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# The Ecommerce Guide to Offers, Personalization and Distribution

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# Guide Overview

The [buyer's decision journey](#) has changed and no longer are customers looking to one brand to meet all of their needs. Instead, brands are having to create industry solutions for themselves, and then explain why those solutions fit a particular customer need. If done well, brands don't need to explain much. The customer sees (and likely feels) the pain point at hand, and wants to purchase to solve for it.

With that in mind, what are the implications of this change for the average [ecommerce site](#)? Boiled down, it comes to this: lots of consumers are browsing, but they aren't ready to buy just yet. Yes, you've tagged them for ad re-targeting to try and get them back to your site and complete that purchase, but what else can you do?

In this guide, we'll go over exactly how to use offers, personalization and distribution methods in order to pull increased traffic to your site, convert browsers into buyers and bring back previous shoppers to increase your repeat customer count.

# How to Use Informational Offers

Regardless of the customer's buying cycle stage, ecommerce marketers can use inbound marketing to turn these visitors into leads by learning to cultivate a trusted relationship with them. This way, whenever they are finally ready to buy, your ecommerce site is the first one that comes to mind.

Don't be one of those sites where the only three things a visitor can do is buy, subscribe, or "contact us." Give your visitors lots of different ways to interact with you. Instead of discounts, trade them helpful information in exchange for their email. These opportunities are often called [pre-transactional offers](#).

Once you've got their email, you can nurture them using more information offers via email and social media to keep your site and

its products top of mind until they're ready to buy. And, as they keep consuming your information, you can keep trading up for more information about them (that's called "smart profiling").

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**The more useful your information is to customers, the more they will begin to trust your brand.**

# Why Use Pre-Transactional Offers?

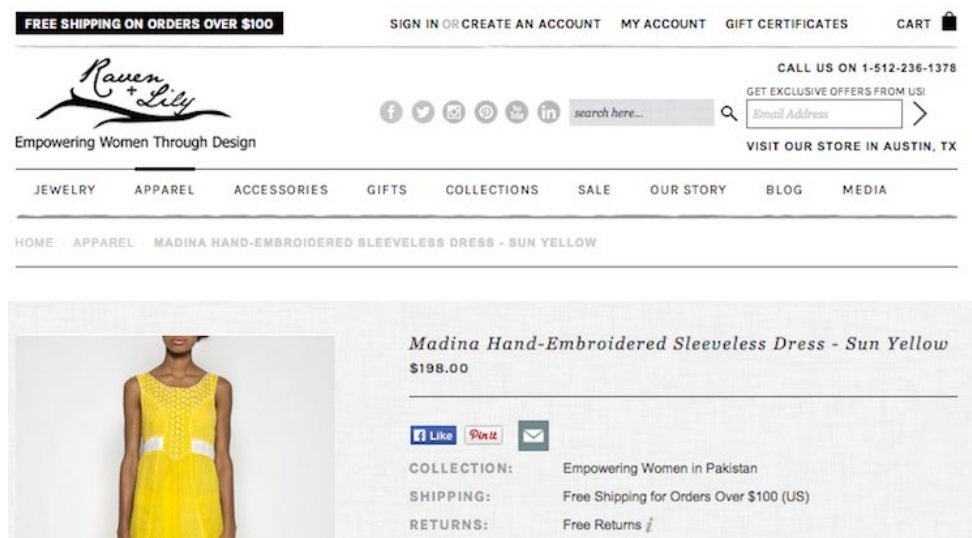
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Use these offers to keep your visitors engaged with you by providing cool content that builds your credibility and expertise in their eyes. The more they believe you know, the more accurate and useful your information is to them. And the more they begin to trust and believe in you, the more likely they'll buy from you.

To start, go beyond the usual newsletter or "sales alerts" sign-up form or pop-ups. While those methods can make initial contact, they don't encourage your prospect to interact with your brand. Here are a couple of ways that you can really get traffic and conversions going.

## 1. Use Social Sharing Buttons That Are Easy to Locate and Easy to Use

For example, [Raven + Lily](#), a clothing company, has social sharing buttons on their individual product pages. The Pinterest button, in particular, makes it easy for visitors to save specific products that catch their eye, even if they aren't making a purchase immediately.



