

SURVIVAL GUIDE

For eCommerce

Frantic, deal-hungry holiday shoppers have no patience for slow sites. During Black Friday and Cyber Monday, all the performance problems that affect sites throughout the year are exacerbated. Pages slow to a halt, traffic overloads servers, and secure transactions fail - even for the most well-prepared (and deep-pocketed) sites.



Leading eCommerce sites are already preparing for the holiday onslaught. If you aren't already thinking about your site's performance for this November and December, now is the time to start. This checklist will help to guide you through the many different tactics and solutions to keep your site up and running, loading fast, and making sales throughout the holidays.

November Note!

If the holiday season has snuck up and you still haven't prepared your site, all is not lost! There are still quick steps you can take to lessen the performance impact of the traffic onslaught. [Skip to the last section for the top 3 last-minute tips to optimize your site.](#)

MONITOR

- ☐ **Gain real-time visibility into desktop site performance across geography, browser, and connection speed**

Gain visibility into the experience your users have whether they're in Bangor or Bangalore, on Chrome or IE, on dialup or DSL. This should include alerts that let you know when performance goes over a given threshold.

Tools: Yottaa, Pingdom, Web Metrics
Resources: [17 Performance Metrics You Should Care About](#)

- ☐ **Gain equally-detailed visibility into mobile performance**

Monitoring must include mobile. Mobile commerce is growing by double-digit percentage points, and those shoppers tend to be even less patient than their desktop counterparts.

Tools: Yottaa, Compuware
Resources: [17 Performance Metrics You Should Care About](#)

- ☐ **Monitor site for issues that may hinder visitor flows and transactions**

Beyond page load times, you should know whether you're providing adequate performance through the full customer journey including transactions like shopping cart checkouts. This necessitates visibility into the datacenter and network as well.

- ☐ **Track server and data center availability and performance**

Tools: Yottaa, New Relic

- ☐ **Track third party content and widgets**

Keep close track of any individual assets and widgets on your site that come from third parties. These are inherently unreliable for performance, take down your site through no fault of your own.

Tools: Yottaa

- ☐ **Track competitors with benchmarking**

Set up benchmarks to keep tabs on the performance of other sites in your space. This helps inform your longer term performance strategies as well as drive short term goals.

Tools: Yottaa
Resources: [9 Tips for Benchmarking](#)

SCALE

- ☐ **Load test**

Find out how much traffic your site can handle today. This is the starting point to developing scale that can handle the holiday crowds.

Tools: LoadStorm, Load Impact

- ☐ **Apply mechanisms to deal with 10X traffic growth**

Prepare for traffic at least 10 times higher than expected. This means new hardware, or a CDN or other "infrastructure as a service" (IaaS) that scales to meet demand. (If 10x seems like overkill, remember that even the biggest, richest online companies go down on Black Friday!)

Solutions: Yottaa, Amazon AWS, MaxCDN

- ☐ **Prepare for DDoS and malicious bots**

Part of infrastructure planning is preparing for unwelcome traffic as well. Traffic management through IP blocking and throttling capabilities can mitigate the effects of attacks and bots.

Solutions: Yottaa

- ☐ **Apply SSL acceleration**

eCommerce sites deal with lots of secure transactions that eat up time and processing power on the back end. SSL accelerators offload this work so you can get more customers through the buying process faster.

Solutions: F5, Juniper Networks

OPTIMIZE

- ☐ **Improve user experience with Front End Optimization**

Even if your site can handle the traffic, your performance may still be slow enough to drive visitors to your competitors. Front end optimization (FEO) will reduce the number of requests and overall weight of your pages, ensuring a fast experience for shoppers surfing your pages.

Resources: [Managing A Web Performance Optimization Project: A Step-by-Step Guide](#)

[High Performance Websites](#)

PLAN

- ☐ **Create an emergency response plan**

Even the best-prepared sites can still go down. Avoid chaos and finger-pointing during a crisis by having a detailed response plan. This will help minimize downtime and mitigate the effects of slowdowns.

Last-Minute List

If it's already October or November and you haven't taken extensive measures to protect your site's performance, this short list can help you avoid a performance meltdown -- without major time and resource expenditure.

- ☐ **Set up end-user monitoring with real time alerts**

Deep dive performance monitoring is preferable, but at the very least you need to know if your site is accessible to visitors. Front-end monitoring will at minimum tell you if your site is accessible in a range of geographies. Set up alerts so that you'll know the second there's an issue.

Tools: Yottaa, Pingdom, Neustar
Resources: [17 Performance Metrics You Should Care About](#)

- ☐ **Manually optimize site content**

If you don't have time or resources for a full front end optimization (FEO) strategy, focus on a few key optimizations that can be done manually. Compress images, streamline third party widgets, and make sure JavaScript is at the end of the load order.

Resources: [11 Techniques to Make Your Website Rock](#)

[High Performance Websites](#)

- ☐ **Spin up 5x server capacity**

All the marketing and preparation will be for naught if your site goes down. While the best approach is to employ a scalable, flexible infrastructure, at minimum plan to increase capacity of your existing setup.

Tools: Call Your Service Provider

In the end, these are complex, differentiated problems with a dozens of available techniques and solutions. Managing a comprehensive approach across multiple teams and multiple vendors is anything but simple. You'll be well on your way using the steps and tools we've outlined here -- but for more optimization resources, [subscribe to our blog](#) or [like us on Facebook!](#)

Yottaa is your single solution for end-to-end monitoring, elastic scale, and automated front-end optimization.

We power billions of dollars of eCommerce success and can help you dominate the holiday season with a faster, stronger website.