAS possible.

I also highly recommend that you have a good methodology for connecting the dots between campaigns.

Re-engaging and warming new prospects is a critical piece to ensure your prospecting investment isn't wasted.

Audiences are a great way to connect the dots between campaigns and there are ample audiences and targeting options that can be used to create a multi-channel funnel.



## ✦ 4. Start Building Your Audiences

Think about the audiences that you already have – as well as the ones that you would like to build over the next few months.

### Examples could include but are certainly not limited to:

- ◆ Visitors that viewed a wishlist (and the subsequent content that they viewed, if you have a big enough pool to further segment).
- ◆ Visitors that viewed a gift guide (and the subsequent content that they viewed, if you have a big enough pool to further segment).
- ◆ Logins to loyalty programs.
- ◆ Past purchasers.
- ◆ Repeat purchasers.
- ◆ High-value customers.
- ◆ Recent visitors – potentially qualified by content viewed, time on site, or the number of recent visits.
- ◆ Wishlist creators, especially if you are able to connect that with data around whether or not their wishlist has been fulfilled or not.
- ◆ Friends of those that like your Facebook page.
- ◆ Those that engaged with content (on Facebook or Instagram). Lookalikes of any & all of the above.
- ◆ Combinations of any of the above.

Beyond building audiences, it's a good time to start thinking about how audiences will be leveraged across platforms and how to track that performance.

Tip: Check out the Audience report within Google Analytics to see how Google-Analytics audiences perform across your whole ecosystem – not just as part of your paid search campaigns.

Granted, this report only tracks audiences that have already visited and will not track all high funnel audiences for that reason, however, it does give great insight into the middle and bottom of the funnel.

This is a great way to see if your audiences are driving sales and, if not, to adjust your campaigns accordingly.

## ★ 5. Re-engage Lists of Yore

Speaking of audiences, since the holidays bring in traffic and purchases from people that aren't typically in our target market, those people are less likely to become repeat purchasers and may fall into dormant lists.

Heading into the holiday season, it's a great time to dust off lists of people that purchased last year – even if they aren't frequent 'purchasers.



## ★ 6. Get in Front of Gift-Givers

As you already know, when the holidays roll around, your targeting widens to also include those that might buy your target market gifts.

It can be daunting to think about reaching a new audience but there are a few ways that you can do that without completely losing your shirt on a high-funnel campaign.

**With the audiences that you've built**, you can expand your keyword lists into broader areas than you were likely previously targeting.

For instance, you could include relevant gift-oriented keywords that might not make your non-holiday keyword list and pair them with an audience that you've identified as gift-givers.

With social ads, you can target friends of page likes to effectively (but efficiently) extend your reach to your target market's friends and loved ones.

For example, you could promote a holiday-gift-oriented piece of UGC to friends of those that like your page.

Those that clicked through, could be added to a site-based audience while those that didn't click through but did engage could be remarketed with additional gifting options in order to get them to the site.

With third-party targeting options, you have additional options for reaching gift-givers. You could target in-market audiences that are relevant to the holidays or gift-giving.

For most retailers, these aren't specific enough to be a standalone basis for targeting but they could be added to search campaigns as observation-only as an indication that the person had recently been shopping holiday-related items and, therefore is in the mindset.

You could also create custom affinity audiences and pair those with demographics to target on the display network

## ✦ 7. Drive Brand Engagement

With the holidays around the corner, it's a great time to start building some momentum around your brand.

There are two types of gift-givers:

- ◆ Those that like to surprise recipients.
- ◆ Those that want a wishlist to purchase from.

Our challenge is to find ways to reach both types.

### Drive User Generated Content (UGC)

UGC is a great way to drive buzz around your brand any time of the year but especially leading into the holiday season because it has numerous benefits including:

- ◆ Capturing the attention of the content creator's friends that may have similar interests.
- ◆ And capturing the attention of those that are planning to purchase gifts for that group.



## Drive Wishlist Creation

Creating campaigns around wishlist creation can be a useful tool for supporting those gifters that prefer specific instructions.

Target your loyalists, which could include audiences built from repeat purchasers, loyalty program logins or email lists, and social media followers.

Propose items to add based upon their browsing and purchase habits and make it super simple for them to share.

Bonus points if you sweeten the deal with a promo for wishlist creators and wishlist-item purchasers.

## ✦ 8. Get Creative with Your Ads & Landing Pages

Ad creative is always important but it becomes especially important when you're attempting to convince someone who is unfamiliar with your brand and outside of your target market to purchase something for someone else.

If you play your cards right, there are some great opportunities for creative to help build trust in your brand.

For example, if you push UGC, then you build an arsenal of assets from actual customers.

For those folks that want to buy the perfect gift, but keep it a surprise, this type of creative can be both attractive and reassuring. The content can be used across ad creative and landing pages.

Creative can be fun and clever – inviting the audience to drop hints by sharing the ad to signify that they'd like to receive your product as a gift.

To drive more traffic through these campaigns, you can also build engagement campaigns with the goal of driving engagement from loyalists, previous purchasers, and your target market.

**Last but certainly not least, you can customize search ads to improve engagement. You could customize the ads with:**

- ◆ Countdown information for promos, or shipping dates.
- ◆ Promotional information. For example, promos vary on Black Friday. You could use ad customizers to manage that.
- ◆ Audience data to help provide the most relevant information. For example, you could distinguish between your target market and gift-givers to ensure that you're delivering the best content for their interests.

## ★ 9. Start Thinking About Your Promo Strategy

It's a good time to start thinking about how you'll compete with other retailers. Will you put on a promotion?

There are several different discount structures and strategies that can be applied but not all promotions require discounting items.

In fact, some are upsells! Others offer a promise of reliability.

Understanding what your market cares about is key to determining which promotion type is preferable. For example, there are people that love to save money and spend as little as possible – they are truly driven by cost savings.

There are others that don't mind spending money but want to receive as much as possible in return – they are driven not by cost savings but by perceived value.

### **Example promotions could include:**

- ◆ Time-stamped promotions such as early bird specials and doorbusters.
- ◆ A percentage off of the whole store, or certain items.
- ◆ A dollar amount off, which could be qualified by a spend threshold. (Example: get \$20 off when you spend \$50 or more.)
- ◆ A free gift, which could be promoted or kept as a surprise.
- ◆ An add-on gift. (Example: spend \$50 and be eligible to purchase a gift basket worth \$100 for \$20.)
- ◆ Free shipping.
- ◆ Shipping guaranteed by a certain date.
- ◆ A wider return window than usual. (In this case, the message is: go ahead and shop now – the recipient will still be able to return it if they don't like it.)
- ◆ Special deals for those that join or are part of a free loyalty



## ★ 10. Simplify Gift Shopping

It's all fun and games until somebody gets frustrated.

A 2017 holiday recap by Bain cited a clear drop in Net Promoter Score (NPS) throughout December from shoppers dissatisfied with their experience in physical stores.

Customers cited “limited selection” or that the store “didn’t have what I wanted” as reasons for the decrease in NPS.

The customers’ perception of the same stores’ websites remained flat for the same time period.

Despite that, 2018 in-store holiday stores increased, according to Bain’s 2018 holiday recap.

Bain credited this increase in online sales to many factors including (and not limited to) an increase in omnichannel strategies leading customers in-store.

The study notes that Adobe Analytics estimated that 2018 had a record number of in-store pickups.

Target reported a 60% increase in in-store pickups in 2018.

Although ecommerce has grown in sales – and last year was no exception – in-store sales accounted for over 70% of total holiday sales.

This means that there is still value in bringing people in-store.

Frustrations aren’t exclusive to in-store shoppers, though. A 2018 Pitney Bowes study showed that 56% of online shoppers reported frustration with everything from shipping, to returns, to lost products and miscalculated duties and taxes.

There’s ample opportunity to improve the shopping experience

**Businesses with brick-and-mortar locations should consider building site-to-store strategies, which might include incentives for in-store pickups, such as:**

- ◆ Free-site-to-store shipping.
- ◆ A coupon or shopping pass.
- ◆ A free gift.



and reduce frustration in an already stressful time of year.

Here are some steps retailers can take to improve the holiday shopping experience.

### Inventory & Selection

One of the primary frustrations cited by the Bain study can be partially mitigated by making it easy for your customers to see your inventory.

This can be achieved through on-site item inventory checks, on-site purchase and same-day store pickup, and local inventory ads.

### Consistency

As a holiday shopper, I’m always a little surprised by the major differences in on-site vs. in-store experience.

Some of that is hard to control, what with large crowds of people in-store and all.

However, there are some things that can be controlled like the price

of items online vs. in-store, promo strategies, and general ease of navigation and checkout.

Stores and sites both have their pros and cons as far as experience is concerned, but unless you're intentionally trying to incentivize a certain action, creating consistency tends to decrease confusion and less confusion usually means less frustration.



## Relieving Barriers to Purchase

Common objections to online shopping – reiterated by the Bain study – continue to revolve around shipping (cost, time, reliability) and the uncertainty of whether the product will be liked and, if not, the ease of returns.

Those concerns are likely amplified for gift-givers, as there's more pressure to ensure that the gift is liked or can be easily returned and to ensure that the package arrives on time.

Taking steps to ease concerns around shipping cost and speed, and ease of returns can boost conversion rates.

## ✦ 11. Sometimes Things Don't Go as Planned

No pressure, but according to the Pitney Bowes study referenced above, 36% of consumers will shop elsewhere after one poor experience and 60% of millennials share their bad post-purchase experience with others.

What does that mean for retailers?

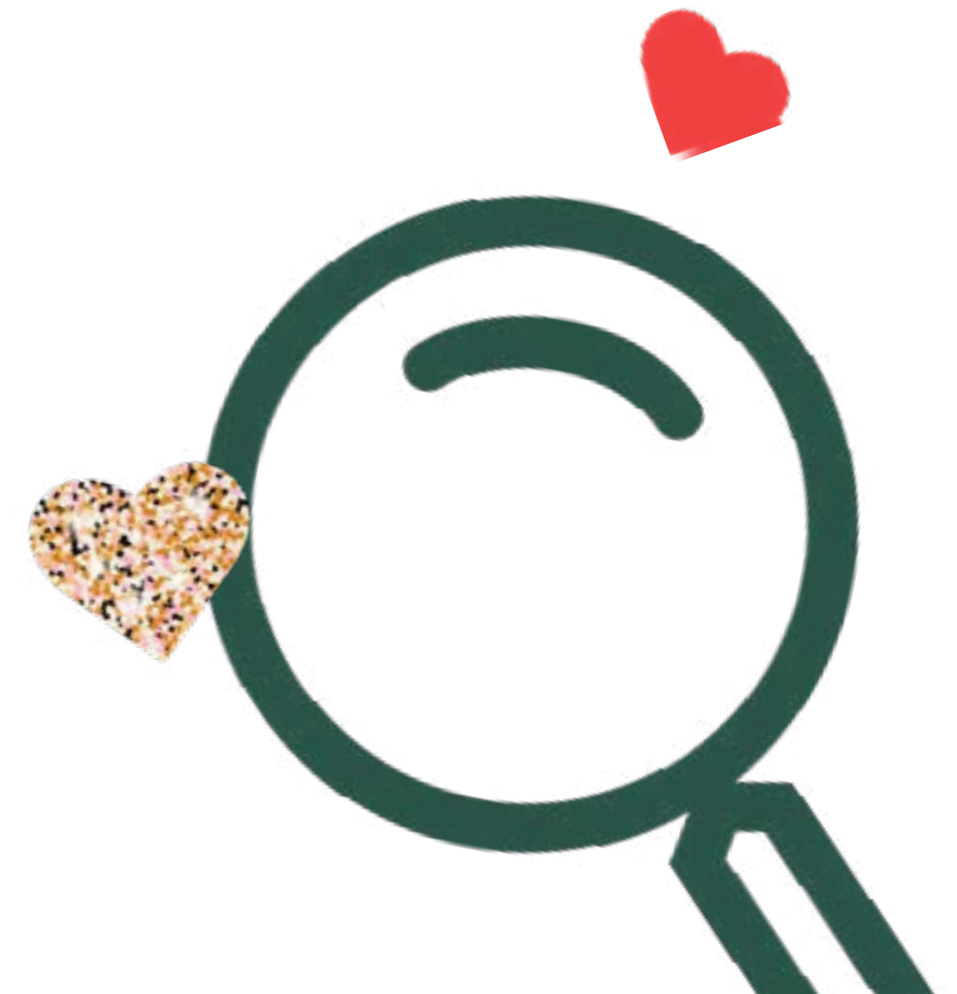
Even with the best planning and the best of intention – some things likely will go wrong.