Raven + Lily also includes social follow buttons in the header of their site, to give visitors multiple ways to connect and follow their brand.

## 2. Provide Provocative, Relevant Content the Visitor Finds Fascinating

This can be absolutely anything from an ebook of recipes that use a particular spice or different ways to set an attractive dinner table.

[Greens Plus](#), a nutritional food and supplement company, has an entire section of their website dedicated to recipes that are freely accessible. They complement the recipes with a guide to getting started with superfoods, which is behind a form.

**Greens+ Guide No. 1**

**GREENS+**  
For Healthier, Happier Lives

## Beginner's Guide to Superfoods

**A** Today, everyone has heard of the healing power of Superfoods: from the antioxidants in blueberries, to the heart benefits of dark chocolate and the healthy omega 3's found in chia seed.

But what are superfoods? And how are they different from ordinary foods?

All foods can be placed into one of three categories: **Junk foods**, **Common foods** or **Superfoods**

An analogy we use to compare the 3 categories of food is the **octane rating** for gasoline. A measure of the rate that fuel burns in an automobile, octane determines the efficiency and power output of the engine.

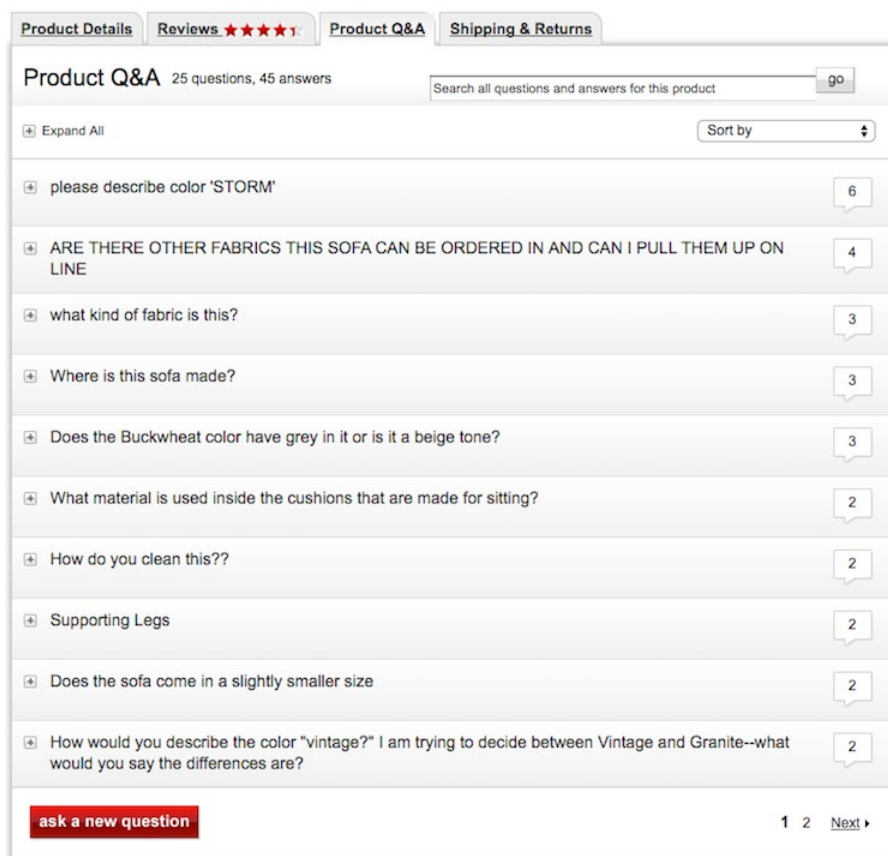
The higher the octane rating, the slower the fuel burns. Regular, **low-octane** fuel burns too fast for high performance engines, resulting in engine 'knock' and accelerated wear and tear. **High-octane**, slower burning fuel provides better gas mileage, more efficient exhaust elimination and greater engine output.

**green foodometer™**

The guide is relevant and helpful to visitors who might be interested in Greens Plus' nutritional options but not sure where to start. This group of visitors might also be less likely to purchase on their first visit, so capturing their email address gives Greens Plus an opportunity to nurture them into a purchase.

