



BUSINESS

BLACK FRIDAY & CYBER MONDAY  
**THE PLANNING GUIDE**  
FOR E-COMMERCE BUSINESSES



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Friday, 24th November will mark the return of Black Friday, the shopping mega-event that sees thousands of consumers in the US, UK and Ireland go online and in-store in the hope of getting a jump on their Christmas shopping, or grabbing some unbeatable value deals for themselves.

Three days later, on 27th November, shoppers will log on once again for Cyber Monday, the follow-up day of online sales, creating a shopping holiday event referred to as BFCM (Black Friday / Cyber Monday).

This year, retailers could be set for one of the most successful BFCMs of all time thanks to a recent lift in consumer spending. **Visa's Irish Consumer Spending Index**, which measures expenditure across all payment types (cash, cheques and electronic payments), signalled the fastest acceleration in consumer spending in six months in September.

It's an exciting time for e-commerce retailers and if adequately prepared for, a highly profitable one. Here is everything you need to know to help your business capitalise on Black Friday and Cyber Monday.



Your BFCM planning starts at least two to three weeks before the event itself. It's not just a matter of slashing prices, there are a number of items you need to check off your list before the shopping bonanza begins to make sure your sale season goes swimmingly. These include:

- Pre-Awareness Campaign For Customers
- Inventory Preparation
- Creative Assets
- Sales Timetable
- Testing Site Durability
- Housekeeping

## PRE-AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOR CUSTOMERS

Both your existing customers and potential new customers will be doing their own planning for BFCM and will be researching deals beforehand, to find out where they should best spend their disposable income in late November. Take the following measures to ensure you have everything in place to convert their curiosity into sales.

### *-Email Existing Customers*

Design and send an email newsletter to your subscriber base, letting them know that you will be participating in BFCM this year. Give the dates and times that your sales will be in operation. It's important to be specific here, particularly if you ship internationally

and to different time zones. If you are new to email newsletters try an easy to use platform such as [MailChimp](#).

### *-Write up a Blog Post*

You can also capture some organic searches on the topic of BFCM, by publishing a blog about the deals event on your website. You can include information about the deals you will be running and more general information about the [history of Black Friday](#) to create the richest content possible.

### *-Leverage Social Media*

Change your page's profile photo / banner or simply create a post or tweet and pin it to the top of the page telling your visitors "Black Friday deals are coming soon". On Facebook, you can promote your post a week earlier as part of an ad campaign to raise further awareness of your sale to fans of your page and a wider audience, thanks to Facebook's diverse suite of targeting options.

### *-PR Outreach*

In November the web will be littered with articles helping users find the best deals each day. Do a Google search for BFCM articles like these in newspaper sites and blogs from last year and then email a copy of your proposed deals to the journalist in question with a link to your online store.





## INVENTORY PREPARATION



Carefully plan your inventory in accordance with a sales strategy that suits your business. Maybe your plan is to sell five units of a big-ticket item at a loss to generate some publicity and bring users on site. Other stores may reduce their profit margin by 20% on all items or drop a portion of their inventory to cost price. Whatever you decide to do, do what makes sense for your business. You are not obliged to go into financial ruin just to keep your customers happy.

Put a BFCM spreadsheet together to help you stay on top of things. This will provide you with complete oversight on your deals activity and can also serve as a handy brief for your website administrator if you are not making the price changes yourself.

Item #	Item Name	Normal Price	Sale Price	Starts	Ends	Units Available
#6787	Fender Stratocaster (white)	€1,299	€999	24.11.2017	25.11.2017	4

*Example of inventory preparation spreadsheet*



## CREATIVE ASSETS



It's important to give your designers (or yourself, depending on the size of your team) the time needed to pull creative assets together for your website and social channels. A temporary design overhaul that capitalises on a new colour scheme, or attention-grabbing images that feature prices being slashed can really help sell the occasion of BFCM to your customer and helps them feel like they are part of something exclusive. You can add a new column to your inventory spreadsheet 'Creative Assets Required' to help you manage the process.