Create plans for how to handle customers that have had poor experiences.

Roughly 13% of people take to the web when they have a poor experience, with 9% of people leaving negative reviews and 4% posting on social media.

Plan to have staff prepared to monitor social media and review sites, ready to respond to and assist dissatisfied consumers.

Addressing issues in a quick and timely manner (bonus points for creative ways to go above and beyond to resolve issues) is a good way to curb negative reviews – and possibly even turn negative reviews into positive reviews.



# 10 EMAIL MARKETING TIPS TO BOOST HOLIDAY SALES

Email continues to generate the highest ROI of all digital channels, with some sources reporting averages as high as \$44 for every dollar spent.

But competition for consumers' attention in the inbox is fierce yearround, and never more so than over the holidays.

With the promotional period kicking off earlier each year (cue the Christmas music in October), it's never too soon to start strategizing for holiday.



## ✦ 1. Review Past Years' Wins & Losses

Who better to tell you what resonates with your audience than your own audience?

Before looking ahead, look back at the last couple of years' worth of holiday engagement and conversion data to identify wins to replicate and areas of opportunity to course correct.

Key into trends in top-performing subject lines, calls to action, and promotions and use these learnings to make data-driven decisions for the upcoming season.

## ✦ 2. Conduct a Competitive Analysis

While looking at your own past performance is a great starting point, it's important to know what you're up against.

Identify your top competitors and review their holiday marketing strategies.

If you weren't subscribed to their mailing lists last year, tools like Milled or MailCharts can offer a comprehensive look back at your competitors' cadence and promotional strategy.

Consider how your plans compare and ratchet up your strategy as needed to lay claim to a greater share of wallet.

## ✦ 3. Run Pre-Holiday Testing

It's generally best to avoid testing during holiday as the volume, make-up, and intent of your audience isn't typical and can skew results.

Instead, utilize A/B tests in Q3 to glean actionable insights preholiday that can be carried through your holiday strategy.



### A few testing opportunities sure to yield good bang for the buck include:

- ◆ Subject Line: Short vs. long, personalized vs. generic, offer vs. no offer. Don't forget to test on triggers like cart/browse abandon; these behavioral messages will see a spike in volume with increased traffic, representing a big opportunity to turn window shoppers into customers.
- ◆ Promo Type: \$ off vs. % off, buy-more-save-more, gift with purchase, free shipping, etc.
- ◆ Timing/Logic for Triggers and Series: Test time between behavior and first mailing, time between follow-ups, and how many touches are included.
- ◆ Average Order Value: Test the number of products, inclusion of dynamic recommendations, or promotion of complementary product to lift AOV.loyalty member. (This is largely helpful for tracking purposes – we'll get to that!)



## ✦ 4. Scrutinize Your Promotional Strategy

Black Friday/Cyber Monday no longer define the season.

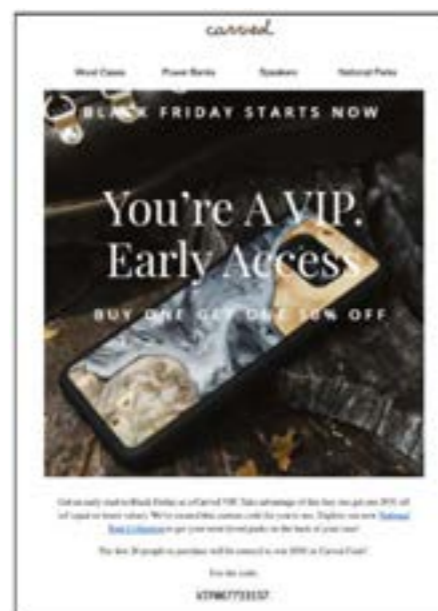
With steep discounts and holiday messaging spanning 8 weeks or more, it's important to mix up promos and content to keep your audience engaged.

Your Black Friday/Cyber Monday offers should be outstanding; consumers are expecting deep discounts, so be cognizant of the offers you're running before these key dates to ensure major promos remain impactful.

Use the holiday season as an opportunity to treat your VIP customers to special promotions or early access to sales, prompting them to consider your brand first for gifting, or treating themselves.

Utilize VIP messaging to stand out in the inbox and offer an additional promo or gift with purchase during holiday sales to further build affinity amongst this already loyal group of customers.

Just look at this VIP Early Access email from Carved:



## ✦ 5. Hone Your Message

Make sure your emails capture attention and generate clicks by keeping creative simple and to-the-point.

Focus on one main story per message to help users process information quickly.

Utilize clear and prominent offers that catch the eye. In short, don't make your readers think too much.

Above all, make sure your messages are timely and play up urgency.

Highlight sell-out risk, end of promotions, and shipping deadlines for holiday delivery to motivate consumers to complete transactions immediately rather than shopping around.

See the examples



## ✦ 6. Ramp Up Your Mailing Cadence

Email subscribers have a higher tolerance for an increased mailing cadence throughout the holiday.

If your brand typically mails a couple of times a week or less, up your cadence to keep your brand top-of-mind and allow for timely messages during every seasonal milestone.

In some cases, you'll want to send more than one email per day (Thanksgiving morning + after dinner when people are sitting around on their phones too stuffed to move, for instance).

Any increase in mailing should be approached thoughtfully to avoid upsetting subscribers, leading to contact loss or, worse yet, spam complaints that could impact deliverability for your entire program.

Get started with a steady ramp-up in late October, keeping a close eye on open and contact loss rates for a read on how your audience is reacting.

Plan to decrease cadence in early January to soften the expected spike in unsubscribes that follow holiday.

## ✦ 7. Audit Your Segmentation Strategy



To mitigate fatigue from an increased mailing cadence, review your segmentation strategy and limit how often you mail to your full list. Consider re-sends of the same promotion only to non-openers or non-converters.

As always, unengaged subscribers should be suppressed to prevent issues with deliverability, which could cripple your entire program during the busiest time of year.

On the other side of the segmentation coin, determine where it might be appropriate to lift suppressions.

If you normally suppress contacts in the welcome series, they might miss some of your best holiday offers.

Try lifting these types of suppressions over Black Friday/ Cyber Monday, if not throughout the entirety of November and December.

## ✦ 8. Grow Your List with Increased Traffic

The increase in traffic from holiday shopping represents a great opportunity to build up your email list for retargeting throughout the year.

### Pre-Holiday

Tease sign up as a way to gain early access to sales or “VIP only” promotions. This can be carried through onsite capture points, transactional emails, and social campaigns.

### During Holiday

If you're running an incentive for email sign-up onsite, reassess the depth of the discount on offer.

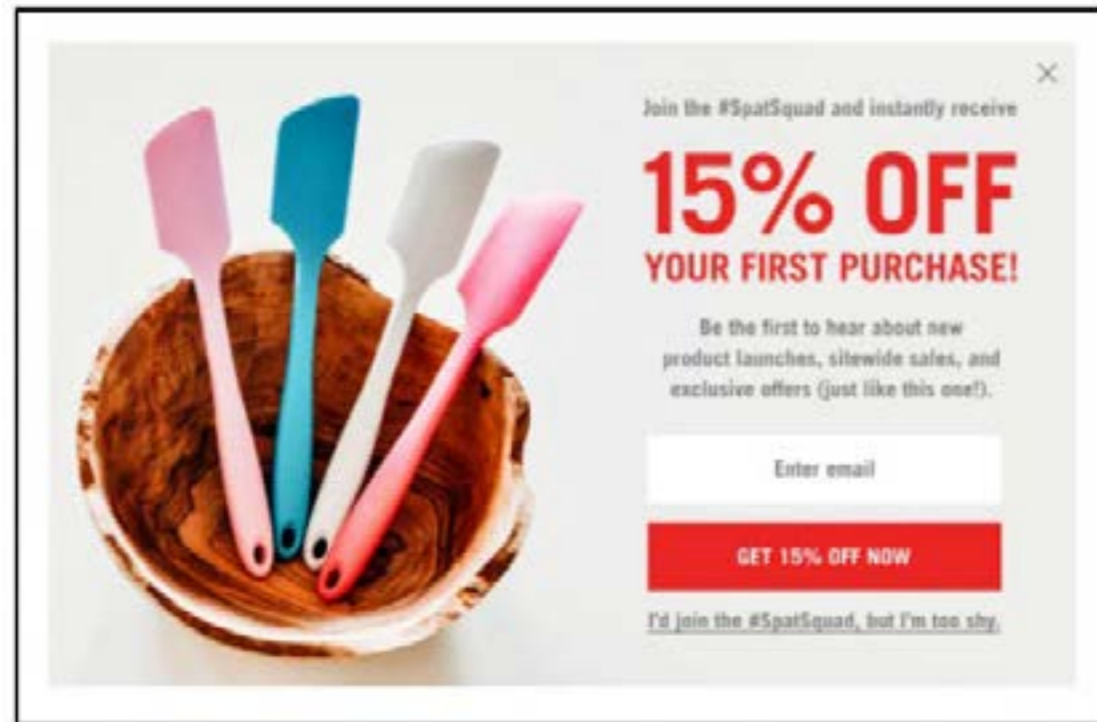
## Consider sign-up promotions that sweeten the deal for new subscribers, like:

- ◆ Free shipping or shipping upgrades.
- ◆ Gifts with purchase.
- ◆ An additional percentage off of already spectacular holiday savings.

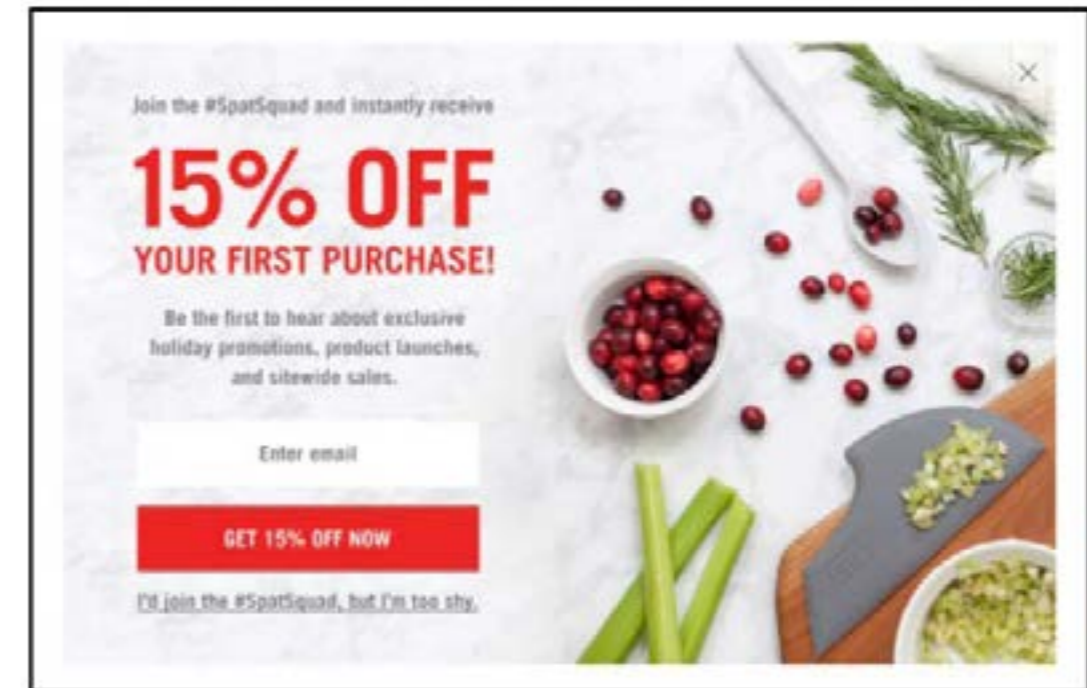
Update the imagery and messaging to speak to holiday to get shoppers in the holiday spirit, and keep gifting top of mind.

