



# 10 Last Minute Holiday Marketing Ideas



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December is a crunch time for retailers and many B2B businesses. Salespeople push to fill their quotas, wholesalers rush to get shipments out and retailers seek enough sales to achieve a profitable year.

Maybe you've been focused on the short term. But it's November and your holiday marketing plan needs work.



It's time to act quickly to help customers find you. You can still reach them before they make their purchasing decisions. According to Google<sup>1</sup>, for example, 70 percent of consumers wait to make holiday purchases until Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving.

There's also a lasting benefit to holiday marketing. With the right tactics, holiday growth can be a long-term deal, rather than a quarterly bump. It's an opportunity to get customers in the door (or onto your site), and then keep them coming back.

By leveraging coupons, discounts or special bonus items during the holidays, you can become a regular destination for your new customers, generating long-term repeat business that pays for the discounts or promotions you create.

Ready to start? Your friends at Vocus, along with some industry experts, are here to pitch some tactics, tips and ideas for holiday marketing success.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.google.com/think/articles/3-strategies-to-prepare-for-the-holidays.html> Time of Year When US Shoppers Plan to Begin Making Holiday Purchases, July 2013 (% of respondents)

## Key Idea: Treat the Holidays as an Event

Marketers are always thinking about acquiring prospects, and trying to engage them to generate interest. Strategically, how do we accomplish this during the holiday season?

Ric Dragon, author of "[Social Marketology](#)" and CEO and co-founder of [DragonSearch](#), said, "I'm going to think about the customers in my industry, and what they're experiencing going into the holiday season. How will my content meet their needs? What can my promotions do to help them? What is my relationship with these people, and how can I deepen the relationship with what I do?"

Dragon suggests you take cues from event marketing for holiday marketing. He cites Red Bull's [stunts](#) as ones that promote the brand and meet customer needs when they aspire to (or participate in) an extreme lifestyle. "When you have an office supply shop that asks people on Facebook about their favorite cranberry dressing for turkey, that's wrong-minded and stupid." Dragon adds, "If I'm a B2B marketer and I make parts for wheelchair motors, I may think about what my customers care about, and tap into an effort around gratitude for the holidays. Make sure your campaigns and elements match your brand voice and purpose." With that said, let's get to some ideas.

### #1 **Tactic 1: Combine Sharing + Paid Social**

If you have been building an audience on social media sites, now is the time to increase engagement. Let's take Facebook as an example. Look at your Insights metrics dashboard and decide what kind of content resonates with your audience. Did a photo or video get shared more often? Or does your textual content work? If your customers respond to photos, create some really great ones that capture the best elements of the ones with the most interactions. Start sharing and watch the stats. If a post gets some organic shares and momentum, pay to "Boost" the post using Facebook's administration tools.



For the holidays, think about a campaign of different images over the season. From Thanksgiving and Hanukah all the way to New Year's Eve, you can plan ahead. If you're sharing photos, take them all on the same day and post them with Facebook's ability to set advanced dates.

Watch for and respond quickly to questions and comments. Paid social is effective, but building the community around your brand is going to pay off more in the long run.

**Example:** Dave Kerpen, CEO of [Likeable Local](#) and author of "[Likeable Leadership](#)," cites his client Soda Stream's efforts on Cyber Monday 2012 as a good example of a sharing and paid social effort. The company promoted 50 percent off plus free shipping on Facebook and in an email to 175K subscribers.

Their Facebook advertising directed customers to a hidden landing page on their website only accessible via a direct link. Customers could also forward the email to friends. The company achieved more than 108K site visits, 7,600 orders and \$448K in sales from this campaign.

Twitter also allows paid posting, and it has been shown in studies<sup>2</sup> that tweets can drive sales. For any social networking effort you make, keep in mind that you can't be a buttoned-up marketer 11 months a year, and then go crazy during the holidays – your audience won't resonate with it, and you'll likely make more enemies than friends.



<sup>2</sup> <https://blog.twitter.com/2013/promoted-tweets-drive-offline-sales-for-cpg-brands>

**#2**

## Tactic 2: Facebook Contests

Another way to encourage interaction on Facebook is with contests, which are very popular around the holidays. Contests generate leads by capturing customer information as a pre-condition of entry. Consumers are motivated by deals to participate. While [Facebook changed the rules regarding contests](#) in August 2013, it is still easier to run a contest using an app. Facebook Apps enable you to collect more data about your users rather than having them participate via the page's timeline, and the data arrives in a structured, intelligent way<sup>3</sup>.



Think about your goals for the contest. Run it in a way that encourages potential customers to participate, not just people who are hoping to win your offer. Making the prize a gift certificate to your business will help focus potential customers, and gives the winner a chance to try your products or services directly.