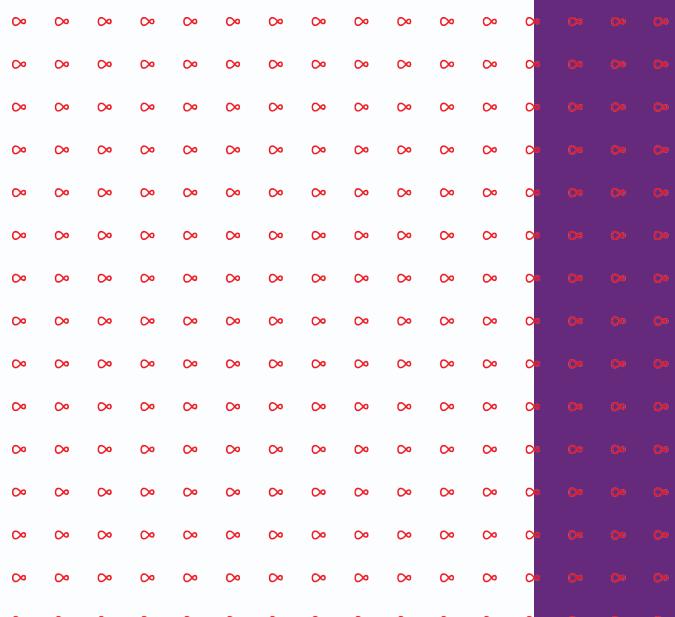
## TIME YOUR SALES



Depending on the size of your inventory and the number of items that you intend to offer at a lower price it could be worth your while to stagger your deals throughout the day, or across a number of days. This helps keep up momentum around your deals event while also taking the pressure off your website, reducing the risk of slow site speeds or a crash, due to a surge in website traffic.

Add start and finish times to your spreadsheet and do your best to ensure it is strictly adhered to especially if it has been distributed for PR purposes or made public on your social media channels.

Keep the timetable on an internal drive so multiple teams can integrate their efforts, e.g. the marketing manager can plan social ads announcing deals, the design team can see which deals still need creative assets and so on.





## TESTING SITE DURABILITY



In the lead up to BFCM, work with your developer to ensure your site can handle an influx of traffic around the sale period.

Compile any data you have from November last year and make it available to your developer. The following metrics can offer a lot of insight and help them establish normal parameters while preparing for an increase in users.

- Traffic channel type
- Traffic location (country)
- Device
- Busiest time of day on site
- Landing pages report
- Time to purchase
- Site speed

If you're using a managed retail platform like Etsy or Shopify, you can rest easy knowing they have dedicated teams making sure everything runs smoothly. Keep an eye out for newsletters or blog posts from these platforms that leverage the data findings of thousands of e-commerce sites in order to offer advice on getting the most out of their sites during peak shopping season.

## MOBILE FIRST



Have a look at your analytics to learn how much of your site traffic is coming from mobile devices. Talk to your developer and ensure that your site is easy to navigate on

mobile. Make it as easy as possible for a mobile customer to check out and complete a purchase as you can.

## HOUSEKEEPING



It might sound like asking you to double-check your homework before handing it to your teacher, but we can't stress enough how important it is to do a thorough once-over before you go live. The last thing you want is to discover that you've underpriced a big-ticket item by mistake and some lucky customer is getting away like a bandit.