A few examples:

### Business as Usual Creative



### Holiday Creative



## ✦ 9. Don't Neglect Your Triggers

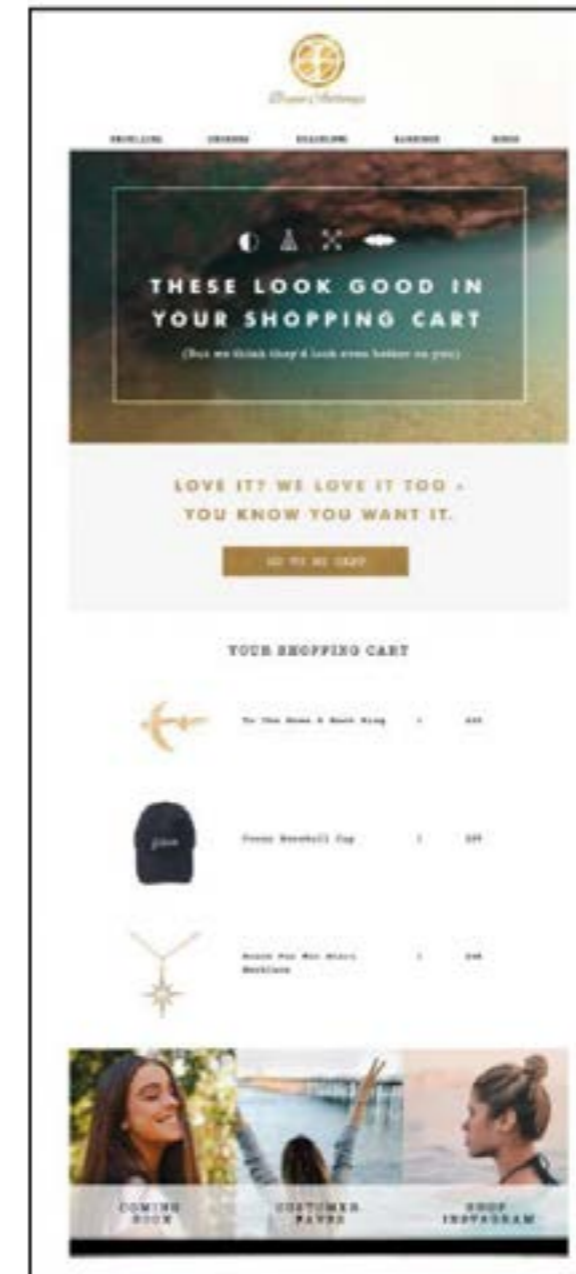
Some marketers tend to think of triggered messages as a set-it-and-forget-it.

**While there's a myriad of reasons to regularly revisit these messages, holiday is a crucial time of year to entertain changes to automation:**

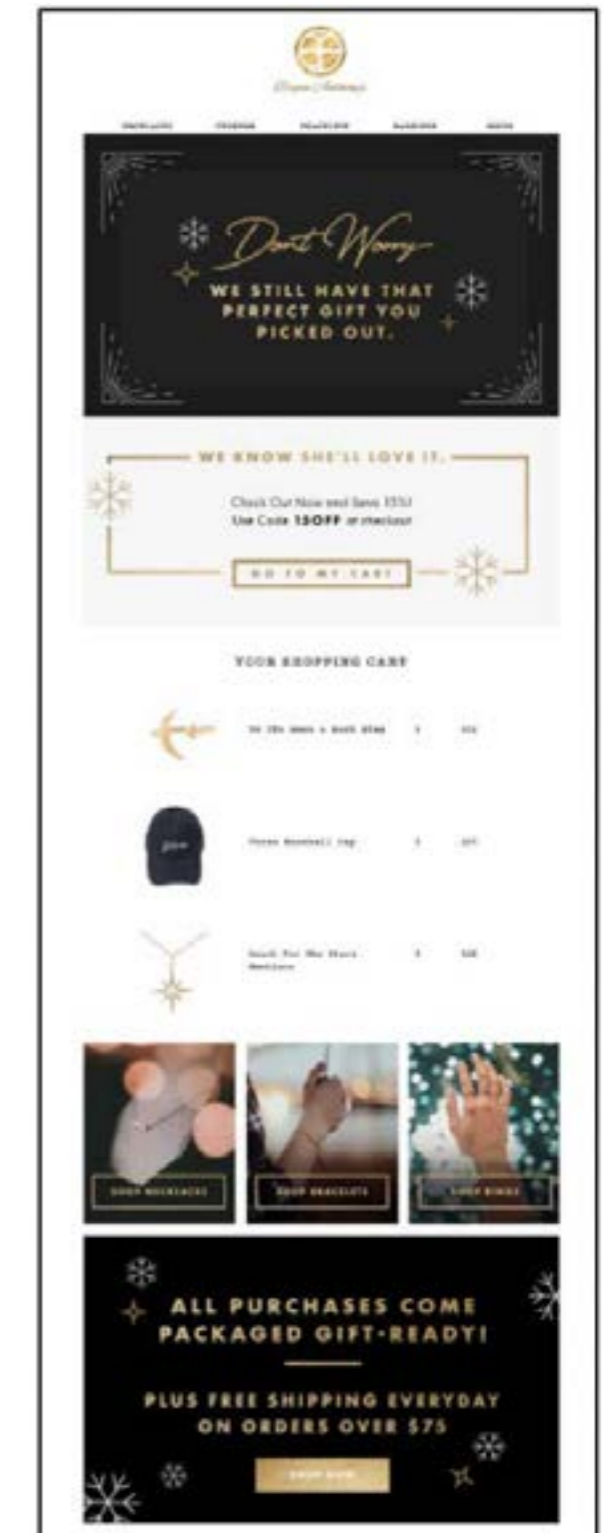
- ◆ Lift suppressions to ensure contacts are able to take advantage of the best deals possible, regardless of where they are in their subscriber journey.
- ◆ Update cart/browse abandon messaging to have holiday look and feel and speak to gifting others or yourself.
- ◆ Tighten up the timing (trigger earlier, decrease the duration between touches) to take a more aggressive approach.
- ◆ Launch re-engagement / win-back automation pre-holiday to stem the tide of unsubscribes likely to come in Q1.



Business as Usual Cart Abandon:



Holiday Cart Abandon:





## ✦ 10. Have a Contingency Plan

If you want to make the retail gods laugh, tell them your plans. But seriously, even the best-laid plans sometimes go awry.

It's in your best interest to plan for the worst by building out contingency plans for a few key scenarios:

### Your Offer Tanks

If your Black Friday/Cyber Monday campaigns don't perform as expected, it's helpful to have back-up campaigns at the ready.

Have a steeper discount, compelling add-on, or "offer extended" email in your back pocket and ready to deploy as needed.

### Your Offer Does Better Than Expected



This is a good problem to have, but you might want to give shoppers more time to take advantage.

Have an "offer extended" message ready to go to capitalize on surprise successes.

### You Send an Email with an Error / Have Site Issues

Take some time to map out the criteria for sending an "oops" email. Only mail an apology if the issue prevented customers from shopping or caused a negative customer experience (site outage, wrong promo code, broken link).

If the issue is a typo, however cringe-worthy it might feel, you're only

going to annoy subscribers with a follow-up.

Have the bones of an apology email built out and ready to customize with specifics.

## Wrapping Up

There's no shortage of opportunities to optimize your email program for the holiday season, so don't feel like you have to do it all.

Pick out the strategies above that are relevant to your business and score them based on the level of effort and the potential return to guide prioritization of projects.

Get a holiday post-mortem on the books for January to review analytics, celebrate wins, identify opportunities to improve in future years, and streamline your planning efforts for holiday 2020 when we do it all over again...

Happy mailing!



# TOP HOLIDAY SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN IDEAS TO TRY

People's emotions are actively engaged with a combination of excitement and nostalgia. If you can tap into that, then you can often multiply the effectiveness of your social media efforts.

Most people simply phone in their holiday marketing, though. Many will just slap some clip art together, offer a small promotional discount, post it to Facebook, and call it a day.

Then they'll wonder why they didn't get much traction.



## ✦ Decorate Your Profile

This is the first and most obvious component of social media marketing for the holidays and it takes the least effort.

Simply update your cover photo and profile picture to reflect the holiday.

For your cover photo, this might mean replacing your normal photo with one of your staff wearing Halloween costumes in front of your building or maybe throwing candy from a Christmas float. Or you might just use a holiday-themed graphic.

How you handle your profile picture might depend on whether it's a headshot or a logo.

For example, if we're talking about a headshot, you might put on a Santa hat or reindeer antlers. If we're talking about a logo you might superimpose falling snow over your logo or drop some candy canes or holly in the corner of the image.

On some platforms, you might even use holiday-themed background colors in some of your posts leading up to a holiday. You could even include holiday-themed static images or animated gifs in your posts.

## ✦ Be Like Santa



Everyone loves getting gifts. Well, maybe except for those people with warrants who got lured into an arrest by police under the guise of a free prize.

But pretty much everyone else does.

This can make gift-giving a powerful way to generate exposure through

social media. Some holidays may be better suited for this, such as Christmas or Valentine's Day.

But it can work for most holidays. And the beauty of this approach is that it's exactly the kind of thing that can get a lot of people talking about it and your company on social media.

Now when I talk about giving a gift, it's important to point out that it doesn't necessarily have to be expensive, but it does need to have some real value.

I'll give you an example of what not to do. I worked with a photographer several years ago who sent me a Christmas "gift" that consisted of a cheap Christmas card with a note handwritten on the inside that said:

"I wanted to thank you for being a customer. As a Christmas gift to you, I'd like to offer you a 10% discount on any new photography projects between now and the end of the year."

That's not a gift.

It's a promotion. And not a very impressive one at that. If you're going to give a gift, give an actual gift with no strings attached.

And that gift should be of sufficient value, relative to the price point of your products or services, but it doesn't need to be related to your business.

For example, you might send out a fancy box of Christmas chocolates to their top customers. In a tight-knit and tech-savvy industry like ours, many of the recipients of a gift like this would immediately hop on social media to post about their amazing gift, and they would usually tag the company that sent it.

Some may and some won't, but you should never ask anyone to post about their gift because that will make the gift seem insincere. They'll probably question your motives in giving it to them, and may even question how much you really value them as a customer.

## The keys to giving the kind of gifts that are more likely to get people talking on social media are to:

- ◆ Give something of sufficient value. (When in doubt, more is better.)
- ◆ If possible, tailor the gift to their personality and interests.
- ◆ Don't ask them to post about it on social media. Not even subtly.



## ★ Holiday-Themed Content

There are a virtually unlimited number of topics you can come up with to help promote your business around a particular holiday.

### There are two paths you can take here:

1. Publish long-form content on your blog and then share it on social media
2. Publish short-form content only on social media

So what kind of content is going to get people talking and encourage them to share it?

## Long-Form Content

While this content probably won't drive traffic from an organic search perspective in the short term, it can start to drive traffic from a social perspective immediately.

This is because it's exactly the type of content people are likely to share while a particular holiday is at the front of their mind.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

### Halloween

- ◆ The best horror movies. You could further refine this by creating a separate post for the scariest, funniest, or kidfriendly horror movies.
- ◆ A comprehensive list of local Halloween events.
- ◆ The origin of various Halloween traditions.
- ◆ Halloween decorating ideas
- ◆ Top horror movie villains.
- ◆ A list of Halloween treats for kids with food sensitivities.
- ◆ Scary short stories from local authors



### Christmas

- ◆ The best Christmas movies. You could further refine this by creating a separate post for kids, teen, and general Christmas movies.
- ◆ A list of gift ideas for a particular type of person (Digital marketers, journalists, construction workers, Marines, etc.)
- ◆ Stories shared from people about their worst or best
- ◆ Christmas memories.
- ◆ A comprehensive list of local Christmas events.