### 3. Provide a Means for Customers to Ask and Answer Questions

[Macys.com](https://www.macys.com) makes it easy for people to both ask and answer questions that have piqued the interests of others. Beyond the Macy's staff, other customers can also answer the questions. People rate the answers, so the most helpful answers float to the top. This provides a helpful and informative touchpoint to visitors and fosters a sense of community.



## Start Lead Nurturing Campaigns Immediately

Once you have their email addresses and you're tracking what pages they visit on your website, you're able to learn about what they're most interested in. [Research shows](#) that 85% of email opens happen within the first two days of receiving an email, but 32% of purchases take place two weeks later. Don't waste time!



Create customized lists of people who are interested in a particular style or brand of products. Make them smart lists so that every time someone's address is added, a workflow is triggered so they immediately start receiving a lead nurturing series specific to their interests.

For example, let's say that visitors have responded to an offer about caring for a particular type of running shoe. These are shoes used by marathoners and other well-known track and field athletes. That dynamic list and workflow immediately send your leads interested in these running shoes a series of lead nurturing emails offering ebooks with training programs for lengthy running races, then another with diets and recipes that marathoners swear by, and yet another with live webinars with famous runners.

And, along with those informational offers in your emails, you're also including subtle calls-to-action about the particular shoe styles or brands they've been browsing.

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**32% of purchases from emails take place two weeks after opening the original message.**

In all, you're providing a personalized experience that puts your brand top of mind for the consumer the next time they are looking for a product within that niche.

### Test, track, analyze and optimize

Test different information offers in email, as well as on your site. Test the calls-to-action (CTAs), the landing pages, the titles, the lead nurturing emails. Test it all.

Run multivariate tests to see which combination pulls the greatest response and optimize accordingly. If your marketing software integrates with your shopping



cart, you can close the reporting loop and analyze the data to discover which information offers (campaigns) delivered the most sales. You can replicate the elements that work best and eliminate the ones that don't.

Eventually, you can optimize your campaigns, premium content and CTAs to get the lowest cost per lead, the lowest cost per sale and the highest ROI. And, you're able to keep on optimizing as new products, services and the competition enter the arena.

# 5 Ways to Personalize Your Brand Experience

Online companies collect large amounts of customer data and it's often tragically underutilized. User data can be used to personalize communication with your customers and prospects, **74% of whom** get frustrated when content isn't personalized to the interests they have already supplied to an online company.

For ecommerce companies in particular, a more personalized shopping experience can help you form stronger bonds with both loyal

and potential customers alike, increasing customer acquisition and lifetime value. After all, wouldn't you prefer to buy from someone who knows your name rather than addressing you as "Valued Customer"?

In our current digital age, customer loyalty often relies on company proof of care and consideration. Addressing your customers by their name is only the first of many steps you can take to increase retention and thus revenue. Below are a few ways to create a fun and personable ecommerce experience for your customers.

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**74% of returning customers get frustrated when content isn't personalized to their interests.**

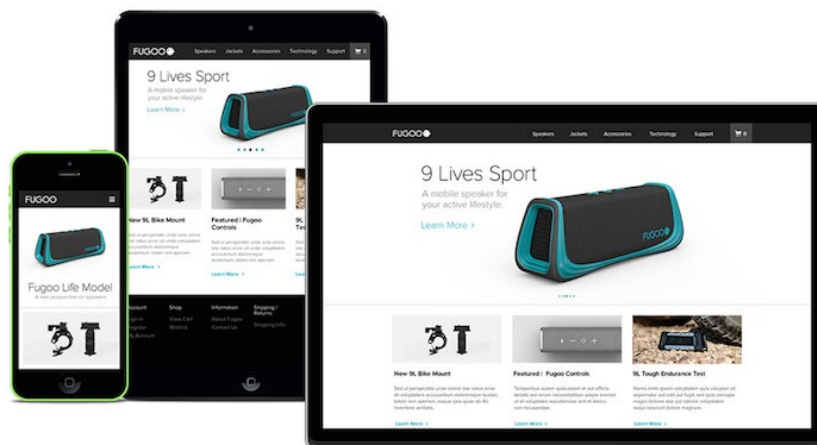
# Mobile Responsiveness

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Mobile devices now account for **almost 50% of ecommerce sales** and almost 45% of ecommerce browsing is done via mobile technology (i.e. a smartphone or tablet). In all, if you are not optimizing your site for mobile, you are essentially cutting your revenue potential in half.