Another way to ensure your customers spend time with your content is to “hide” an “Elf on the Shelf” or other holiday picture on your own website. Direct people there using an email campaign or a news release. Remind customers about it on your Facebook page every day of the contest, with a hint about where they may find a clue. Send people to your Facebook page to submit the answer via an app, or send them to a custom landing page. Require them to provide their email address as part of the entry. Pick a random winner and customers will have spent time looking at your site during the contest.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, contests can drive users to “Like” your page, letting you communicate with them in the future. People who like your page will see your content via paid or organic posts, and you can reach friends of people who like your page with ad targeting.

**Example:** Last Christmas, an online shopping site called Rue La La gamified the holiday with a Facebook contest called “[Rue Reveal](#).” Customers clicked to “unwrap” a box once every 24 hours, and the winners found cashmere shawls, sunglasses, bottles of wine and \$500 gift cards in their virtual box. The contest drove likes, repeat visits to the company’s Facebook page, and exposure to items and branding for the holidays.

### Tip: Make your products shareable

If you have an e-commerce site or a catalog, ensure each product can be liked, tweeted, put into a ‘wish list,’ emailed or otherwise shared. Encourage people to share the products they like with friends and family. For example, “Santa sometimes needs help – if you weren’t sure what to get me, look at <http://yourstore.com/product?id=234&CODE=x>.” By making the URLs traceable back to these share codes, you will be able to see which shared items brought traffic back to the web site. Creating custom tracking URLs is covered later in our measurement section.

**#3**

## Tactic 3: Optimize for Mobile

“Mobile is one of the key growth channels this holiday season,” writes eMarketer.<sup>5</sup> “Last year’s performance shows how critical mobile has become. In March 2013, according to IBM, the iPad passed the iPhone as the largest driver of mobile traffic to retail sites, with more than 10% of site visits and the highest conversion rate (4.4%) of mobile devices.”

To avoid missing out on this year’s mobile bonanza, provide a good user experience on the mobile web.

We asked O. Liam Wright of [True Interaction](#), a user experience, design and development firm in New York City, for his tips on optimizing mobile content during the holidays.

<sup>3</sup> [https://fbcdn-dragon-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-ash3/851577\\_158705844322839\\_2031667568\\_n.pdf](https://fbcdn-dragon-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-ash3/851577_158705844322839_2031667568_n.pdf)  
<sup>4</sup> Inspired by the Downtown Ithaca Alliance story in this article: <http://mashable.com/2009/08/11/social-media-contests/>  
<sup>5</sup> <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Omnichannel-Key-2013-Holiday-Shopping-Season/1010200> Omnichannel Is the Key for the 2013 Holiday Shopping Season, Sept. 10, 2013

- **Keep it short.** Mobile readers don't want long blocks of text. "Focus on descriptive text," says Wright.
- **Show reviews.** People want validation that they're choosing the correct item. "Anything that confirms their decision to purchase."
- **Use pictures.** They're worth a thousand words and can be a great way to show off items on mobile.
- **Go minimalist.** Wright says, "Instead of trying to recreate your entire site on mobile, think about the user's experience and goals for the season. Maybe you're just promoting specific holiday items." By reducing the scope, you can save money and accomplish more in less time.
- **Give extra options.** "Give users an option to purchase something else comparable, or something to go along with the product." If you make it easy to buy a case with glasses, or gloves with a coat, you'll maximize your sale potential.
- **Be persuasive.** Wright suggests making things easily actionable, with tactics like scarcity – for example: "Only 10 left at this price." You can also use reciprocity; give customers a discount and one to share with a friend via email, or "Buy now and also get a bonus."

## #4

### Tactic 4: Hold a Holiday Open House

If you have a brick-and-mortar location, why not host a pre-holiday Open House event?

Don't make the event about buying, but rather about browsing and idea generation. Have staff on hand to answer questions, as top-notch customer service can overcome attempts to "showroom" (looking at products in your store before buying online) or shop for the lowest prices.

Try putting signs with the store's address (physical and online) around, and making them places for customers to take pictures of the products they like. You could even entice shoppers with "photo stations" for sharing. Use a white box with a light and your store's logo for easy sharing of "product shots" using their own phone or social network. Voilà, instant Instagram marketing. Consider offering a bonus discount for shoppers who share their store photos of a product.

If you're not able to collect customer emails with your point of sale setup, get a clipboard and offer customers the option to join your list on paper. Add them quickly, and make the first email a thank you with an offer, discount or bonus for coming back to the store. Don't forget to track redemption rates.

#### Idea: Go bigger on fewer discounts

"We're living in the most cluttered marketing landscape ever," says Dave Kerpen. "The key to winning in this environment is to truly stand out. If you're going to provide a discount to someone, figure out what you can discount 50% or 75% instead of offering a 5% or 10% coupon. Go big or go home during the holidays."