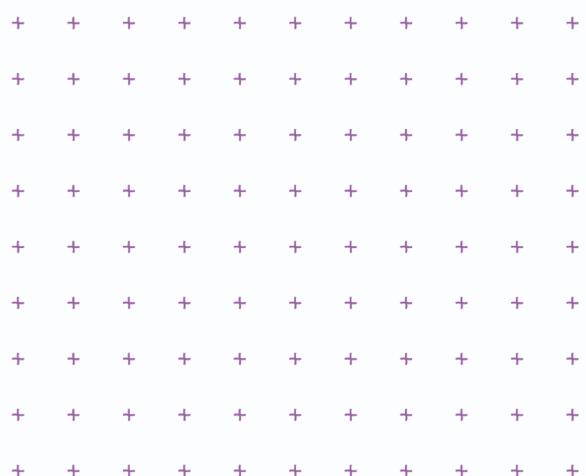
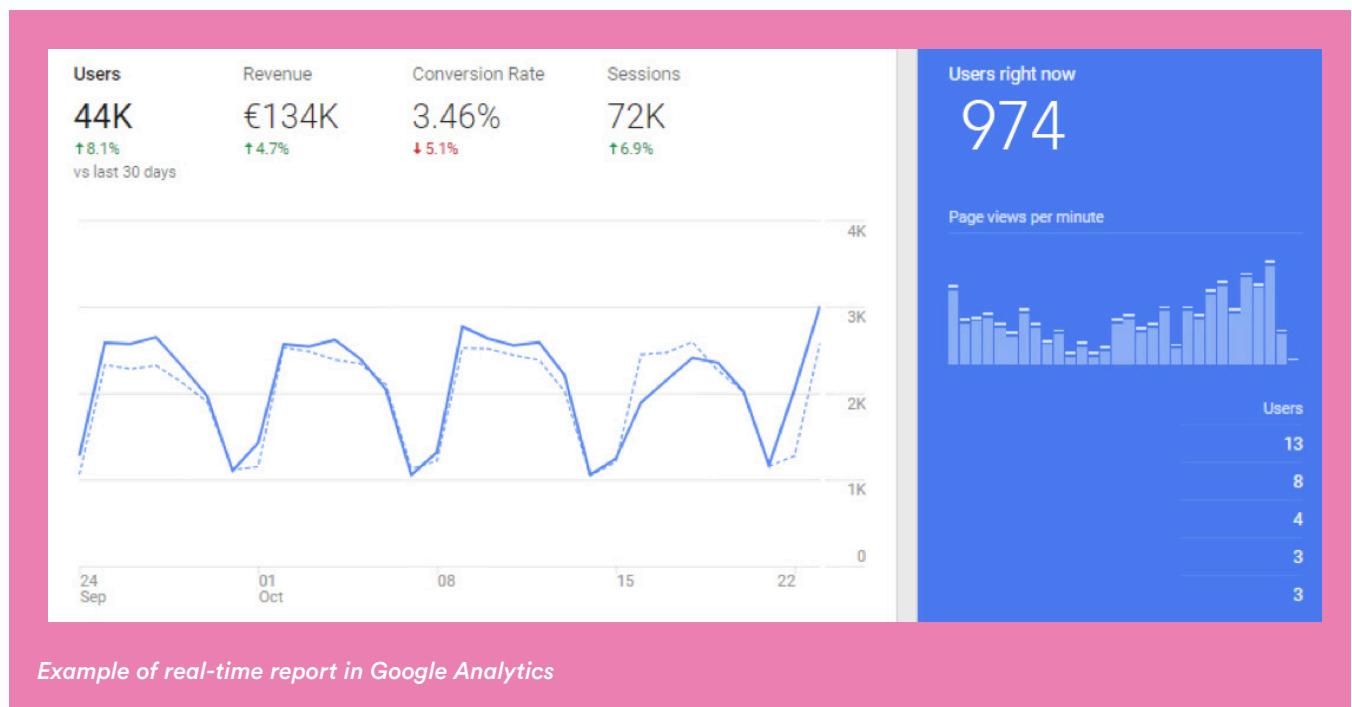
Use your spreadsheet to check that each item is listed correctly, subdividing the work if needs be and delegating to your site administrator, designer and ads teams where possible

## FULFILMENT



BFCM is an exciting time for many retailers. There's the thrill of seeing your revenue and site traffic tick over in real-time, as you hope to break all sorts of retail records in the space of a few short days. Just make sure you don't lose sight of the fact that BFCM is a fantastic bonus opportunity to capitalise on; it shouldn't impede your everyday operations.

Check with your fulfilment manager, or whoever is responsible for stocking and shipping to make sure that with an increase in orders you can still maintain your usual delivery standards. Don't forget that a good chunk of your BFCM customers could be first-time customers. Use this opportunity to truly impress and turn them into returning customers, just in time for the Christmas shopping period.



## 2. ADVERTISING



To make the most of your BFCM activities for your business, you need to spread the word that you've something extraordinary going on your website.

Two of the most effective advertising channels for e-commerce sites are Google AdWords and Facebook advertising

### GOOGLE ADWORDS

Both your existing customers and potential new customers will be doing their own planning for BFCM and will be researching deals beforehand, to find out where they should best spend their disposable income in late November. Take the following measures to ensure you have everything in place to convert their curiosity into sales.

