

Making a List, Checking It Twice: The Essential Paid Search Holiday Checklist

1 What is your communication process?

Who are your stakeholders and how will you be working with them?

- Establish a communication process and update schedule with:
 - Core team of marketers using AdWords
 - Managers with final say on budgets and resources
 - Cross functional teammates for updates on product, sales, merchandising, operations, and other marketing channels
 - Your Google account team
 - Agency and vendor contacts (*if applicable*)
- Provide regular performance updates considering:
 - Appropriate audience and timing of reports
 - KPI dashboard and analysis: actuals versus forecast, year-over-year comparisons
 - Major in-quarter wins and the projected performance impact
 - Example:** *Key findings from completed copy tests and related holiday messaging updates*
 - Identified risks to delivering forecast and mitigating optimizations
 - Example:** *CTRs trending low leading into Black Friday and forthcoming ad copy tests*

2 What are your key performance drivers?

Are you running with the right keywords?

- Unpause seasonal keywords in time to fully capture consumer demand
 - Tip:** Use *Google Trends* and *account history* to forecast demand
- Keep a close eye on the average position of these seasonal keywords (*along with your core keywords*), which can quickly accelerate to become your head terms and drop in rank due to increased competition
 - Tip:** *Schedule a daily report or even check the AdWords Preview and Diagnosis Tool every couple hours to closely monitor these keywords*
- Pause and unpause keywords that rely on inventory turnover

What is your bidding strategy?

- Time part bids indexed to seasonal history, trends, and special promotions
- Use location bid adjustments to get more traffic from high value areas or encourage visits to stores (*if applicable*)

What are you going to say to all those holiday shoppers?

- Finalize ad testing and your copy flight schedule
 - Tip:** *Emphasize key shopping days, promotional offers, and deadlines like shipping cut offs and sale end dates*
- Use all relevant ad extensions especially with the recent Ad Rank update
 - Example:** *Use location and call extensions to drive in store traffic, or sitelinks for any popular keywords to cross sell new products*
- Promote your products with richer ads and on Google Shopping with product listing ads
 - Tip:** *Consider mobile PLAs*
- Opt into Google Search Partners so shoppers can find you when searching for stores like yours on Google Maps

Are your best landing pages ready to welcome shoppers?

- End landing page tests and confirm your best designs with the website team
- Set automated rules for conversion rates to alert you of any potential site issues
- Test your mobile optimized landing pages if available, and update destination URLs where appropriate
- Schedule reminders to QA landing pages especially for time-sensitive offers

Cont.

- Do you have enough budget?
 - Project the monthly or quarterly spend using your run rate so that you have enough for all key shopping days
 - Set automated rules to check on your budget
 - Are you up to date on all the special deals for shoppers?
 - Stay updated on any potential in-quarter changes to the promotional calendar
 - Research any interesting offers from your competitors
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3 What are your contingency plans if something doesn't go to plan?

- What is your crisis response plan?
 - Establish policies: what is considered a crisis, and how should the team be empowered to respond
 - Establish an escalation plan for times when team members will be remote
 - Circulate applicable contact information
 - What if you have more demand than expected?
 - Stay updated on inventory that could run out (*and pause those keywords*)
 - Set up notifications for potential website downtime (*too much traffic!*)
 - Make the case for more budget if there is opportunity
 - What if you have less demand than expected?
 - Test higher positions on your best converting keywords or highest margin product lines
 - Monitor average position to check if competitors have affected your ad rank
 - Test to find more profitable opportunities
 - Example:** *Mobile bid adjustments to get smartphone shoppers or match type expansion capture more queries*
 - Partner with your Google account team to diagnose any potential issues
 - Test a better offer with your promotions team
 - Tip:** *Balance value per order lost with total order*
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4 Recognition and Thank You's

Last but not least, remember to thank and recognize all those who helped you along the way to make this a blockbuster season for your search campaigns.

Here's to a great Q4.