- ◆ The origin of various Christmas traditions.
- ◆ Christmas decorating ideas
- ◆ A list of bargain, luxury or gag Christmas gifts.



### Valentine's Day

- ◆ The best (or worst) Valentine or romantic movies.
- ◆ A list of gift ideas based on how long you've been in a relationship.
- ◆ A lot of unique Valentine's Day get alwavs.
- ◆ Stories shared from people about their worst or best Valentine's Day.
- ◆ A list of local romantic restaurants.
- ◆ A list of bargain, luxury or gag Valentine gifts.

## Short-Form Content

Polls, questions, and funny memes rule here. The idea is to generate quick engagement in the form of comments and shares.

This is a starting point, but to get significant traction, you'll need to find a way to connect holiday-themed topics to your business and/ or industry.

### Halloween

- ◆ A poll of the best (or worst) horror villains
- ◆ Ask people to share their scariest Halloween experience.
- ◆ A poll of the best (or worst) candies.
- ◆ Ask people to comment on the plot holes in popular horror movies.



- ◆ A poll on trick or treating vs going to a Halloween party

### Christmas

- ◆ A poll of the best (or worst) Christmas movies. Bonus points if you can get people debating whether Die Hard is a Christmas movie or an action movie.
- ◆ Ask people to explain their theory of the science behind how Santa travels around the world, flies, carries all those toys, and gets in and out of homes undetected.
- ◆ A poll of people's favorite Christmas food.
- ◆ Ask people to comment on the best or worst gift they've received or given.
- ◆ Ask people to share their best Christmas memory.

### Valentine's Day

- ◆ A poll of the best (or worst) romantic movies.
- ◆ Ask people to comment on the best or worst gift they've received or given.
- ◆ Ask people to share their best Valentine memory.
- ◆ A poll on who they "love" most in your industry or what they love about your industry.
- ◆ Ask people to share how they fell in love or how they knew their partner was "the one."

**Note:** In cases where there are multiple options, each option should be its own post.

## ✦ Create a Holiday-Inspired Hashtag

Hashtags can be a great way to get a lot of people talking about a particular topic while making it easy for everyone to find those conversations.

All it takes, in some cases, is for a few people to use a particular hashtag in order for it to take off.

The key is to make it powerful, funny, or timely, or ideally, a combination of those elements.

Some ideas might include:

### Halloween

- ◆ #ScarySEOTactics
- ◆ #NightmareClientStories
- ◆ #RealEstateHorrorStories
- ◆ #TrickOrTreatIdeas
- ◆ #HorrorFilledBusinessIdeas

### Christmas

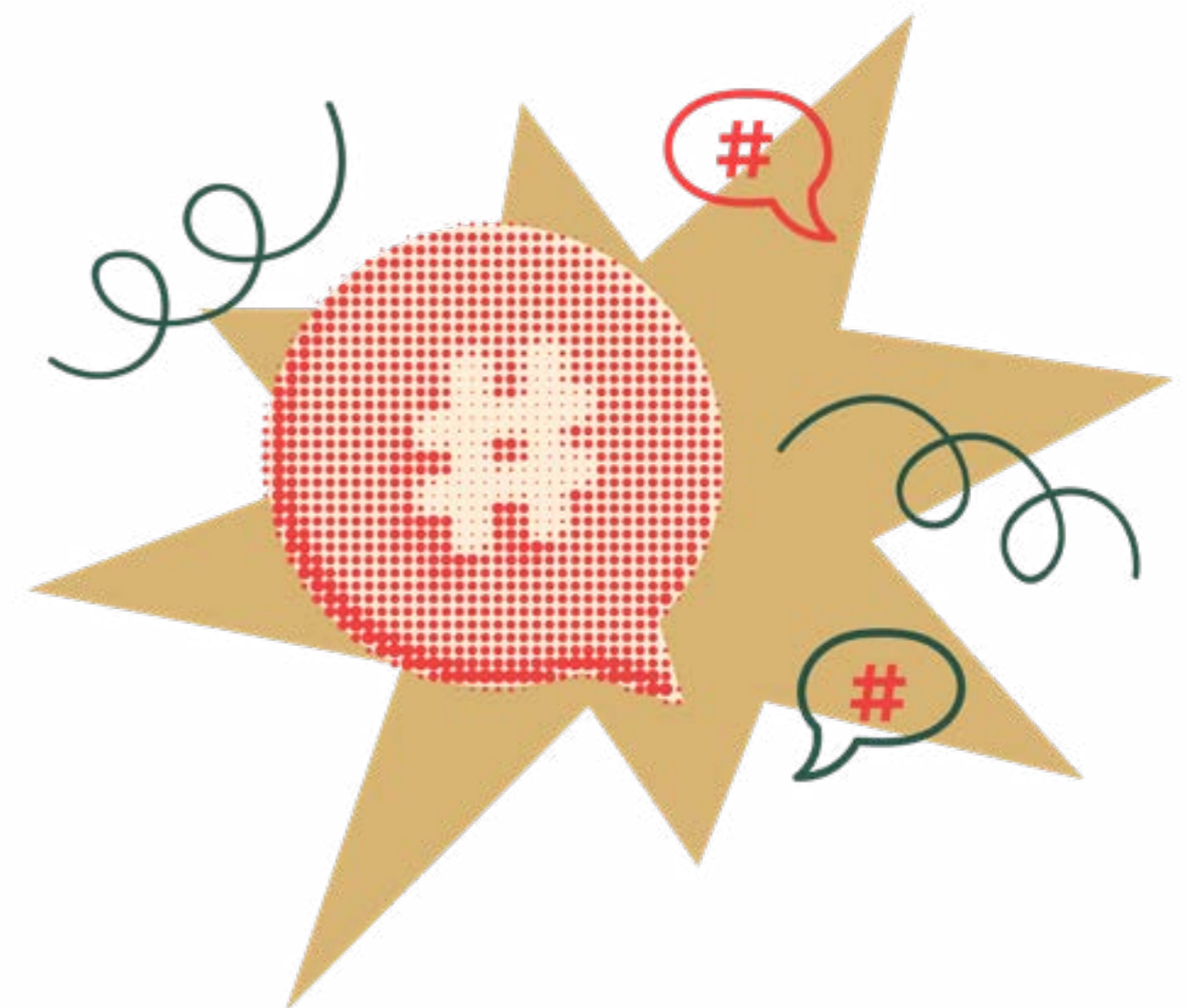
- ◆ #BestChristmasGiftEver
- ◆ #WorstChristmasGiftEver
- ◆ #ChristmasGiftsForHomeBuyers
- ◆ #MyDreamSecretSanta
- ◆ #AllIWantForChristmas

### Valentine's Day

- ◆ #BestGiftFromMyLove
- ◆ #WorstGiftFromMyEx
- ◆ #WhatILoveAboutSEO
- ◆ #HowIMetMetMyLove
- ◆ #CompaniesILove

I'm going to make a very important statement here – avoid tying politics in with your hashtags because that can go south really fast.

It's equally important to make sure the hashtag you want to use isn't already in use. The baked goods company, Entenmanns, learned this the hard way when they jumped on the #NotGuilty hashtag a few years ago.



## ✦ Elf of the Shelf

If you have kids, or know anyone who does, or have been at least somewhat conscious for the last several years, then you've probably seen the festive, yet creepy Elf on the Shelf toy.

If you haven't, well, first, welcome back from your coma. Next, I'll give you a quick explanation of what it is.

The short version is that it's a magical elf who has traveled down to your house on Santa's orders to monitor and report on your kid's behavior.

From the time your kid wakes up, well into the evening after they're asleep, these elves watch them. Then, after your kid has finally gone to sleep, the elf travels back to the North Pole to report to Santa.

This explains why the elf is in a different place each morning. Often doing something funny.

Why can't these elves just use email? Or FaceTime?

I don't know.

What I do know is that you can use this elf to promote your business.

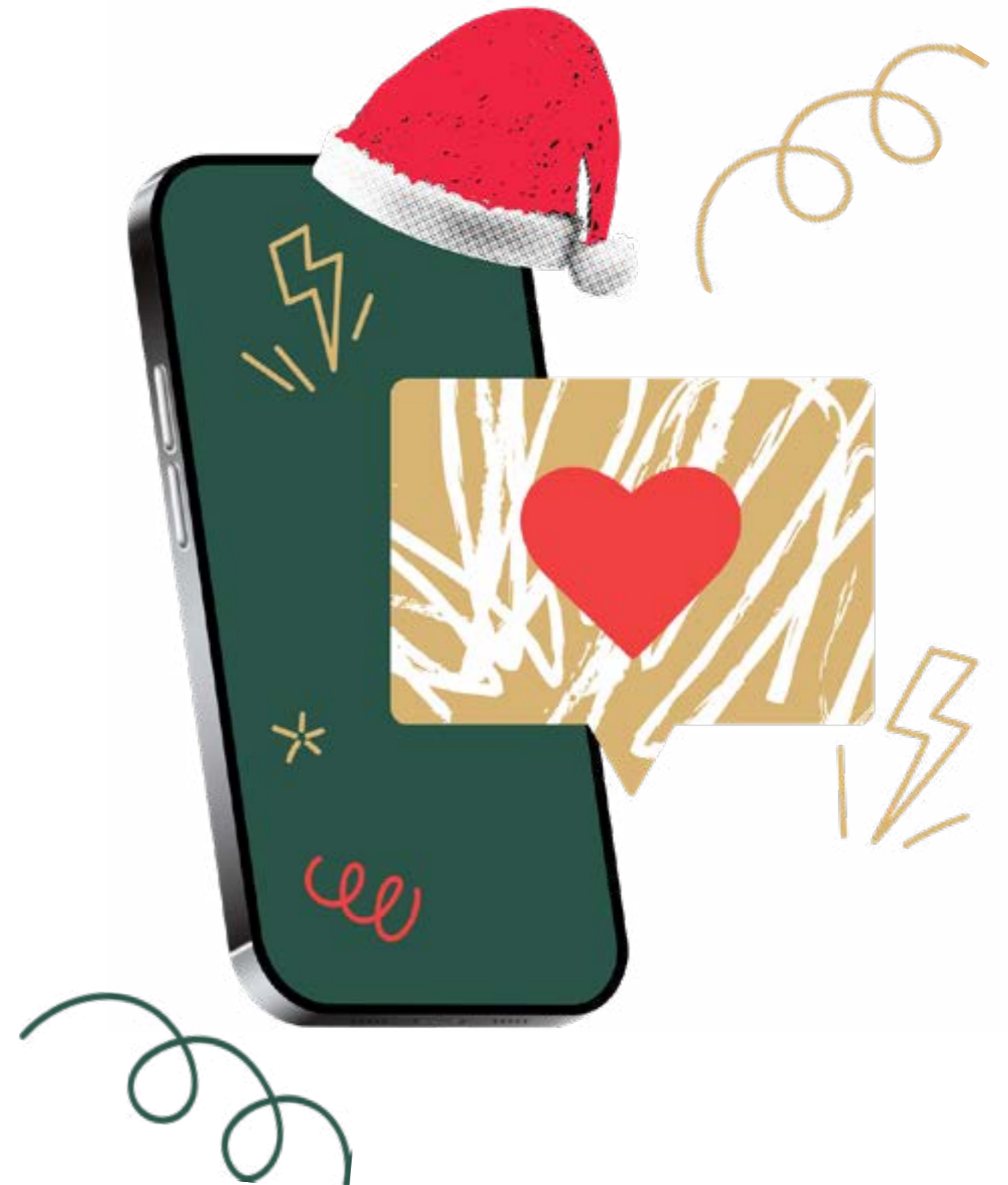
"How can this creepy stalker elf help promote my business?" you ask?

In the same way that parents set these elves up doing funny things at home, you can set them up doing funny things in your business, and then posting them to social media each morning.