#### *-Update Ad Texts*

You can tweak your existing ad text on your regular inventory to highlight your BFCM sale. Mention “Black Friday deal” or mention “50% off” (where accurate) to catch shoppers’ eyes.

#### *-Update Ad Extensions*

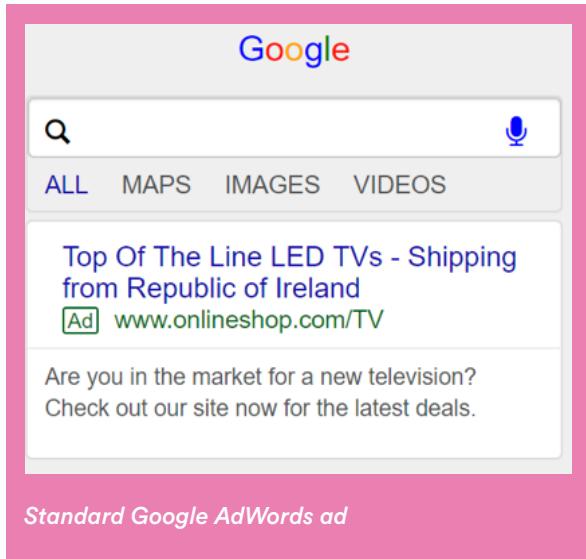
Within AdWords you have a number of ad extensions at your disposal that can help you beef up your existing ads and make them more appealing to your audience.

These include:

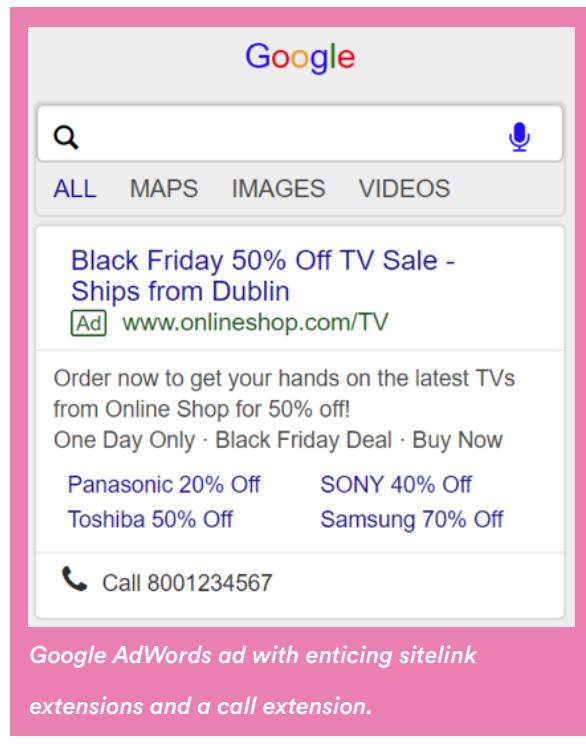
- Callout extensions
- Call extensions
- Sitelink extensions
- Location extensions
- Promotion extensions

The extensions help transform your ad from a boring, standard offering into an attention-grabbing spectacle.

You can even set up sitelink extensions



Standard Google AdWords ad



Google AdWords ad with enticing sitelink extensions and a call extension.

### -Review and Optimise

If you've previously run an AdWords campaign for BFCM, you can view reports in your AdWords and Google Analytics that will help you learn from failures and guide you to repeat successes.

Examine the following data from last year to help inform your campaign:

- Instances where budget was too low / too high
- Average transaction value among converters on promotional days
- Most successful and least successful product categories during the promotional days

### -Adapt Ad Scheduling

If you have ad scheduling on e.g. only show ads from 9am - 8pm you might want to adjust this frequency during BFCM to maximise conversions. Picture your customers at home on the couch late in the evening browsing deals that will go live the following morning. Also picture the commuters on public transport in the morning, eagerly on a countdown to when the sales commence.