## #5

### Tactic 5: Help Customers Spread the Word With Video

When you enable them, customers can be your most effective holiday salespeople.

Create a series of short videos with customers discussing why they shop with you. You don't have to spend much to create well-lit video with good audio. Have customers talk about family, gifts they're buying, the way they celebrate each holiday and more.

The videos don't have to mention your store, offerings or marketing messages. Instead, just include a slate with your store info at the end.

Do quick edits and send the videos directly to the customers. Encourage them to share the videos on their social channels. Promote the videos in a news release, on your email list and on social networks. Make sure you're paying attention to any comments and feedback you get, and modify the campaign or respond as needed.

**Example:** In 2012, American Red Cross created the [Give Something That Means Something](#) campaign, where they encouraged people to donate blood around the holidays. They encouraged donors to send E-cards





and a holiday video to their friends with the message supporting blood donation. The act of having friends advocate for donation, rather than the organization itself, proved effective and authentic.

#6

## Tactic 6: Create Landing Pages With Coupons

The holidays are a great opportunity to deploy custom landing pages to build your customer list and CRM contacts.

"The best time to ask for someone's information is when the barrier to giving information is lower," says Abby Hammer, senior product manager at Vocus. "Landing pages can combine lead forms with incentives like special deals, coupons and downloads. This makes them an ideal fit for the holidays, where consumers are intrigued by offers, and willing to interact with you to get something extra."

In exchange for a coupon, your landing page can require customers to "Like" you on Facebook or fill out a lead form. As you sign people up, tag them in your CRM system as "coupon lover" and put them into a "holiday promotion" mailing list. Consider including social sharing buttons on your landing page so that once a customer gets a coupon, they can like the page, share it, tweet it and otherwise alert friends.

### Three tips for better holiday landing pages:

- **Keep it simple.** Holiday colors, simple navigation and limited choices will help keep customers focused on making decisions.
- **Put the offer at the top, above the fold.** [Dave Osborough at Pay-Per-Click Hero](#) says, "The last thing you want is for a customer to bounce away from your page simply because they couldn't find your hidden offers."
- **Suggest additional options.** Providing complimentary items can increase basket size. Amazon's "Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought" is a model example. But simple additions like "This item requires these batteries" with an "Add to Cart" button can help customers who need a complete package.

#7

## Tactic 7: Launch a Loyalty Program Now

The holidays may seem like a strange time to launch a loyalty program if you don't already have one. However, this time of year is a great opportunity to get customer information.

"Make it about your customer," says Dave Kerpen. "Give them as many options as possible. Some retailers ask for my phone number but I don't want to be texted or called. However, if they have a Foursquare promotion, I'll check in and give them my data that way. Each customer is different. You have to understand them and communicate with them on their terms." Kerpen also recommends a free gift with purchase over a discount, since you're not setting your goods at a lower price in people's minds.

Here are four tips to make your loyalty program more attractive:

- **Offer something for just being in the club.** Starbucks' card app encourages repeat buying; it allows people with 24 drink purchases to achieve "Gold" level. But anyone using the app benefits from free downloads and a free drink on their birthday. Take a cue from the king of coffee and offer something for signing up.
- **Easy redemption levels.** Reward points don't motivate when consumers can't see the benefit of their repeat business. In 2012, shopping giant Nordstrom halved the points required for the upper tiers of their loyalty program and expanded their customer base, all while increasing the likelihood of consolidating their spending.<sup>6</sup>
- **Give customers a choice.** Marketer Don Peppers [writes in Fast Company](#), "Modular offerings are a practical way of allowing for customer-driven personalization of a program without going the extreme of full customization. For example, a lower value customer might choose from reward alternatives that include a service upgrade, while high value customers might have choices that include additional redemptions or alternative merchandise."



- o **Keep it simple.** Peppers notes that fewer restrictions and rules keep customers engaged in your program. When customers know what they get and what they have to do to get it, they're happier and you have less work.

**Tip: Offer a discount for recruitment**

Break through the holiday clutter by providing a discount that benefits both an existing and a new customer. When a member signs up for outdoor goods private sale site [TheClymb.com](http://TheClymb.com), they're encouraged to invite friends to join. They can provide email addresses or post a code to their social networks (with share buttons). When a member's friend becomes a customer and spends \$50, both the member and the friend get a \$15 credit.

**#8**

## Tactic 8: Seasonal Autoresponder Campaign

During the holiday clutter of extra emails, consumers appreciate and respond better to offers that seem directly tailored to them.

Software like the Vocus Marketing Suite enables you to send pre-programmed, multi-touch email campaigns to your list, segmented by customer data for extra relevance.

Here are some key emailing dates to consider for a holiday autoresponder campaign.