Beyond simply being responsive, however, your site must also be user-friendly on mobile. This means making checkout experiences as convenient as possible, minimizing the amount of information a user needs to fill out while allowing ample space for the user to do so. Remember, smartphone users are using their fingers on touchscreens to move throughout a site or page. Make sure buttons and forms are big enough that their fingers will properly click the desired action.

Take a look at ecommerce store Fugoo's site, for example. See how the site design alters slightly depending on screensize in order to optimize the experience for the end user.



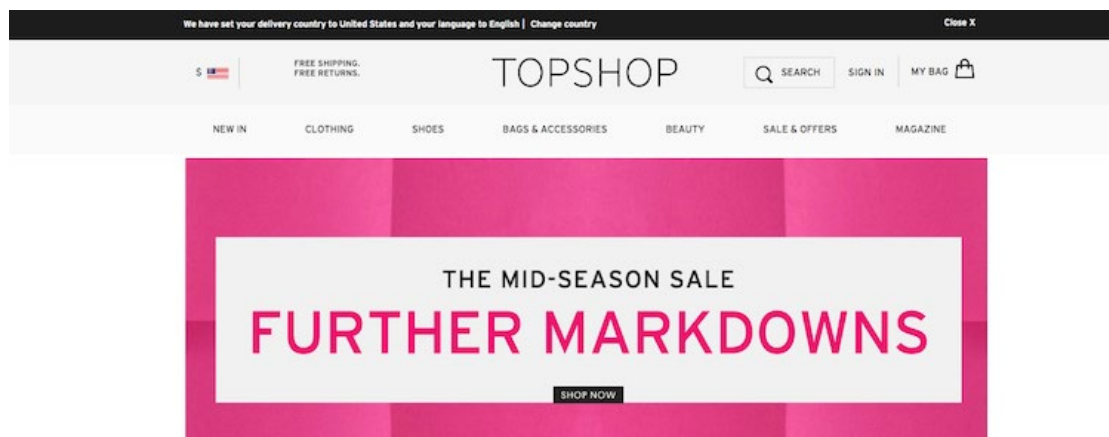
The most efficient way to do this is to invest in a responsive site design. You can also use a mobile-dedicated site as well, though you will need to create different site experiences for all screen sizes. And, remember, screen sizes change about as often as a new smartphone is released.

## Currency and Localization

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It's a global marketplace out there. Make it easy for international customers to buy. Create smart rules to set the default currency to the viewer's IP address, but make it easy for them to change it if they want. You can also feature special promotional offers, or different products, in different countries using smart rules.

Take Topshop, for example, which sets the default currency and language based on the viewer's IP address. Better yet, the site is able to alert users on how their currency is being configured.



The currency and language choice is prominently displayed, and viewers have the option to change it as necessary.

## Name Personalization

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Using someone's name helps to make a more personal connection. Although personalizing emails is common, many companies forget to use it elsewhere — e.g. on landing pages and CTAs. In fact, you don't even have to go so far as using someone's name. Instead, personalize the message as though the customer were writing it for him or herself.

Take a look below and see how [Criquet](#) uses first person pronouns to personalize the site experience.



Hint: double check the HTML code to ensure that the person's name appears correctly. Nothing will lose your customers quicker than misspelling their name.

Also, remember to use the right tone for your persona. Due to the casual atmosphere of the internet, most people are generally receptive to a more

friendly and personal tone. That said, rework your tone to address your audience.

Friendly and personal might not work in your market, or with your persona. A/B test your emails and verbiage to get a good sense of your audience's preferred rhetoric.

The emails with the higher click-thru rates are the ones with the preferred tone.

