ROADIE

Retailers: How to win this holiday season

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Planning ahead for the holiday season will be more important than ever for small businesses this year. We're heading into the holiday season in a pandemic environment, and online shopping is more important than ever before. This guide offers a few tips for success in the busy 2020 holiday delivery season to help you make the most of the next few weeks.

30 days before Black Friday

☐ Consider alternative business practices that might suit your needs. Some retailers find models like appointment shopping or converting your business into a "dark store" (which means closing to public foot traffic and focusing 100% on delivery and curbside pickup). Your needs will depend on your industry, your community's public safety guidelines and your specific business type.

☐ Stock up on inventory and make sure you have a storage plan – and make sure you know where all your inventory is.

TIP: The closer you can get to your end customer, the better. If you can distribute storage around your region or city, you're setting yourself up for success – but again, make sure you know where everything lives, and update your system in real-time as much as you can!

☐ Consider testing out an e-commerce solution (like Shopify & Zapiet) for handling pick-up and delivery of your goods.

TIP: This is also a great time to check in on your website. Optimize your site to prevent lag time or high bounce rates. Traffic to your site is likely to pick up significantly by Black Friday (if not before!), so be ready for heavy traffic and new orders.

20 days before Black Friday

☐ We strongly recommend you offer delivery this holiday season – if you haven't taken the plunge and started providing it yet, this is the year to do it! Make sure you have a delivery partner lined up and ready to go well before Thanksgiving. You can get a delivery partner like Roadie up and running within minutes, but providing ample runway up to the holiday shopping season will give you a chance to iron out any wrinkles in the process.

TIP: When selecting a partner, consider how much packaging you'll need. With Roadie, for example, your goods don't need to be wrapped up and bounced around trucks and conveyor belts, so you can usually skip all that bubble wrap, cardboard and tape.

☐ Make sure your delivery partner can handle your needs. Here are a few things your partner needs to be able to accommodate:

• Your anticipated volume, without sacrificing on-time delivery

• Your holiday hours

• The size/weight of all shipments, including bulky or oversized items

☐ Get creative – is there any way to offer special touches for those customers who never set foot in your business? Think holiday recipe cards, craft ideas, gift guides, gift bundles, gift cards, subscription services... anything to amp up the holiday cheer for your customer, or to make their gifting easier!

☐ Consider offering gift wrapping if possible.

• Work out a comfortable margin for that add-on service that takes your time and costs into account.

• Stock up on these supplies too!

15 days before Black Friday

☐ Use your website, social channels, and email to reinforce holiday hours & service offerings and promote any sales or specialty items.

☐ Be sure to educate your customers on all new service offerings – your e-commerce shop, delivery and pick-up options, etc. – as well as pricing and the timelines associated with these offerings.

☐ Consider incentivizing bigger or combined orders. Can you offer free or reduced-cost delivery for certain basket sizes?

☐ Look into adjusting your hours of operation to accommodate irregular buying behavior. And if you do, be sure to let your customers know!

☐ Stress-test your online shopping experience by testing search and filter features, the checkout process and holiday pricing. A bad experience on your website can turn off a potential customer.

The Week of Black Friday

☐ Prepare for post-holiday returns by setting customer expectations on return methods and required documentation. Will you offer exchanges, store credit, or a full refund? Will customers need receipts, order summaries, etc.?

☐ Double-check your inventory to confirm you have enough stock for the anticipated increase in volume.

TIP: Recommend holiday shopping ideas and recipes based on your products and services.

14 Days before Christmas – Christmas week

☐ Use your website, social channels and email to reinforce holiday hours & service offerings and promote any sales or specialty items.

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

☐ If you're offering same-day or last-minute delivery, now is the time to remind your customers via social media or email!

The day after Christmas (Boxing Day)

☐ Even the best retailers with the happiest customers can expect a substantial amount of returns in the days after Christmas. Make the process easy for everyone (including you!) by following a few best practices:

- Set expectations by providing your return policy to shoppers at the time of purchase. (It's smart to display return policies on receipts and your website, too.)

- Offer customers a menu of return options. Sure, some may want a full refund, but others might be happy with an exchange or store credit towards a future purchase.

- Ask customers for a reason for their returns. Their answers may offer valuable insights and help you prevent future returns.

- Keep track of returned inventory and make sure it enters your system as soon as it's back in your possession.

- Make returns easy. We know it hurts a bit, but a good customer experience throughout the return process is key and can drive future business – maybe that customer will come back sooner than you think!

Let's go!

Whether you've got 30 days to get ready for the holiday season or just one, Roadie can help with your delivery needs and get you set up in just a few minutes.

Create a free account at **roadie.com/small-business** or reach out to one of our account managers directly at 833.276.2343 with any questions.

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