



# 2019 BFCM BEST PRACTICES

# OVERVIEW



**Black Friday is a week away**--are you ready? Maybe your preliminary plan looks a little like this: create discount codes in Shopify, write some killer copy touting your unbeatable deals, and wait for the sales to roll in. Sounds great, right? Well, at the risk of bursting your bubble, you will need to plan further ahead to have a truly successful Black Friday/Cyber Monday (BFCM for short).

Don't worry, we've developed this guide to walk you through strategies, best practices, expert suggestions, and tricks of the trade to help your business have its best BFCM yet!

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# 8 EXPERT TIPS FOR A GREAT BFCM SALE

“ *Offer solid discounts of at least 20% on some of your high-margin products. You might even want a loss-leader for the sale just to get people in the funnel to retarget or cross-sell to.* ”

-Chris Grippo, Account Director



Now that we've got you thinking about your plan leading up to BFCM, let's look at what will make your business stand out in the crowded market. Here are eight important tips for planning a successful BFCM campaign:

**1. Discounts need to be significant to get the attention of shoppers.** A 15% discount doesn't move the needle when folks are seeing 40% from your competitors, so be strategic about your sale offers. You might even want to consider alternatives to traditional discounts like store cash and bundle deals (i.e. buy 2, get one free).

**2. Extend sales beyond Black Friday.** Don't sleep on potential sales from early shoppers. If competing brands are launching sales on Thursday and running them through Tuesday, you should be, too. This will also allow more time for your ads to find audiences on Facebook and avoid slow approvals.

**3. The simpler, the better.** Keep sales and discounts simple--shoppers shouldn't need a graphing calculator to understand your offers. Some successful campaigns could include: Buy 3 get 4 free; deeply discounted clearance prices; 25% off for 1 week only. Such sales are easy to understand and execute.

**4. Focus ads on benefits to the shopper.** If you choose not to run any special deals, use ads to highlight the other reasons why shoppers should visit your store. This could be free shipping, new arrivals, gift guides, and any other social proof that appeals to the audience.

**5. Incentivize subscriptions and memberships.** Consider introducing special discounts for newsletter sign ups, "enter to win" prizes, and secret codes for subscribers. Get creative by offering discounts or gifts with purchase for return customers!

**6. Scale discounts up throughout the sale.** Who says your offers need to stay the same each day of the sale? Start your sale early at a discount amount (let's say 30%) and scale up on Black Friday (40%), and again on Cyber Monday (50%--the big one).

**7. Create a sale that works best for your goals.** BOGO, discounts, dollars off, bundles -- these are all successful strategies for sales, but with different results. Whether you're looking to move a lot of inventory, increase AOV, sell your highest margin or highest ticket items, don't be afraid to get creative and use what you're already working with to define your plan.

**8. Don't be shy of cross-selling and upselling.** Focus on selling complementary items to existing customers to entice them with a product that pairs perfectly with what they've purchased. Most importantly, don't forget to play to the holiday season. Prime your audience to recognize the opportunity to purchase the perfect gift.

**STICK AROUND** we're going to deep dive into these tips and more throughout this guide, but consider this page your official **CHEAT SHEET FOR BFCM.**



# CYBER WEEK IS THE NEW BLACK FRIDAY:

**Black Friday is so 2015** -- now it's all about Cyber Week, from Wednesday night before Thanksgiving until at least the night following Cyber Monday. A BFCM sale shouldn't be limited to one day only. In fact, your sale dates don't matter so much as the length of time. Just be careful about hitting the sweet spot for your business -- urgency and scarcity are the keys to good promotions. A 12 hour sale is too short for ads to become effective, but a 30 day sale creates less urgency for buyers. Aim for a limited sale over the Black Friday/Cyber Monday weekend for best overall payoff, and don't be afraid to pepper in other promotions throughout your sale!