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**A/B test your emails to get a good sense of your audience's preferred rhetoric.**

## Persona-Based Personalization

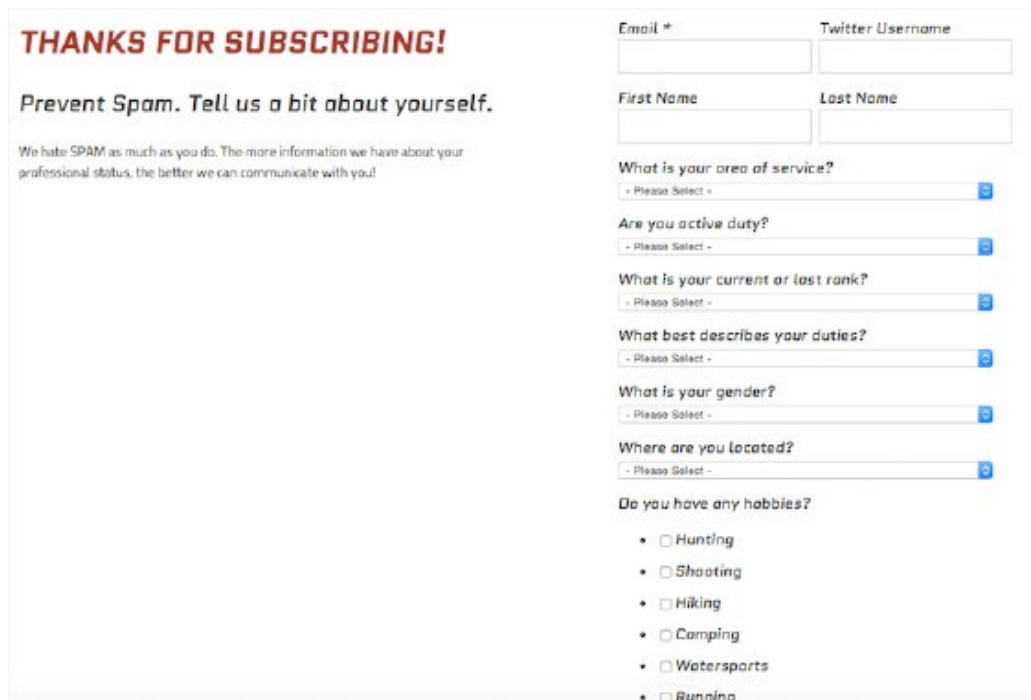
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Buyer personas are a representation of your ideal buyer. If you haven't created buyer personas for your business, [now's the time to get on that](#).

Create content that appeals to each of your audience personas (keep in mind that your store may only have one persona). Use the information you've collected through purchase history and website activity. Gently steer each persona along the path to a purchase by offering them more information about the products they looked at, as well as similar or related products.

For example, [U.S. Patriot Tactical](#) made their homepage "smart" based on personas and serves a different homepage based on the interests of their users. To collect the data needed in order to do this, U.S. Patriot Tactical encourages those who

create an account to give additional information about themselves in order to receive a more personalized experience.



**THANKS FOR SUBSCRIBING!**

**Prevent Spam. Tell us a bit about yourself.**

We hate SPAM as much as you do. The more information we have about your professional status, the better we can communicate with you!

Email \*  Twitter Username

First Name  Last Name

What is your area of service?  
- Please Select -

Are you active duty?  
- Please Select -

What is your current or last rank?  
- Please Select -

What best describes your duties?  
- Please Select -

What is your gender?  
- Please Select -

Where are you located?  
- Please Select -

Do you have any hobbies?

- Hunting
- Shooting
- Hiking
- Camping
- Watersports
- Running

This is a great idea, but be sure you are actively using the customer data to create a personalized experience, rather than promising to do so and not fulfilling it.

## Action-Based Personalization

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Action-based personalization is changing what a customer sees on your website, or in an email, or on her shopping cart page, based on her actions. These include site customizations and recommendations such as:

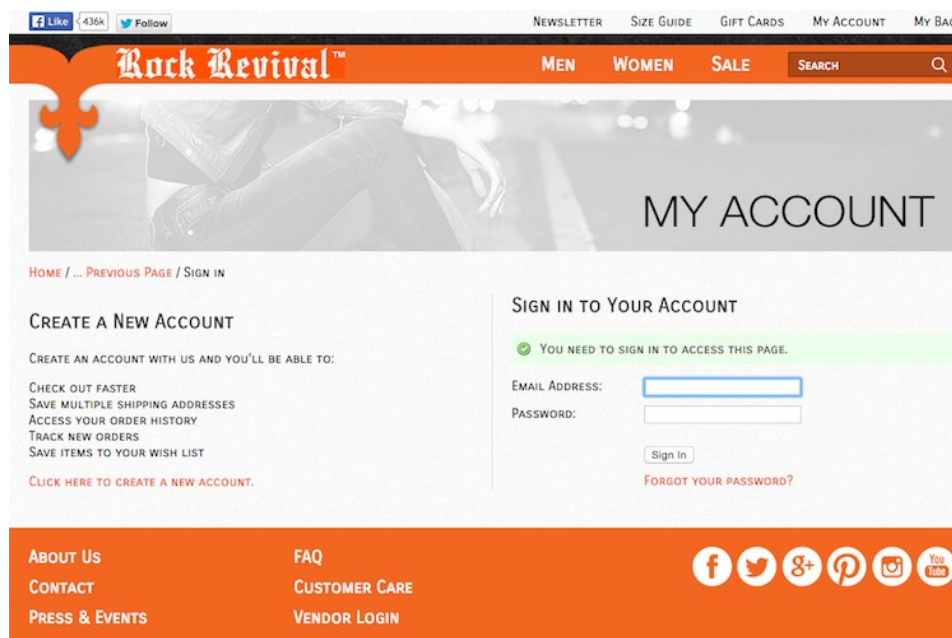
- "Customers who bought this also viewed/bought"
- "Recommendations for you"



- “Here are some relevant articles for you”
- “Latest [recipes/books/offers/articles/products] you might be interested in”
- The ability to create and add to a wish list or “buy later” list
- “Remind me to buy [this product] on [date]” capability, which let’s people set reminders for special events such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc.
- Automatically move abandoned shopping cart items into a wish list

These customizations and recommendations can all be based on pages the customer has visited, products they’ve purchased, products they’ve abandoned or removed from their shopping cart, their shipping address or more. Use the data you collect on your site to provide a private shopping concierge for each customer. This will increase customer lifetime value and prove your stance as a customer-centric brand.

Feel free to even call out the benefits of creating an account for your users to help encourage sign ups. See below how [online store Rock Revival](#) encourages shoppers to create an account in order to access additional site features.



## Personalization Makes Relationship Building Easy

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It's difficult for companies to truly connect with their customers on a personal level, but taking the time to tailor individual customer ecommerce experiences can go a long way to creating lifetime value. Personalization makes customers feel special. It also increases the convenience of shopping with you over your competitors. You'll win increased repeat customers as well as word-of-mouth marketing, both of which will help to scale your brand.

# Quick-Start Guide to Promoting Posts on Social

Your ecommerce brand is probably no stranger to using Google's AdWords to drive people who are ready to buy to your site. But, wouldn't it be great if you reached people who weren't ready to buy yet, and captured their information? Now, you can build a pipeline of people and influence their decision using lead nurturing campaigns, dynamic web content and smart CTAs.

This is where promoted (i.e. sponsored) social posts can make a difference. Each social network defines this type of pay-per-click advertising slightly differently. To keep things simple for now, remember that a promoted post/tweet is just that — a post or tweet designed specifically to appear in the newsfeeds of a social network's users.

Here's a quick start guide, along with some specific tips to get you going:

## 1. Clarify your campaign's objective

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Decide what makes this campaign a success. Some options include increased traffic, engagement, leads generated or clicks. Each network's metric choices will be slightly

different, so be sure you are measuring the success both through the network and via your [ecommerce site](#)'s sales, traffic and other relevant areas expected to see a bump due to a promoted post.

## 2. Choose the Type of Advertising You Want

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Your campaign's objective determines the type of ad you'll run. There are basically two types of ads:

- An ad that gives the appearance of being "organic," for example, boosted posts on Facebook, sponsored posts on LinkedIn, or a promoted tweet on Twitter. These have no tracking tokens. It is content you have already shared with your followers.
- An ad that is sent specifically to a targeted audience, i.e. it does not appear on your business page or newsfeed. Examples of this include promoted posts on Facebook, promoted tweets with tracking token and direct sponsored content on LinkedIn.

## 3. Pick Your Audience

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The great thing about social media is that it's a huge market research petri dish. There are millions of people out there giving away their preference data (i.e. which movies they like, which brands they follow, which geographical areas they frequent). All of that data is essentially available to you on a platter.

Use each network's data targeting information to be specific about your target audience. Each network offers different ways to segment their data. Make sure you've got a clear definition of your ideal [buyer persona](#) before you start, including demographics, psychographics, interests and more.