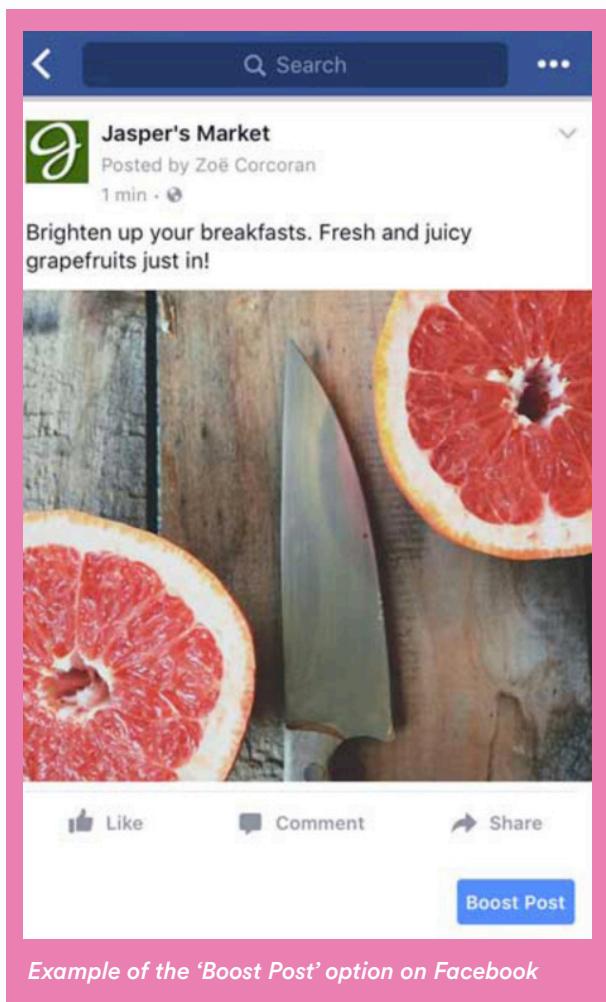
### -Remarketing

Consider running a display remarketing campaign in AdWords on the days leading up to BFCM. This process shows display ads to people who have visited your website or used your app previously. You can create display banners to raise awareness of promotions on your e-commerce store. Learn how to set up a remarketing campaign [here](#).



## **FACEBOOK**

Facebook advertising is one of the most accessible advertising platforms for small businesses and SOHOs. Facebook has purposely designed itself so that businesses can simply ‘boost’ any post they have created on their Facebook Page or go through Ads Manager for some more advanced functions.



*Example of the ‘Boost Post’ option on Facebook*

Before we go through some of the more specialised functions of Facebook Ads Manager, you can download our free ebook: [\*\*Achieving Business Growth with Facebook Ads\*\*](#), to learn techniques such as implementing the Facebook Pixel.

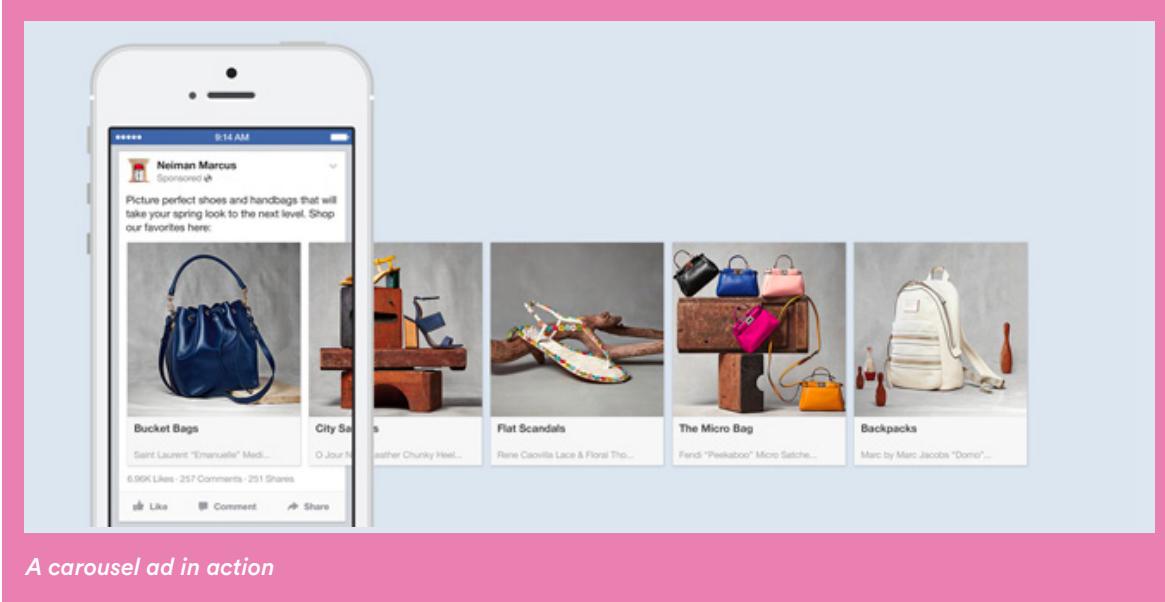
The Facebook Pixel is a piece of code that lets you track user activity between Facebook and your website.