Ideally, your elf should do things closely related to your business. For example, a home builder might have an elf sitting atop a truss wearing a tiny helmet.

But you'll get even more traction if your elf has a habit of doing things that are funny or ridiculous.

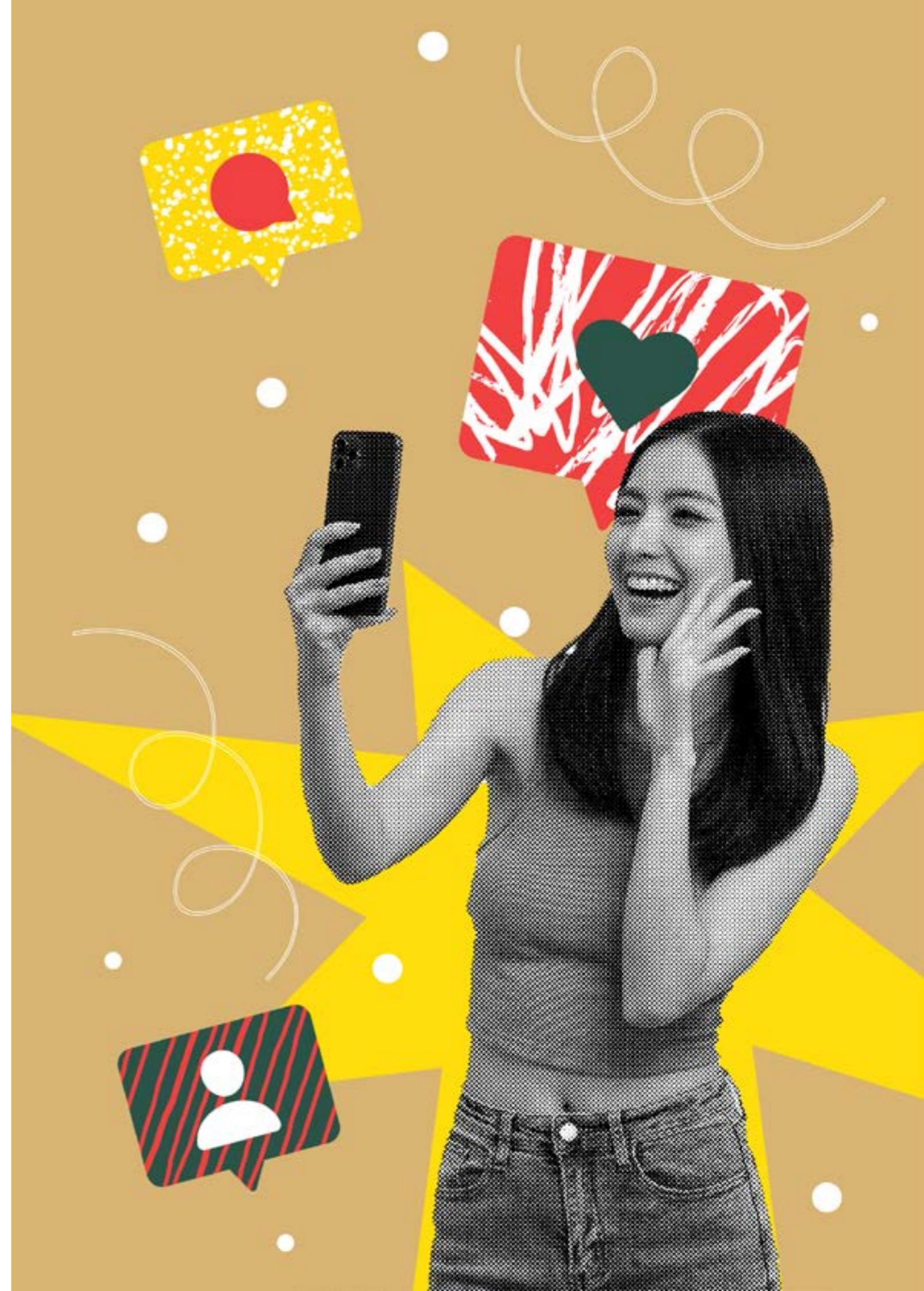
That same home builder might have their elf sitting on a tiny front end loader, with an opened bag of cement in the background, dumping a tiny load of cement into a cup of coffee.



# CREATIVE IDEAS TO WORK WITH INFLUENCERS THIS HOLIDAY

Social media has become one of the most prevalent forms of interaction, news and information gathering, and sharing today.

So it comes as no surprise that social media marketing has rapidly grown to be one of the most operative tools for businesses, with 73% of marketers believing it has been “somewhat effective” or “very effective” for their growth. This is especially impactful during the holiday season.





## Why Work with Influencers?

Influencer marketing is unique in that it allows consumers to see products in action - by real people.

Rather than hoping that your target customers will be able to visualize themselves wearing your new line of handbags, why not show them exactly how it looks on one of their favorite Instagram fashionistas?

Social media personalities (non-celebrities who are basically celebrities) have earned the trust of their followers, so when they recommend a product or service in their niche, their audience is more likely to convert to a new customer.

Utilizing an influential figure rather than dumping money into an expensive advertising campaign can help you avoid problematic social media algorithms and an upsurge in ad costs over the holidays.

Instead, let's increase your exposure to niche audiences who are more likely to spend their money using influencer holiday marketing.



## How Can You Work with Influencers This Holiday Season?

### ✦ Let the Influencer Take the Wheel

Influencer marketing is not about creating a new narrative; it's about how your business fits into the influencer's existing narrative. Their followers follow them for a reason.

Finding unique ways to apply sponsored content to their messaging is a powerful way to get your products in front of potential buyers, but let them do the messaging.

The best influencers are popular because they are creative. They know how to produce aesthetically pleasing photos, and they know how to integrate and promote products in a way that their audience will enjoy.

They know exactly who their audience is and what they like to see. And, they're usually way better at this than businesses are.

Rather than agonizing over how you're going to create a new holiday marketing campaign that stands out from the rest, simply give your influencer your product and a few message ideas, and they'll do the rest.

In fact, the fewer guidelines they have, the more creative they are likely to be when it comes to creating their content to their specific audience.

In return, your business will get an authentic message that promotes engagement and resonates with your future buyers. This is way less of an #ad feel and increases the chance for conversions.

## ✦ Choose Influencers that Embody Your Brand

An influencer marketing campaign is dropping a new set of wireless headphones on a beauty tutorial page.

While the influencer may reach some people who would be interested in the product, because hey, we all love music, it would be pretty limited.

This type of influencer is very niche and has a following largely consisting of people who want to learn makeup and skincare tips and tricks.

They aren't following this influencer for music advice, though they may listen, it's a stretch.

If the influencer suddenly posts a picture of themselves wearing these wireless headphones in a blatant #ad, it may be a bit offputting and confusing.

There's no strategy there. What are they going to say about them?

"I love wearing these headphones while I wash my face?"

No.

On the contrary, dropping a new line of activewear on a popular yogi's social media page is the perfect way for a retailer to get the word out about their brand.

The influencer could talk about the quality of the materials, breathability, the selection, and the fit, helping their following understand if the clothing would work for them.

Those who practice yoga, or those who know someone who practices yoga, may think "What a cute workout set! This is the PERFECT Christmas present for so-and-so [or me]!"

As opposed to "why the hell is she promoting headphones? I came here to learn how to make my eyebrows on fleek. Unfollow."

Choosing personalities that already embody your brand is essential in influencer marketing. Otherwise, you'll be wasting your time and sponsored content dollars. But how can you find the right people?

Use explore tools to search hashtags that are relevant to your niche. Rather than browsing 'Recent,' select 'Top,' and you will dive into a wormhole of content posted by potential partners.

Because platforms like Instagram are visual engines, it should be easy to find someone who speaks to your brand and imaging.

You can even browse their content to see if they've done sponsored content before to get an idea of what you would be getting.

These days, followers are quite vocal when influencers become "sell-outs," and this is often when their content and messaging do not align with their existing narrative. Find the right influencer, and you will be more successful.

## ✦ Think Small

The best influencer(s) for your brand doesn't have to have a huge following (100,000+); micro-influencers (somewhere between 1,000 and 50,000 followers) are an excellent and more affordable way to reach the right people when you are just dipping your toes into influencer marketing, especially if you have a smaller budget.

Micro-influencers are the "average Joes or Janes" of social media; they are everyday people who don't charge an arm and a leg for sponsored content. Plus, they tend to have a higher engagement rate than influencers with large followings.

They also often have a very specific audience, which is ideal for businesses looking to access a small niche group of people.

Because of the relevance and higher engagement rates, you could

theoretically reach more people by working with several micro-influencers instead of working with just a couple of the big dogs. And it would cost you less, way less.

## ★ Select a Focus for the Holiday Gift Guide

One of the biggest mistakes companies make is trying to promote all of their products at once.

We get it, you have a lot to offer! But the more you try to market, the more difficult it will be to sell in large quantities.

An effective influencer marketing campaign will focus on seasonal items or your best sellers. Put together a gift set or select a limited time product.

The more universal product selection, the better. This way, potential buyers don't have to think too hard about which item to get. Instead, they know exactly what they want to get.

For example, if you sell skin care or beauty products, package up the top five customer favorites and sell them as a gift bundle.

Find a selection of highly engaging beauty influencers and have them promote the set to their followers as the "perfect gift" for the beauty enthusiast.

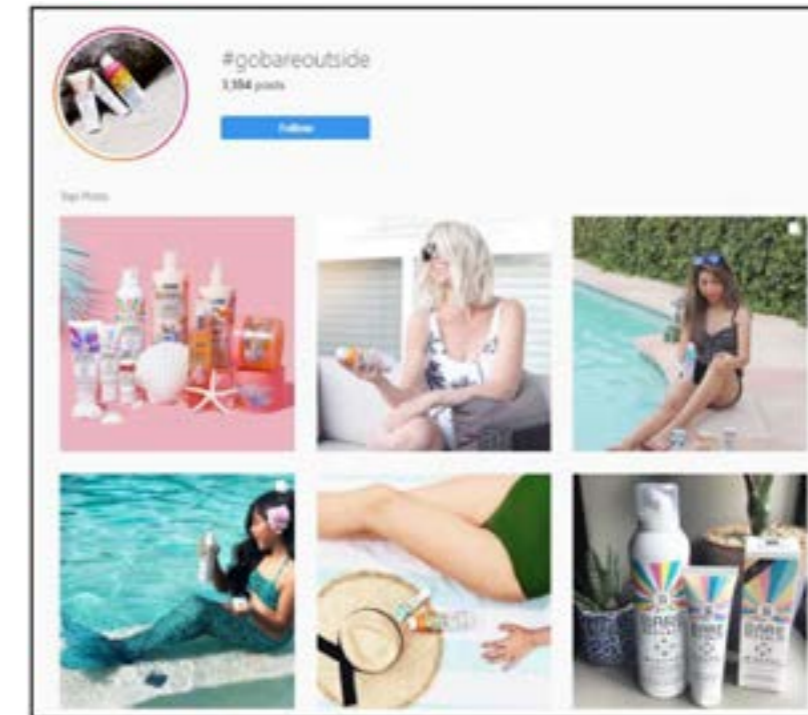
### Use Hashtags

Hashtags are one of the best ways for users to find new content that they know they will be interested in. In conjunction with your holiday campaign, create a unique, catchy, and relevant hashtags to be used by all involved influencers. This is usually just 1-2 hashtags, not 10.

For example, popular sunscreen brand Bare Republic uses their domain

name as a hashtag for multiple purposes.

On Instagram, #GoBareOutside will show you several posts, all of which are directly associated with their branding.



Visiting any of these posts will tell you if the content was posted at an influencer's own free will, or if they were working in collaboration with a brand.

