



# 3 SIMPLE GET HOLIDAY READY TIPS FOR EMAIL

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Bring in the mother lode this holiday season by understanding your customers and the phases of holiday shopping.

When it comes to [email marketing](#), it's never too early to start preparing for the holidays. For many businesses the passing of Labor Day begins the holiday countdown, and there's never been a better time to be in the lead rather than playing "catch up." The research is in: Coremetrics' July 2010 Online Retail Holiday Readiness Report states that "consumers are spending more money online than ever before." And they need to be spending it with you. So stay a few steps ahead of your customers (and competition!) during the holidays by following these 3 get holiday ready tips for email marketing.

## 1 First Things First - Be Aware of Important Dates

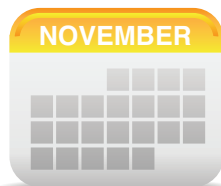
To keep your ice skates on track and your register ringing, here is a list of the [upcoming holidays and observances](#) that occur during the greater "holiday season."



**Columbus Day:**  
Monday, 10/11/10

**Halloween:**  
Sunday, 10/31/10

**FUN FACT:**  
Oct. 19 was the average kickoff date for holiday e-mail marketing campaigns in 2009 (['Tis the Season for Holiday Emails](#))



**"Fall Back"**  
**Daylight Savings Time Ends:**  
Sunday, 11/7/10

**Veteran's Day:**  
Thursday, 11/11/10

**Thanksgiving:**  
Thursday, 11/25/10

**Black Friday:**  
Friday, 11/26/10

**Cyber Monday:**  
Monday, 11/29/10



**Hanukkah:**  
12/1-12/8

**Winter Begins:**  
Tuesday, 12/21/10

**Christmas:**  
Saturday, 12/25/10

**Boxing Day:**  
Sunday, 12/26/10

**Kwanzaa:**  
12/26-1/1

**New Year's Eve:**  
Friday, 12/31/10



**New Year's Day:**  
Saturday, 1/1/11

**Martin Luther King Day:** Monday, 1/17/11

Now that you have the important dates, mark them on your calendar (or print out the calendar we've provided for you) - and check them twice! You don't want to miss these opportunities to get your customer's attention during the holiday season, so it's wise to plan your communications now by creating your holiday mailing schedule.



### TIP

There are many free and easy ways to create a plan. Most email services have calendars (e.g., Google Calendar), and the VerticalResponse email tool also has a free calendar. It can help you manage key dates for your holiday promotions, and allows you to easily input important tasks.

## 2 Find Out What Your Customers Want

Unless you're a mind reader gazing into your snow globe, you probably need some help discovering your customer's holiday shopping habits and gift giving needs.

Send a [survey](#) to determine the right products and/or services to promote, as well as the ideal time to promote them.

#### Questions might include:

- When will you start your holiday shopping this season?
- Do you expect to buy holiday gift baskets this year?
- Will you be requiring gift-wrap?
- Will you use our top-ten under \$10 offers?
- How important is "free shipping" to you?
- What % of your shopping will be online?

These are just a few questions that might help you prepare for your holiday shoppers.

## 3 Consider The Phases of Holiday Shopping

There are several "phases of holiday shopping" that you can plan your email communications around.

### Holiday Shopping Phase 1: The Early Birds

#### Early bird shoppers are very organized consumers who know what they want.

This group is looking for deals and want to beat the avalanche of holiday shopping to come. They are shopping now!

To find this audience, reach out to your most loyal customers and let them know about your early bird holiday deals. You can also target your seasonal customers by emailing anyone who purchased from you during the same time last year. You want to contact these people as soon as possible, so pencil in an email (or two!) to this audience in October.

#### Here are some ways to appeal to the early bird shoppers:

- Offer a time sensitive deal (i.e., Save 20% before Nov. 1)
- Create urgency with a "Limited Time" offer
- Free Gift with Purchase while Supplies Last
- Announce special pre-holiday hours
- Beat the Rush and Save

## Holiday Shopping Phase 2: Primetime

**Holiday shopping enters the period of peak orders and revenue highs from early November to mid December, as the primetime shopper starts spending.**

Competition can be tough during this time, so be sure to make your emails stand out.

Here are some ideas:

### Send a Thank You Email:

**Thanksgiving (11/25) is during the middle of the primetime shopping period.**

Use it as an opportunity to give thanks to your customers for supporting your business. You don't even have to include an offer (but you can if you want to) – it's been proven that a simple "thanks" goes a long way toward increasing customer loyalty. Your customers will thank you in return by patronizing your company this holiday shopping season.

### In Store Only Promotions:

**Black Friday is infamous as the traditional biggest shopping day of the year**, and it is the day after Thanksgiving (11/26). Send an email telling people to come into your shop for a one-day only offer. Black Friday average order values rose 35% from 2008-2009\*.

Create some door buster specials and your customers will come in droves.

### Online Only Promotions:

**Create an online only promotion in honor of Cyber Monday (11/29)**, which is said to be the busiest day for online shopping. Send out the promotion code in an email and direct people to your website where they can redeem. Cyber Monday average order value rose 38% from 2008-2009\*. Also, in 2009 Cyber Monday was the most popular day of the year to send retail emails.

### Email Series:

**Create a series for Hanukkah (12/1-12/8), or the 12 Days of Christmas (12/25)**, and present a new gift idea every day. Be sure to send this out in advance to give your customers enough time to buy.

### FUN FACT:

**Last year more than 83 percent of major online retailers increased their email volume during November and December, according to a [2010 Retail Email Guide to the Holiday Season](#).**

## Holiday Shopping Phase 3: The Last Minute Shopper

### Research and experience show that many holiday shoppers wait until the last minute to make purchases.

This period of holiday shopping is called the Last Minute Frenzy, and starts early to mid-December. Schedule a few emails in December that will speak to this audience.

**Some email ideas and content include:**

### Get their attention by mentioning benefits:

- Guaranteed Delivery by X
- Last-Minute Gifts for Under \$50
- Extended Hours for More Holiday Shopping
- Upgraded Shipping and Gift Wrap

### Give Shoppers Ideas:

Last-minute shoppers appreciate anything that makes holiday shopping easier. Draw these shoppers to your store or website by tailoring your offers to meet their needs. The best way to do this is by offering easy, last-minute gift suggestions.

### Try these offers to get last-minute shoppers to your store or website:

- Most Popular products list
- Top 10 under \$20
- Gift cards and gift certificates
- Offer an Extra 20% off
- Tout free gift-wrapping and/or free shipping

## Holiday Shopping Phase 4: Bargain Bounty

Late December through the New Year marks the Bargain Bounty period. Keep in mind that just because the holidays are over doesn't mean the spending and shopping has stopped. Plan to send a few bargain bounty emails touting your end-of-the-year sales and discounts.

### Here are a few ideas:

- Holiday Clearance Sale
- Post Holiday Sales
- Stock Up for the New Year and Save
- Return that Ugly Sweater from Nana and Get What You Want

As usual, your holiday email marketing should be relevant, timely, and valuable for your customer. And keeping important dates and holiday shopping patterns in mind will help you to target products, services, and offers to your customers at the right time. After this you'll be ready to ring in the New Year (and some big sales)!

\*According to the Coremetrics 3rd Annual Online Retail Holiday Readiness Report, July 2010