## Make sure to have something for:

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<i>Pre-Black Friday Exclusive</i>	<i>Black Friday</i>	<i>Small Business Saturday</i>
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<i>Pre-Cyber Monday Exclusive</i>	<i>Cyber Monday</i>	<i>Cyber Week</i>
WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<i>Cyber Week</i>	<i>Cyber Week</i>	<i>Cyber Week</i>

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*If you're running your promotion where you will use paid ads, it makes sense to increase the length of time as long as possible. This allows the ads to optimize for longer and get the best return.*

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-Courtney Corner, Growth Specialist

# MANAGING BLACK FRIDAY BEHIND-THE-SCENES

**Unfortunately, running a successful BFCM sale involves a whole lot more than creating ads, applying discounts, and waiting for the sales to roll in.**

So many other components are critical to making sure your promotion goes off without a hitch. The plus side? With a little planning, you can make your BFCM run as smoothly as possible.

Let's take a look at what makes a sale work by breaking it down into 3 simple categories: **budget management** (how you spend your money), **stock management** (what product you have available), and **website management** (keeping your shop pristine).

## BUDGET MANAGEMENT

We've all heard the adage "you have to spend money to make money," right? While kind of a bummer for money-conscious businesses, this is undoubtedly a true statement. You should plan to increase your budget significantly in the lead up to BFCM. Most retailers and e-tailers report that 25-50% of their years sales come in Q4, and this bump comes in part due to increased spend.

One area that is especially prone to a higher budget need is Search & Shopping, where everything is demand driven. Because you can anticipate spikes in search interest, your budget should reflect inflated costs. Don't be caught off guard if/when your spend grows in Q4 just to keep up with your sales. Get ahead of potential budget issues by determining automated rules in advance that will scale budgets dynamically based on daily or hourly performance.



# MANAGING BLACK FRIDAY BEHIND-THE-SCENES

## KEEPING UP WITH STOCK

Stock matters, plain and simple. What you have, what you don't have, what you are trying to sell -- these numbers should be well accounted for before your BFCM sales window comes along. We recommend making a checklist to get ready. It might look a little something like this:



Make a plan for how you will respond if you sell out of stock. Keep in mind that it may be challenging to update ads in real time, and sending consumers to an out of stock page sends a message about a lack of trust they should have in your brand.

Remember the inventory bell curve. If selling things like clothing or shoes, remember that just because an item is in stock doesn't mean that your most popular sizes are available. How will you handle advertising for your inventory with this in mind?

Keep shoppers in the funnel. If you run out of stock, this doesn't have to mean turning a potential customer away. Set up a "remind me" email capture for those items that go out of stock to capture emails of folks who were ready to buy.

## EFFECTIVE WEBSITE PROMOTION

How will you promote the sale on the website? Your answer to this question could drastically affect how your Cyber Week sale goes. Your digital strategy can help push your sales to the next level, if done correctly. Check out our list below for some BFCM promo pro-tips:



Banners and announcement bars are a must! A homepage banner, sitewide ribbon, or top navigation item will help lead your customers straight to your deals.

Help site visitors find promotions and discounts more easily by building a Cyber Week collection or landing page.

If you're offering site-wide sales, go ahead and apply the discounts to the store so users won't have to worry about inputting a code at checkout.

Your site should be mobile friendly, as most shopping is being done from smartphones.

Display Cyber Week offers across your website by using a static notification or banner.

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***Make a huge hero banner on the homepage. Put your discount/deal in a huge font. People are going to dozens of sites that day and they want to know in about 3 seconds what you have to offer***

**-Joe Pennebaker, Growth Specialist**

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# TAMING YOUR TIMELINE

**You can never start planning for BFCM too early!** For instance, big brands start planning their holiday sales strategy January 1st. While this timeline might be a little too soon for your business, it illustrates how important strategy timelines are.

Even if you're not sure of details, it's good to start thinking about your sales ideas months in advance. Getting the wheels in motion around August is ideal, and details nailed down by the time Halloween rolls around. Once November hits and starts flying by, you'll be right on track rather than playing catch-up.

To help you get started on your own schedule, we've provided a skeleton timeline below. Look it over, fill it out, beef it up -- do whatever it takes to make sure you're prepared for the holidays!