**Black Friday.** November 29, 2013 – The “granddaddy” of all offer days for retailers. Some retailers have begun to open their offers on Thanksgiving Day to capture people who like a bargain with their turkey.

**Cyber Monday.** December 2, 2013 – According to [Ian Lurie](#) of online marketing agency [Portent, Inc.](#), the first Monday of December is when shoppers try to clear their gift list. The day after Cyber Monday is a very large online shopping day. Consider a “Cyber Tuesday?” campaign for people concerned about missing out.

**Free Shipping Day.** December 17 or 18 is the last day many online retailers will guarantee pre-Christmas delivery. Lurie says this can generate a huge burst of sales. Email, plus social postings on your site and even a press release may help raise that awareness and capture those last-minute shoppers.

**Post-Holiday.** Plan out your email campaigns through the beginning of February. Do you have a post-holiday campaign for all the gift cards or money customers received? If they've done returns, do you have something to offer them afterwards? Keep the offers coming after the tree has come down.

**#9**

## Tactic 9: Publicize a New Holiday Deal Day

American Express famously created “[Small Business Saturday](#)” in 2010. It didn't take long for media attention and word of mouth to make this a regular part of many shopper's holiday season (This year, Small Business Saturday is November 30).

You don't have to be bound to Small Business Saturday or Cyber Tuesday for deals. Make up your own holiday to get people's attention. “Chocolate Wednesday,” “Baked Goods Thursday” or “Utensil Friday” all sound like great ideas for the right businesses.

If you're a home goods retailer, get creative and make up your own traditions! Create an integrated campaign that tells the story of your grandma, the passionate cook who loved to give kitchen supplies to her grandchildren to encourage this tradition. Create a custom “Utensil Friday” landing page, with specific deals on kitchen equipment. Promote it with a news release driving traffic to that landing page. Include pictures of cooking and holiday baked goods. Take pictures of your in-store event with cooking experts showing how to use the utensils effectively, and share them on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Instagram.

Baked Goods Thursday!  
20% off today

#10

## Tactic 10: Track Everything in Real-Time

Real-time analytics can help you fine-tune your tactics to get as much ROI as possible from your holiday marketing.

Dave Kerpen is a big fan of using promotional codes to track promotions on every channel, online or offline. "If you're doing a free gift with purchase holiday promotion, the Twitter code could be "freegiftTW." Track redemption and see which networks are working for this promotion."

Over days or weeks, you may find that some promotions are more effective with one media channel versus another. The only way to tell is to track them.

If you're not yet using an integrated marketing suite like Vocus, you should still use a package like Google Analytics to track your campaigns. You may have seen URLs like this around the web: [http://YourSite.com/MailSignUp?utm\\_source=Facebook](http://YourSite.com/MailSignUp?utm_source=Facebook). In this URL, the "source" is the network name – in this case, Facebook.

By tagging your URLs with the campaign source, the keyword term and other factors, you can track how your campaign converts on various networks, or with different copy versions. Google even provides a [page that lets you create these URLs](#).

### Before You Get Started... Remember!

- 1 When you think about ways to get customer attention, remember to keep customers' long-term need in mind. Use the holidays to deepen relationships, not just boost sales.
- 2 Be relevant. Your special activities should benefit customers and be consistent with your brand voice.
- 3 Build community on social media, not just audience. Respond to questions and problems.
- 4 Don't spam.
- 5 Create custom URLs to gain even more information on how your offers travel and are redeemed.
- 6 The holiday shopping season is almost here. Put this guide down and go plan, implement, measure and repeat!

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## Thank You's

- Ric Dragon, Author, "[Social Marketology](#)" and CEO and Co-founder, [DragonSearch](#)
- Dave Kerpan, Author, "[Likeable Leadership](#)" and CEO, [Likeable Local](#)
- Abby Hammer, Senior Product Manager, Vocus
- O. Liam Wright, Founder and CEO, [True Interaction](#)

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He has worked with clients from Fortune 500, cable networks and Wall Street, as well as major advocacy groups. He teaches social media at the Heyman Center for Philanthropy and Fundraising at NYU SCPS, and is a regular contributor to [Inc.com](#).

## About Vocus

Marketing has evolved. To succeed today, marketers need to make digital channels work together to generate brand awareness and demand while tracking and measuring outcomes.

Vocus offers a unique combination of software and services to help you succeed. We help you attract and engage prospects on social media, search engines and in the news. Capture and keep customers with landing pages and fully integrated email campaigns. Measure and improve your effectiveness with easy analytics that track your customer conversion experience from engagement to retention. We integrate social, search, email and PR to deliver real-time marketing opportunities including leads, prospects, content and media inquiries, with integrated analytics that track campaigns from engagement to conversion.

With our marketing consulting and services team ready to help, Vocus delivers marketing success.

Find out more at [vocus.com](#)

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