### **AD FORMATS FOR RETAIL**

There are a number of different ad formats available to you as a business on Facebook. Here are two that are best suited to retail goals.

#### **-Carousel Ads**

A great asset for retailers when it comes to BFCM is the carousel ad. These are ads that users can scroll through horizontally to see a range of related products, or different aspects of the same product.



*A carousel ad in action*

The carousel format allows you to showcase up to ten images or videos within a single advert, each with its own link. This gives you more creative space in a single ad, while still letting your users interact with a number of different products.

In the case of BFCM, you could feature products that are reduced in price for one day only and run that ad for a single day.

You could also break up one big image of your entire discounted range and spread it across all the tiles for a more enticing creative experience.

#### **-Facebook Video**

According to **research from Hubspot**, four times as many consumers would prefer to watch a video about a product than to read about it. Facebook has also revealed that it hits **8 billion video views a day** on its platform, making video ads the ideal format to get the attention of consumers on Facebook.

There are a number of types of videos that can be used to reach customers on Facebook (and Instagram via targeting options), allowing you to make an impact with a relatively small creative budget, or with something more elaborate if you wish.

On the lead up to BFCM, you could use video as part of a simple pre-sale awareness strategy as follows:

- Create a gif or slideshow video of all the products you're going to be reducing
- Upload the asset into a video ad on Facebook
- Target to a custom audience or at specific interests
- Aim for a high relevance score to get a low Cost Per Click (CPC)
- Capture this audience for remarketing purposes
- Serve this audience with carousel ads during BFCM



## REMARKETING WITH DYNAMIC ADS



We've already alluded to remarketing, but here's how you can take it to the next level.

Upload your product catalogue into Facebook Ads Manager and you can create dynamic ads. These are ads that automatically promote products to people who have expressed interest on your website, in your app or elsewhere on the Internet.

This functionality also lets you target cart abandoners, by displaying the exact items they had in their cart in a carousel ad.

Dynamic ads let you target customers with a strong intent to buy that might have hesitated at the last second. You can retarget these people at a time in the month

when people usually get paid, or, for example in the middle of BFCM.

If you use sites like Shopify, Magento or BigCommerce, these platforms are already set up to work with dynamic ads. Learn more about dynamic ads [here](#).



# 3. POST BFCM



When it's all done and dusted gather up the learnings from your BFCM activities to help you inform your e-commerce strategy for Christmas and for next year. Here are some actions you should take once you have caught your breath.

## REVIEW AND REDESIGN



BFCM is a great way to test the overall performance of your site thanks to high levels of traffic in a short number of days.

Go through your analytics and look for instances where customers abandoned their shopping activity. If you are tracking scroll depth or have a heat map installed on your site, try and determine if there were any obstacles on the page or unfriendly UX that prevented users from checking out.

Pay close attention to the conversion rate of user devices. If you have very high levels of mobile traffic but a low conversion rate, there is a chance that your site is not properly optimised for mobile.

Investigate and implement!

## CONNECT WITH NEW CUSTOMERS

Turn your one-time shoppers into loyal customers by engaging with them through subscriber emails and targeted social media posts. Consider building a separate email list just for those that made a purchase during the sale of BFCM and contact them the next time you have a promotion.

## BRIEF THE TEAM



When the last BFCM order leaves your store, gather your team and measure successes and failures that occurred during the promotion. Hear what each team believed worked and didn't work and agree procedures that can be put in place for the following year to streamline processes.

Now have a quick cuppa and get ready for the Christmas shopping season!



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