## 4. Set Your Budget

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Know your spending limits for the campaign. Set a daily budget for the first week and a total monthly budget. The first few days are critical and monitoring ad performance is essential. Assuming you're doing CPC (rather than CPM), if your ad doesn't generate enough clicks, the networks will begin fading your ad out of prime network ad time. Clicks are how they make money, after all. If that happens, it will take you longer to figure out which ad, if any, is truly working.

## 5. Design and Create Your Ad

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Each network has different requirements for the content of their ads — number of words, images and sizes, etc. Prepare several different versions of your ads so you can [perform A/B tests](#) to see which is most effective. It will take some close monitoring and tweaking, but it's worth it to get the biggest bang for your buck. Here are a few of the most common design requirements per network:

### Twitter

- Image size: 375 x 375 pixels
- Video size: 435 x 244 pixels

- Promoted tweet: 140 characters including links
- Profile picture: 81 x 81 pixels
- Header image: 520 x 260 pixels
- Recent image: 90 x 90 pixels

## Facebook

- Image size: 1,200 x 628 pixels
- Image ratio: 1.9:1
- Text: 90 characters
- Headline: 25 characters
- Link description: 30 characters
- Your image may not include more than 20% text

## LinkedIn

- Image size: 50 x 50 pixels

# 6. Check Your Results

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This is an essential step to understanding the process of using a PPC campaign. You must examine the results. Here's how:

- Come back to your campaign objective: Did you get the results you wanted? If so, what was the ROI?
- Check the stats by network, by ad type, by ad: Visitor to lead conversion rate? Lead to customer conversion rate? Visitor to customer conversion rate? Which ones worked? Which ones didn't?

- After seeing the results, do you want more of the same or something different?
- If it didn't work, what went wrong? Ad? Landing page? Segmentation? Budget?
- Check everything and try again.

CAUTION: Don't bankrupt yourself with PPC. Make it one of many ways you're driving traffic and sales on your website. PPC doesn't work for every brand, every product, every audience, every time. And it rarely hits a homerun the first time out. Test, learn and try again.

## Tips for Running a Successful Social PPC Campaign

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- If your goal is to capture leads, choose the CPC option (cost-per-click). Paying for eyeballs (CPM) is a waste of money.
- Choose the ad type option that lets you have a unique tracking token at the end of the URL for each ad. You want to be able to test ads and see how many visitors came through, how many visitors converted, which ads converted and more. Without that information, you won't know where to keep investing your money to optimize for ROI.
- Match the language of your campaign offer to the language on your landing page. If they're different, you'll confuse the visitor, and a confused visitor is an immediate bounce.
- Assure quality. Double check that there are no typos in the copy, and that your ad images are the proper sizes. Test to be sure each tracking URL goes to the right landing page.



- Choose the option to do A/B testing whenever you can. This way you can keep testing the best version against another version and continually optimize to extract the greatest number of leads from your campaign, and thus the highest ROI.
- Test different types of ads (sponsored post vs. non-sponsored) to see which ones pull in higher traffic, leads and/or conversions for your campaign.
- Balance how you target your audience. Your target audience needs to be large enough to give you a reasonable rate of response, so don't segment in too niche a fashion.
- Set a daily budget high enough in the first few days to get an ample amount of users to see your ad and begin clicking on it. Remember how fast social media feeds go — it can be easy for people to miss your ad. Without proper reach and frequency, you won't know how well your sponsored post/tweet is working.

Social media is a treasure trove of potential new customers, and a little spend can go a long way. Just make sure you aren't spending money on campaigns that aren't providing ROI. Test, track and measure your campaigns to get the most value out of your spend, increase your customer base and scale your ecommerce business.

## Conclusion

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No one wants to be sold to. But, people are happy to be educated, and in that process become convinced of your sincerity, trustworthiness and credibility. Delivering accurate and consistent, quality information, at the moment someone wants it, is the best persuasion — and using offers, personalization and distribution best practices is how you deliver those messages.

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[Download the Hubspot app for Bigcommerce merchants to get started today.](#)

Using an all-in-one marketing platform gives you the tools to test, track, analyze and optimize the inbound marketing elements that deliver what customers want most (great products and services), and what you need most — the highest marketing ROI. Check out [Hubspot for Bigcommerce merchants](#) to see how you begin utilizing these tactics today.

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