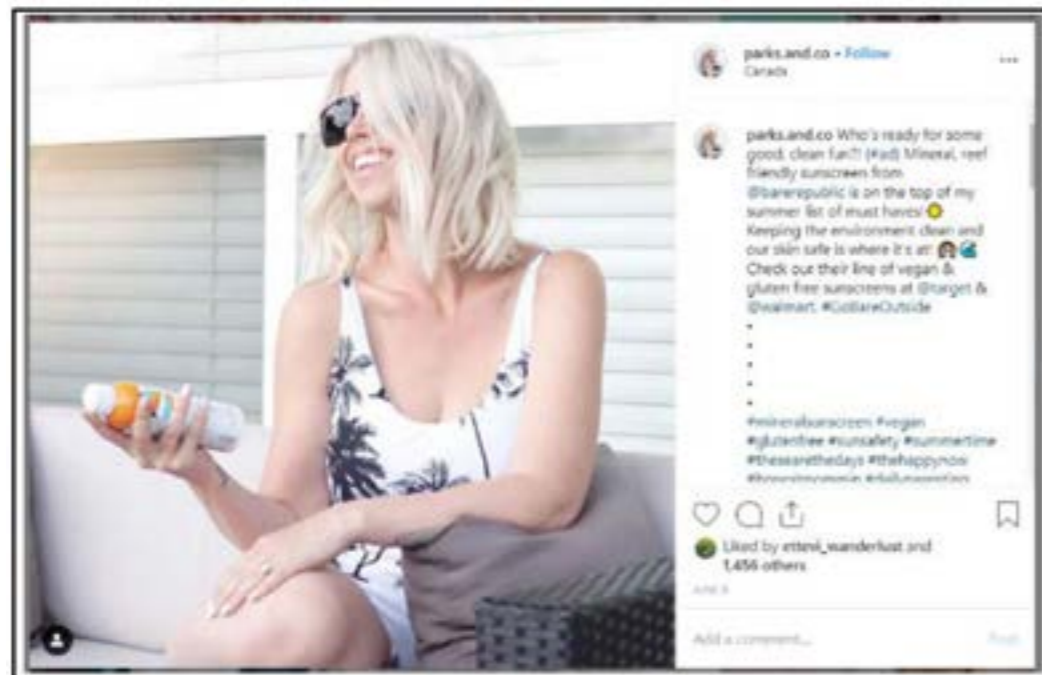
A post by @parks.and.co shows us that this influencer not only used #GoBareOutside, but also #ad, which indicates that they were paid to promote this product.

Bare Republic also uses this hashtag to gain permission to share other influencer's content on their own feed.

Here, Ulta Beauty made a post about Bare Republic being available in their store, and the brand liked the content enough that they wanted to post it, too. So, they asked Ulta to hashtag

#GoBareOutside.

Hashtags are an extremely useful way to batch up content related to your campaigns and direct potential buyers to more information related to your brand.



## ✦ Include an Urgent Call-to-Action

All holiday marketing campaigns should include a clear call-toaction, and sponsored influencer campaigns are no exception.

When it comes to the Instagram influencer, this can come in many forms. If they are promoting your content in their Instagram stories, they may prompt viewers to “swipe up” to visit your website or landing page.

If they are promoting a product in a post, they may say to “tap” the photo for shoppable products, or to “click the link in bio” to access more information.

They may even ask that followers participate in a holiday giveaway by following your brand’s page and engaging with a post.

No matter what you want your influencer to do, be sure to track any and all links to measure the effectiveness of your campaign. Some brands even use influencer-specific hashtags to help track the incoming traffic.

In short, one of the best ways to maximize your business profits this holiday season is by partnering with influencers.

What better way to target your preferred customer than by promoting your products or services through a popular social media figure?



# HOW TO CREATE A HOLIDAY CONTENT STRATEGY

Whether it's Black Friday or Christmas or New Year's Eve, every holiday presents an opportunity to stand out from your competitors and grab some of that holiday traffic.

Having a content game plan even months in advance ensures that you won't be stressing when the holidays come around.

Want to get a head start and create a content "advent" calendar of your own?

Here's how to plan out all of your holiday marketing content while still having time to enjoy the festivities.



## ✦ Anticipate the Trends

The holidays come around every year, so whether you have been in business for a while or are just starting out, it's likely that you're aware of some yearly trends. If not, it's worth a Google search to pull up studies that have the stats from previous holiday seasons.

For example, one study found that mobile app usage and mobile shopping go up during the holidays—likely because people are trying to avoid the crowds and the inconvenience of making multiple shopping trips.

At the same time, marketing trends show that more consumers are on the prowl for deals during this time of year, trying to strike a bargain to save some cash.

What does this mean for your content strategy?

Well, by staying in tune with the trends, you can better anticipate what type of content will strike a chord with your audience.

Do you need more articles optimized for mobile search?

Need to launch some sweet discounts?

Are users searching for holiday gift guides?

With the numbers in front of you, you can create content that you know people will be looking for.



## ✦ Ask Your Audience

Can't find data regarding holiday trends in your industry? Ask your audience what they want.

Many marketers and content creators skip the market research step even when it comes to regular content planning, thinking that they already know what their target audience wants.

The truth is, the best way to know is to ask them directly.

Prior to creating your holiday content strategy, send your audience surveys regarding what kind of content they are hoping to see during the holidays.

**They may not tell you outright, but you can brainstorm some of your own ideas based on their answers to questions like:**

- ◆ What's your #1 concern going into this holiday season?
- ◆ How are you planning for the holidays this year?
- ◆ What are you most looking forward to during the holidays this year?
- ◆ How could [your brand] help your holidays run smoother? What's your best holiday memory?

The list of questions can go on and on, but the goal is to get a better idea about their goals/concerns/struggles/interests going into the holidays. With this information, you can plan out content that is of interest to your audience.

Further, sharing a survey is a great opportunity to tell them, "Hey! Look out for our great holiday content coming out soon!"

## ★ Audit Your Existing Content

Before you create any new content, you need to audit your existing content to assess what you already have, what content could be updated, and what new content should be created.

If you have been in business for a while and have published holiday-related content before, it may be possible to update your content for the new season. Or, it may make sense to start from scratch.

Ultimately, it depends on whether the content is current enough to be relevant for the upcoming holidays and whether there is ample traffic potential.

For example, with holiday content, often users are looking for tips, gifts, news, and trends for the current year. They may be searching for “2019 holiday guide” or “best new years party ideas 2019”

Your 2018 guides may be chock-full of last year’s keywords. The tips or products on the list could be outdated. You should decide whether you should optimize it for the current year, or write a completely new piece of content.

You should also factor in existing content for internal linking purposes to help drive traffic to additional pages on your website.

## ★ Activate Creative Content Planning

Once you have some past holiday data on-hand and some tipoffs from your existing audience, you can dive into the fun part of content planning.

Now’s your chance to think outside the box and brainstorm content ideas that are relevant to the holidays.

Using organic keyword research is a great place to start.

You can play around with holiday-related terms and identify keywords that are work creating content around for your site. If your marketing strategy involves search engine optimization, this is the way to go.

However, you may want to create content for other marketing channels as well. Google Ads, Facebook Ads, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and email marketing are all channels to consider.

What topics would really grab your audience’s attention on these platforms?

In what ways can you repurpose the content for wider circulation? Are there any killer content ideas that you can think of that would stand out from the competition?

## ★ Align Topics with Your Goals

Of course, not every content idea is going to be gold. After generating an exhaustive list of ideas, it’s time to narrow it down. It helps to start by identifying which content ideas most closely align with your business goals.

For instance, if your goal is to generate more organic traffic, sending gift boxes to Instagram influencers may not be the way to go.

Similarly, if you are hoping to create a buzz on social media, pouring all of your energy into a 30 Days of Holiday Deals email campaign likely won’t get you there.

### Pick out the content ideas that:

- ◆ Align with your existing business goals.
- ◆ You know you can execute successfully.

Diving into new waters during the thick of the holiday season could result in a dire sink or swim situation for your content marketing.

## ★ Arrange Topics by Timeliness & Priority

On theme with the point above, your holiday content needs to “make sense” for your business.

In other words, it should be strategic, planned out, purposeful, and onbrand. Simply creating content for the sake of being festive won't do much for your marketing.

That's why it's recommended to also consider arranging your content in terms of timeliness and priority.

Not only should the content be ready for launch prior to the actual holiday, but if you are creating multiple pieces for a single holiday, the content should make sense in progression.

For example, a “Complete Guide to Getting More Holiday Traffic” would naturally come before the “Ultimate Guide to Converting Holiday Traffic into Leads”.

Assuming your audience will encounter multiple pieces of content from your brand, it's best that your content is organized in a sensible and strategic way.

## ★ Add Seasonal Photos

The holidays are full of feel-good smells, sights, and sounds. Tap into that nostalgia and the holiday spirit by adding seasonal images to your content.

Images have been found to make content more engaging, and one of the best ways to snag some of that holiday traffic is to engage users with some festive, attention-grabbing images.

If your budget allows, ditch the stock photos and capture some high-quality images of your own.

Or, hire a graphic designer to make some on-season images for your blog posts, social media posts, and ad campaigns.

You can then repurpose this content across platforms, saving you time and money on your holiday content marketing.

## ★ Advertise Your Content Across Platforms

When it comes to content creation, I'm not a big fan of the “post and pray” method myself.

Why rely on one platform when you could generate traffic from multiple channels with a single piece of content?





### Some platforms worth sharing your content on include:

- ◆ Facebook
- ◆ Twitter
- ◆ Your blog
- ◆ YouTube
- ◆ Email
- ◆ LinkedIn
- ◆ Instagram
- ◆ Paid ads
- ◆ Reddit
- ◆ Pinterest
- ◆ Guest blogs

Map out a content plan and schedule that includes when and how you plan on posting your content across multiple platforms.

With tools like Buffer and Hootsuite, you can even write your captions and set the featured images in advance.

Simply schedule it out ahead of time and you won't be scrambling to post content during the holidays.

## ★ Analyze Results

To truly make the most of your holiday content marketing, it's best to monitor progress and adjust your content accordingly.

While it may be tempting to simply publish and put up your feet, it's likely that readers will have questions, and inquiries will come flooding in.

You should be prepared to handle an influx of new leads and traffic. On the other hand, you may find that your content doesn't go viral and that you need to tweak things to give it a boost.

You or someone on your team should be available to respond to readers' comments, fix technical issues, further optimize content, and put out

any fires that may come up.

Information is power, and having the data at your fingertips will give you the power to make major improvements in your content and learn valuable content planning lessons for the future.

## ★ Apply Past Lessons to Future Content

If creating a holiday content strategy isn't your first rodeo, it's likely you have a few tips and tricks that you have picked up from previous years.

If so, it's best to avoid making the same mistakes twice. Some risks just don't pay off, especially when paired with the stress of the holidays.

On the other hand, maybe your content strategy has always gone off without a hitch, or you are diving into the world of holiday content planning for the very first time.

Even so, be sure to align your content with your business goals, create content that your audience is interested in, and add that special, festive touch for the holiday season.



# SEASONAL MARKETING 08

Whether it's Black Friday or Christmas or New Year's Eve, every holiday presents an opportunity to stand out from your competitors and grab some of that holiday traffic.

Having a content game plan even months in advance ensures that you won't be stressing when the holidays come around.

Want to get a head start and create a content "advent" calendar of your own?

Here's how to plan out all of your holiday marketing content while still having time to enjoy the festivities.



## ✦ Seasonal Marketing: What is it?

Any promotion that businesses create for certain times of the year, or sales seasons.

These marketing campaigns leverage the high traffic that certain times of year create, such as the winter holiday season around Christmas, Halloween and others.

Seasonal marketing often includes special season-themed promotions.

Seasonal events are a great opportunity to appeal to new and existing users with special promotions.

### Benefits

- ◆ **Appealing to seasonal excitement:** Holidays and seasonal transitions can create excitement among users due to changing weather or family gatherings
- ◆ **Offer a limited time bonus!** This limited-time offering means a user needs to act quickly to get the deal and can make a user more likely to install (Increasing brand awareness).
- ◆ **Boost product sales:** Seasonal marketing can help boost product sales and revenue by attracting new and existing users to special deals. Include them on graphics!