<b>4 WEEKS PRIOR</b>	Deals finalized and firm, ready for ad images and copy to be developed.
<b>3 WEEKS PRIOR</b>	Ads are being created, images and copy in editing.
<b>2 WEEKS PRIOR</b>	Ad images and creative finalized so ads can be built for platforms.
<b>1 WEEK PRIOR</b>	Ads should be written and entered into the system to allow for approvals and potential edits.
<b>CYBER WEEK</b>	It's go time!

## IMPORTANT NOTE:

**Every retailer will be running ads during Cyber Week**, which means approval systems and customer service at Google, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest are all backlogged. You might also find that employees of your company or your marketing partner to be taking vacation around the same time. Be ahead of the curve with your plan!

# RAMPING UP TO BFCM



**While people are primed to buy on BFCM**, the competition has become increasingly fierce. For instance, you can expect CPMs (aka cost to serve your ad 1000 times) to skyrocket as online sellers ramp up their budgets. With high CPMs and a deluge of offers from other advertisers, it is more difficult (but not impossible) to run a successful top of funnel BFCM campaign targeting shoppers unfamiliar with your brand. Luckily, there's a not-so-secret sauce for making a splash on BFCM: ramp it up!

**Ramping up your BFCM plan means not waiting until the last minute** (or week, in this case) to get ahead of the pack. You should be increasing your top of funnel spend in the month leading up to BFCM when CPMs are much more affordable. During this time, you'll get greater reach for your buck than you would towards the end of November.

**The main objective leading up to BFCM should be to drive traffic to your site**, not outright sales--though sales are always great! Focus on getting people to view your products and add them to cart in the weeks prior to BFCM by optimizing for ViewContent or AddToCart on your site. This will help your business get customers in the funnel, ready to be retargeted with BFCM offers and make their purchase. For most retailers, retargeting campaigns reliably generate the highest ROIs--even during BFCM. While most of your BFCM Monday sales may come from retargeting, you can build up your funnel by planting those seeds early.

# DEALS, DEALS, DEALS!



**As you get in the weeds of planning and implementation,** don't forget the real star of Cyber Week: awesome deals! This is where you can really pull a few tricks out of your sleeve and get creative to increase your average order value. How about a classic Buy One, Get One? Or maybe mystery deals, or a free gift with purchase. Another unique option is using games to get consumers engaged. Whether you use an app to spin a wheel or create a challenge called "12 Days of Gifting," thinking of something that will keep people hanging is going to be good for your bottom line. Have fun with your deals, and your customers will have fun while they shop!



# GETTING THE WORD OUT

**What's a big sale without advertising?** Full of untapped potential, for one thing. To really get the most out of your Cyber Week promos, you need to build engagement and focus on marketing campaigns to get people excited about shopping your collection.

In our digital age, it's easier and at the same time can be more difficult to communicate with customers. There are numerous channels for reaching audiences, yet more competition and even ad fatigue from consumers. Think wisely about which channels are most appropriate for your goals, considering what has proven effective in the past and/or what methods are trending up.

Make a list of potential marketing tools for your campaign.

**Our pros recommend the following as a starting point:**



**Email**



**Website**



**Social Media  
(Organic)**



**Social Media  
(Paid)**



**Google  
Search**



**Google  
Shopping**



**Facebook  
Messenger**



**3rd Party  
Campaigns  
(Small Business)**

**You may already use some of these tools for your everyday advertising,** some others may be entirely new to you. The most important thing your business can do is make a solid plan for the tools you'll be using and how you'll be using them. Advertising is a marathon, not a sprint. Instead of blasting customers with info at every turn, use your tools strategically to build lists and focus ads. Remember that the contacts you gain will be yours long after the holiday, so the payoff is huge.

# POST-CYBER WEEK GAME PLAN



**Even the best laid plans hit hurdles and experience turns along the way.** It's possible that even with all of your timelines and brainstorming, your Cyber Week won't turn out quite how you expected. Don't worry! 3 out of 4 consumers (that's 77%) plan to do last-minute shopping for the holidays. On top of that, while Black Friday and Cyber Monday see peak daily conversions, there are more total purchases in December. While 40% of people will do their holiday shopping around BFCM, you will still have all of December to target the other 60%. That's a lot of potential revenue!