

A customer is for life, not just for Christmas

 By [Lisa Reid](#)

23 Sep 2015

Believe it or not, it's time to start planning your communication strategy for the 2015/16 festive season.

The festive season kicks off with Halloween in October (1 month from now) and Black Friday (both growing in popularity in South Africa), followed by Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve. Before you know it, you'll be heading down into summer trading and your consumers will be at their busiest spending time with family and friends, enjoying the summer break. It is therefore crucial that your marketing efforts in preparation for the festive season chaos are carefully considered to break through the clutter and have an impact on your current and potential customers.

Also, remember, that some of the foundations laid this time of the year, may well pave the way for a long-lasting future relationship with your customers. If you are looking for some inspiration to kick start your communication plan for the festive season, you'll enjoy our six specially curated tips to improve your marketing efforts by capturing the spirit of the holidays and building engagement with your current and potential customers during the fast approaching festive season.

1. It's not all about Christmas

Year on year mailboxes are flooded with the infectious Christmas spirit and time and time again (if your communications are not segmented and targeted correctly) consumers feel bombarded with irrelevant, product-push communications.



©noodles73 via [123RF](#)

Too often, companies forget who it is they are actually selling to. It is crucial to remember that your target audience (especially in South Africa) is in fact a diverse bunch of people who may not all be of the same religious views and beliefs that support Christmas. So be aware not to push these customers away with wholly Christmas focused messaging.

So, think beyond Christmas. Think goal setting & new years' resolutions. Help your customers reflect on the successes over the past year and help them identify new goals, both personal and work related, for the upcoming year. But make sure you don't just try to sell product. Engagement beyond selling will help lay the foundation for a prosperous and long-term relationship with your customers.

2. Know who you are selling to

During the festive season your customer may not necessarily be your end-consumer. This is especially true when it comes to this time of the year as customers are likely to be buying for others, rather than themselves. Have a look at the test case below from www.whichtestwon.com where performance of a homepage test yielded completely different results before and after Christmas.

The response was surprising. Most people guessed that version B drove the most click rates & sales due to the creative being more enticing and informative. However, it was in fact version A which saw an increase of "Add to Cart" clicks by 14.29%. Reason being, people landing on the page were not buying the magazine subscriptions for themselves, they were buying it as a gift for a friend and therefore were less interested in the details about the magazine. All they wanted was a quick and easy way to buy the subscription with as little clicks as possible. However, after Christmas, these results were reversed for the same reason. Customers making purchase decisions for themselves wanted more detail before committing to the subscription.

Using customer data, to personalise and send relevant communication is fast becoming one of the biggest factor that influence purchase decisions, therefore, capitalise on this opportunity and use your customer data to yield positive results.

3. Surprise and delight

In the spirit of giving, it's a perfect time to show your customers some appreciation too. Unexpected rewards can carry your relationship with your customers to a new level. By surprising and delighting your customers with a reward or even a simple personalised piece of communication, you can keep members engaged and happy, and create a positive association for your brand. It can be as easy as a holiday message with free, relevant and personalised content.

4. Social heroes

How do you engage with your customers when you know that they are inundated with advertisements and emails? Make them your social heroes by using the power of user generated content. Put the power in their hands by allowing them to showcase themselves enjoying your product or services through platforms such as Instagram or Facebook.

Allow people to vote for their best picture to spark further engagement and reward the winner or most engaged customers with something special. The way in which you relate to your customers with real people, in real moments, using your product and services is a winning recipe to keep your brand top of mind.

5. Content is king

At this time of the year, Christmas is no longer the sole event everyone waits for anymore. Over the years, other "events" have grown in popularity. As previously mentioned, the festive season now encompasses Halloween, Black Friday, Christmas Eve, Boxing Day and New Year's Eve. So how do you best encapsulate these important dates into one communications plan that doesn't end up bombarding your customers?

Our advice is to cherry pick a few examples of your favourite CRM communications you've received from various brands during the past festive seasons to identify key winners to implement into your marketing strategy for the coming year.

6. Enhance your e-commerce offering to meet the demands of last minute shoppers

It's at times like Christmas where brands can really show off their ability to deliver a seamless online experience to last minute online shoppers. A recent article titled "Festive Readiness" by Matt Roux, CTO of Emerce Commerce, highlights 14 important tips for ecommerce organisations to be festive season "ready" in order to prepare for the surge in online orders during this time (which can be up to 4 times the normal order amount) and of course to meet the expectations of your customers.

Here are three quick tips to consider for your online store:

1. Optimise your on-site search - if consumers can't quickly and easily find what they're looking for on your site, they'll look elsewhere.
2. Promote gift cards and gift ideas - last minute shoppers need your help and they want a quick & easy online solution for last minute shopping. Promote your gift card offering & make gift suggestions on your site to help guide this shopper.
3. Update your FAQs, customer service and shipping information - ensure your site help sections are updated with relevant holiday information that will set the expectations for delivery timelines for the last minute shopping rush.

We all know trading ramps up during the holiday season so while every brand in the country will be vying for your customers' attention and share of wallet, we hope these tips can help you create a compelling way to engage your customers and cut through the festive season clutter.

ABOUT LISA REID

Lisa Reid joined Truth as Managing Director in July 2014. Prior to Truth, she worked for Virgin Active South Africa as Head of Customer Relationship Management to drive the business towards Customer Centricity. Her key focus was to set up a department that aligned all internal stakeholders around member centric communications and initiatives to ensure a holistic customer experience. In 2009, Lisa was Communications and PR manager for adidas, supporting the business during the 2010 FIFA soccer world cup.

«A customer is for life, not just for Christmas - 23 Sep 2015

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>