### Best Practices

- ◆ Change the background and use the right colors
- ◆ Make the characters relevant: Using characters and recognizable

figures can help acquire new users, as well as reactivate lapsed users. Present the characters in seasonal situations or attire to grab the users' attention.

- ◆ Make the look and messaging of the ad festive: To stay relevant, take part in the celebration!

### How to create a seasonal marketing campaign

- ◆ **Understand your audience and niche:** Understanding who you're targeting helps you create more focused marketing campaigns. Creating an ideal customer profile is a first step in understanding your user (age, location, etc).
- ◆ **Build your marketing campaign around the sentiment of the season:** Consider the sentiment of the season. Christmas or Easter can carry a sentiment of giving, compassion and family values. Maximize your offers: Offer discounts or bonuses
- ◆ **Improve your SEO:** If you have a web, can impact on your ASO as well
- ◆ **Ask for feedback:** It is a good time to ask for reviews since users are more sensitive.
- ◆ Search for competitors campaigns to be updated on the industry trends.

# Examples: Icons non Gaming

Tumblr



Capcut



Tiktok

Cyberghost

Taimi

Duolingo

# Icons Gaming

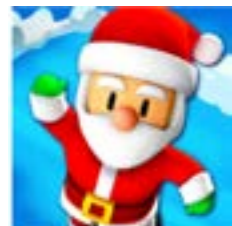
Warface



WOW Slots



Rise of Empires

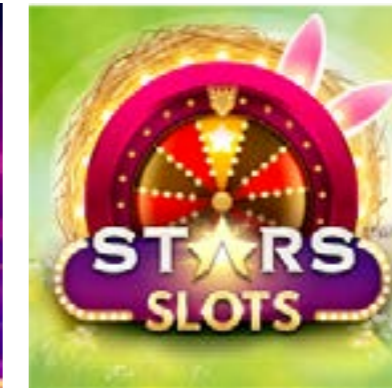


Stumble Guys

Standoff 2

Rise of Cultures

# Icons



### Examples: Feature Graphic non Gaming



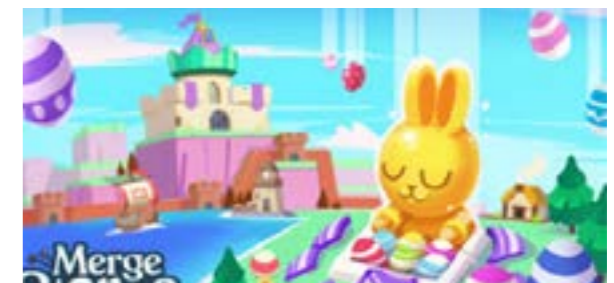
### Feature Graphic Seasons



### Gaming



### Feature Graphic

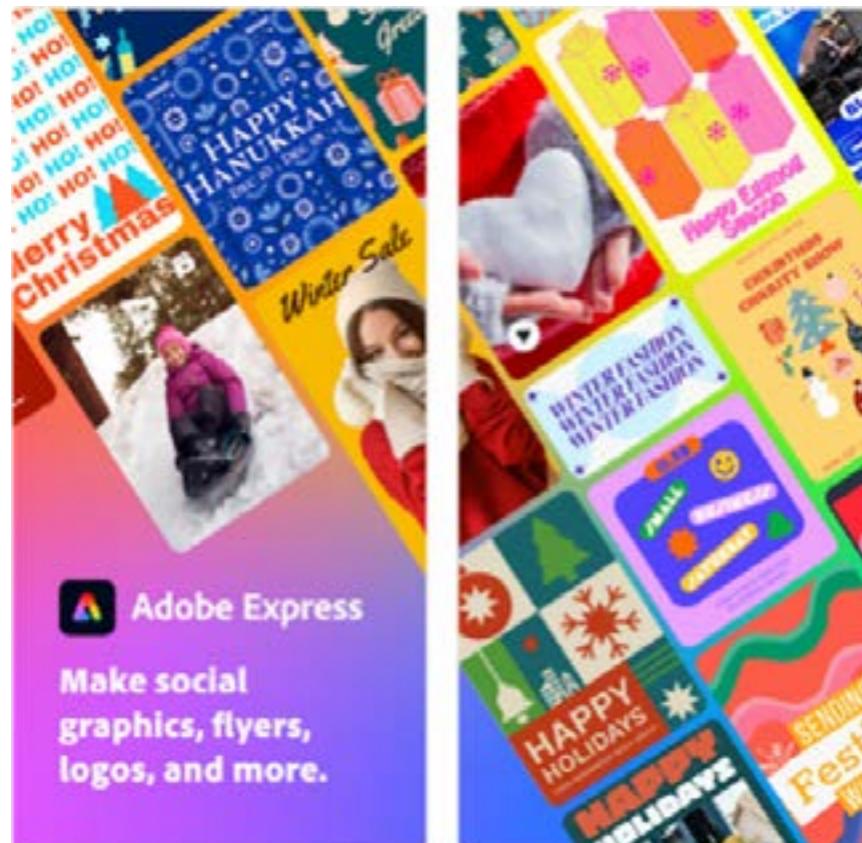


# Examples: Screenshots

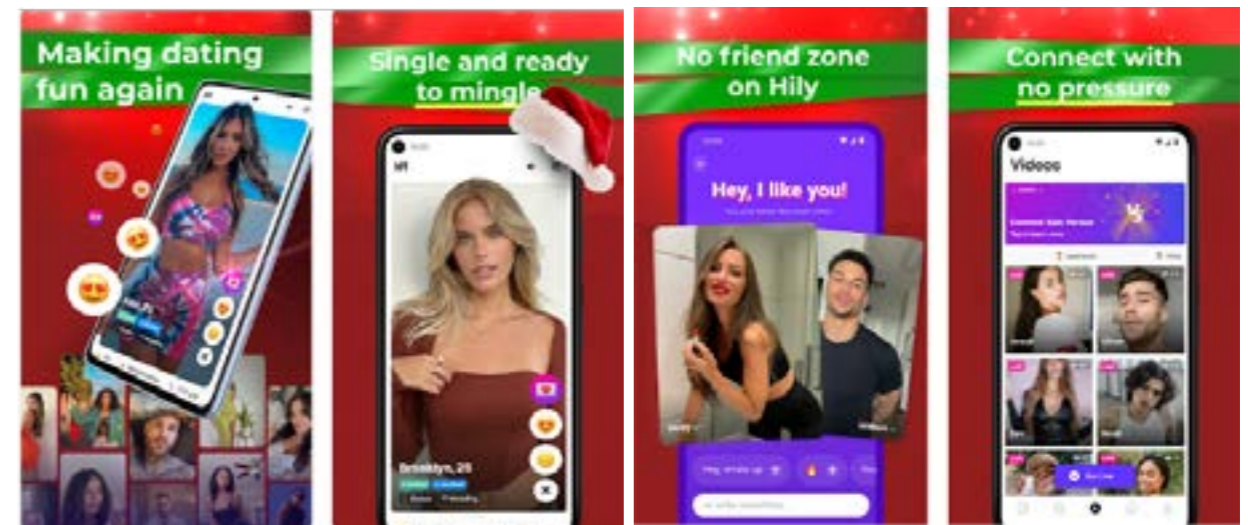
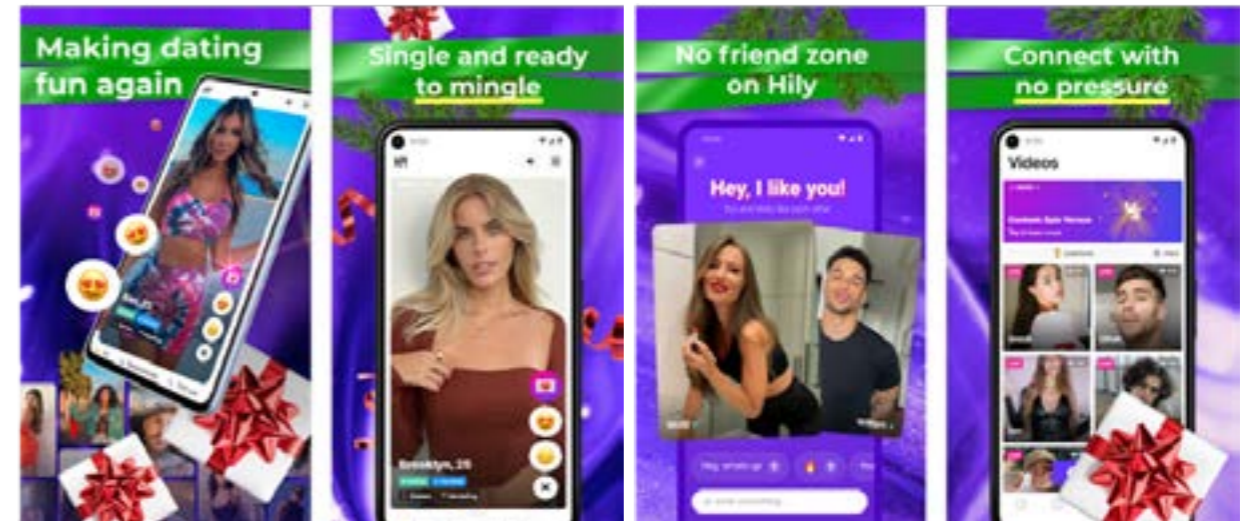
Canva



Adobe Express



Hily



# Examples: Screenshot Set Gaming

Lunar New Year



Call of Duty: Mobile



Warface



Standoff 2

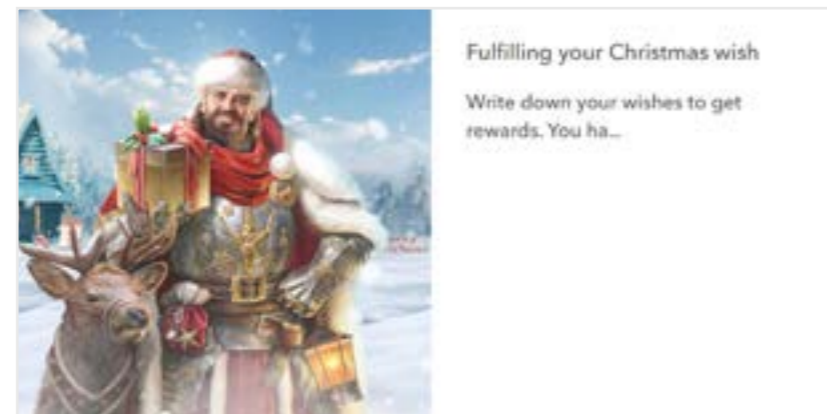


## Seasonal Examples: Promotional Content

Lord of the Rings



Rise of Empires



Clash of Clans



## Promotional Content Non-Gaming

Spotify: New York



Audible: Christmas



InShot: New Year

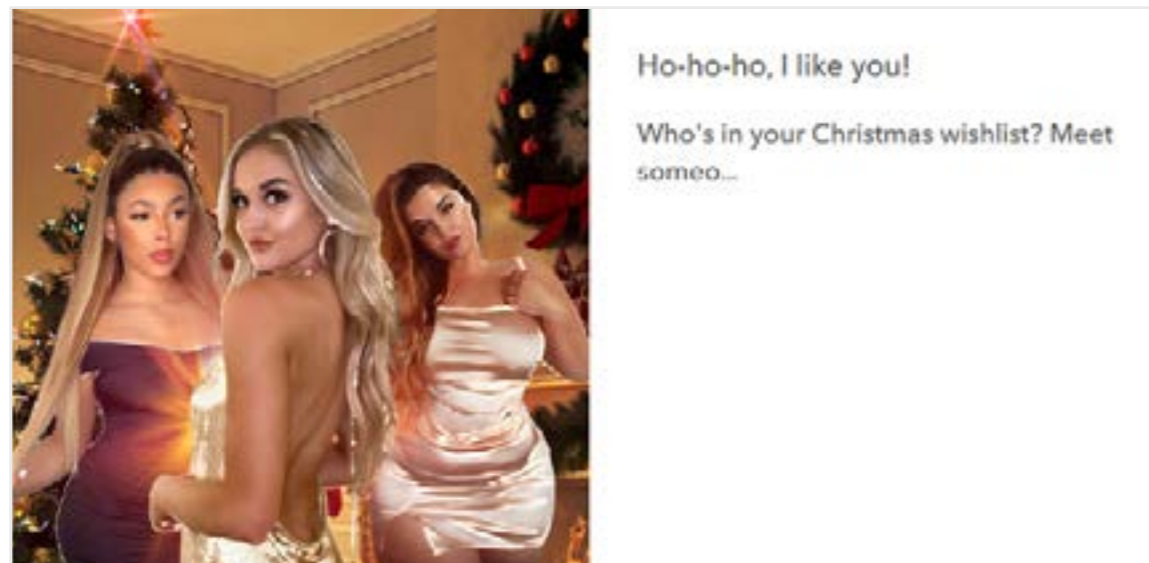




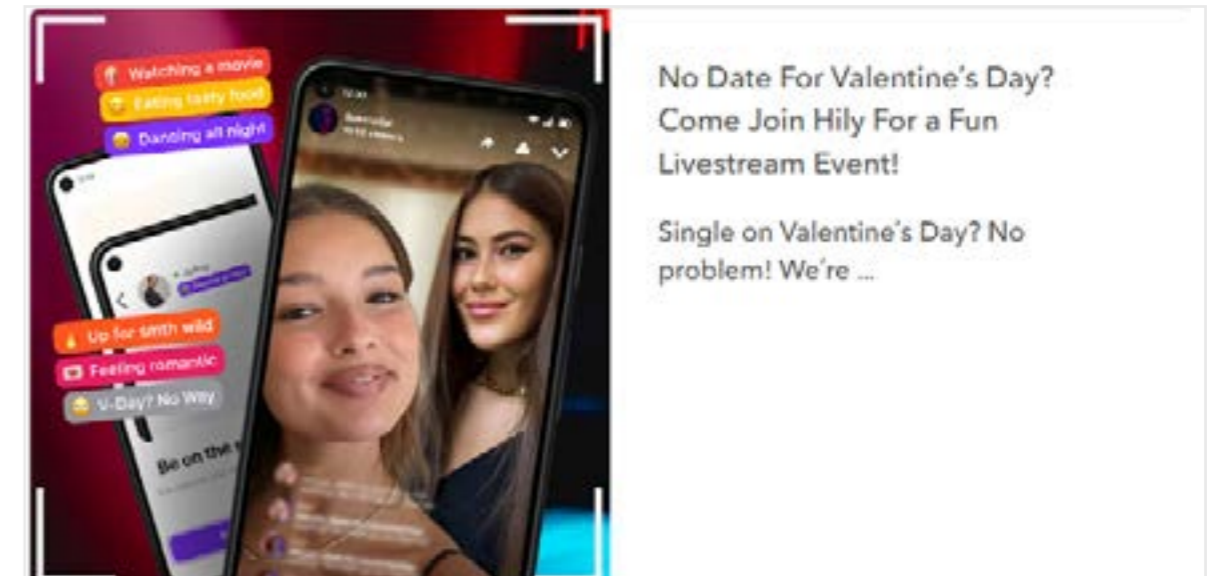
## Seasonal Examples: Promotional Content

### Hily

- ◆ Hily's Promotional Content (PC) leverages on the name of brand (which means "Hey I like you") changing the word "Hey" with "ho-ho-ho".
- ◆ The image used seems a bit off. The models appear to have a different light scheme compared to the background.

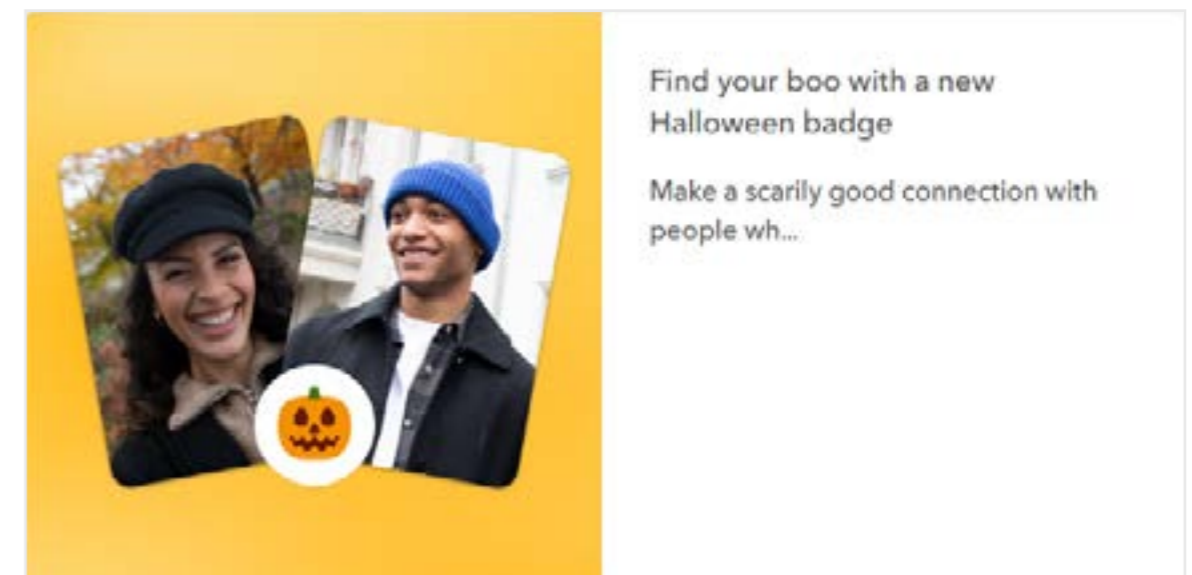


- ◆ Hily allows users to Livestream and it features this characteristic in the PC.
- ◆ The app leverages this special date by using a metadata that references to not having a date on Valentine's. This could be a delicate matter since some users would not like to spend this day alone.
- ◆ Another perspective could be using a more classic "Find your Valentine" phrase.



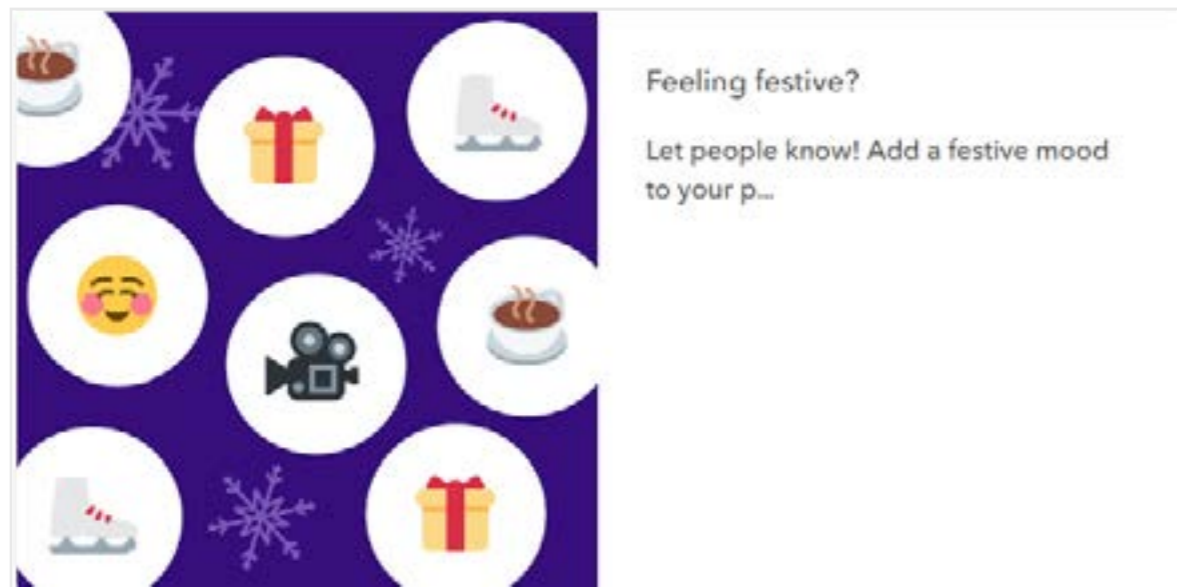
### Bumble

- ◆ Hily's Promotional Content (PC) leverages on the name of brand (which means "Hey I like you") changing the word "Hey" with "ho-ho-ho".
- ◆ The image used seems a bit off. The models appear to have a different light scheme compared to the background.



## Badoo

- ◆ Badoo promoted an event that feels oriented for both holidays (Christmas and New Year) with a picture that adds different emojis. The simple detail of the snowflakes in the background give the winter season vibe. Otherwise, the image wouldn't explain much and could also be used in any other Promotional Content.
- ◆ Elements that suggest New Year's holiday could be fireworks and lights.
- ◆ Elements that suggest Christmas holiday could be Christmas hats, socks and trees, colors (red & green), presents, candy canes.



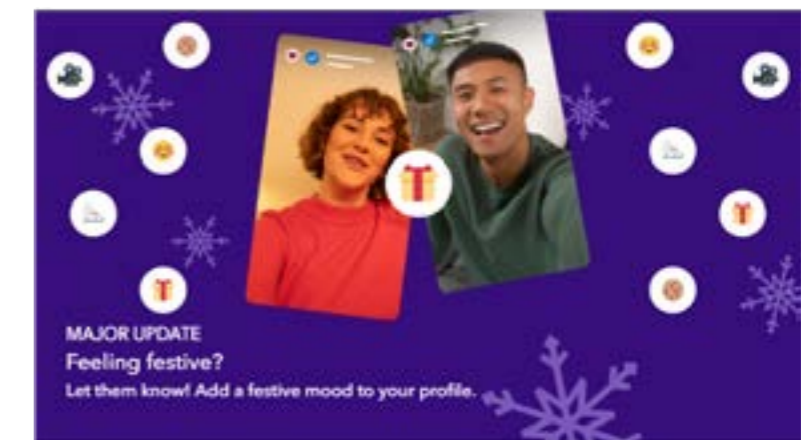
**Badoo** uses a layout similar to the one used in the PC. In this case, it adds two profiles.

**PURE** gives a Christmas vibe to one of its characters by disguising it as Santa Claus.

- ◆ Event metadata talks about giving a present.
- ◆ Remember that it is a giving holiday.

**DOWN** celebrates New Year by improving the app and refreshing profiles.

## Badoo



## PURE



## DOWN



# Seasonal Examples: Promotional Content Gaming

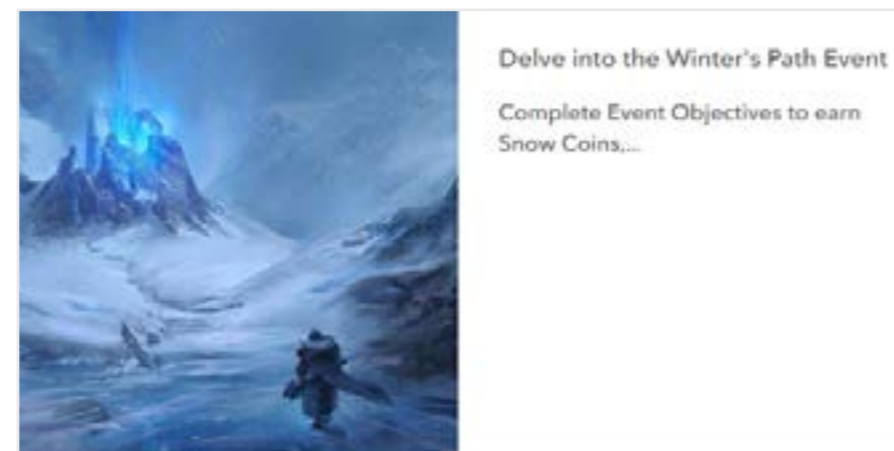
Apex Legends Mobile



War Robots Multiplayer Battles



RAID



# Seasonal Examples: In-App Events

RAID



Marvel strike force



Call of Duty: Mobile



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