



attention.
always.

Holiday Guide



Deck the halls with the best
Retail Experience!





Once again, it's that time of the year!
The holiday season is knocking on our doors and we are
busy hatching grand plans.

*There are a few more days yet till you savor the intoxicating
aroma of cakes, cookies, and everything nice;*

says the Calendar!

We say “No Way! Holidays are already in; let’s bask.”

Holidays are synonymous with good food, loads of shopping, and some happy times with our loved ones. Hence, our downtime is their busy period.

Wondering who “**they**”?

The retailers! They hustle during the holiday season to lead from the front.

If all of them hustle how can you have that edge as a retailer?

A comprehensive, intuitive, and well-thought-out strategy is crucial to deal with the massive sale that happens during the months of October, November, and December.

If as a retailer you are keen to close this year on a happy note (a win-win situation both for you and your customers); you are at the right place.

This playbook, will deliver you insights to smoothly sail through the 2022 holiday season.

Now is the time, wear your thinking caps; buckle up; and get going to ace the holiday season like a pro.

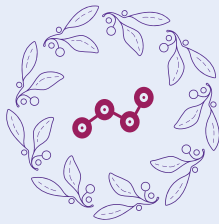
Together we shall get the ball rolling!



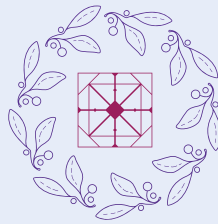


A sneak peek into 2022 holiday season strategy

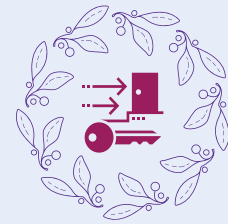
Do rewind the 2021 holiday sale before you start afresh, to mend the ways which hadn't worked for you earlier. A retrospective helps to:



Frame success metrics




Identify new or continuous patterns of behavior



Identify opportunities for improvement





Timeless tips to up the spirit of the holiday season

Products that were popular last year will probably stay popular, so retain them and capitalize on their popularity

Keep your holiday season campaigns running smoothly at all times

2022

Some products did not move, even though you offered discounts and promoted them. Why didn't they sell? A detailed analytics report like the ones that SFCC offers, gives you deeper insights into what you could do differently this time

Constantly test and keep checking your strategies to get optimized revenues this buying season





Welcome the new with open arms

The holiday season is a great time to acquire new customers because everyone is in a shopping spree. Take advantage of the surge in sales by creating new customer segments, based on demographics, interests, cross-channel shoppers and more. Offer tailor made promotions and products to see what works for each customer group.

Do you know the customer segment that's often overlooked?

Those that buy just once during the holidays. Sign them up for your email and marketing promotions so that they turn into repeat customers.

Choosing the right social channel matters!

Social media is the savvy retailer's best bet to reach a wider audience. Incorporating tactics exclusive to social media marketing and advertising, like the pull-up feature on Instagram stories or native advertising on Facebook, takes your customer to the store website.

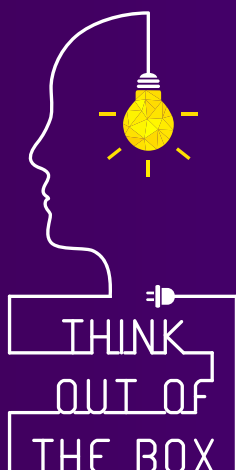
Run campaigns on all your social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. It will help you research the unique advertising styles on each platform, because using a templated marketing content across all social media platforms isn't wise. Also, you would soon know, which social handle works the best for you.

Ramp up your SEO strategy in time

Will potential customers find your brand's website when they search for a product you have?

Search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo run on search engine optimization (SEO), which is a fancy term for creating content that says, 'Hey, we have the product you're looking for, so click on our website link.'

Most customers don't get past the second page of search engines, so your best bet is to work on a winning SEO strategy that works to rank you on the first page as you slowly ramp up efforts to make it to the top. With the latest updates being made to Google Core Web Vitals, you have to be sure that your pages are ranked higher than your competitors!



A **'quick handoff'** doesn't just refer to selling and handing over products to the customers quickly. It also includes all the different ways that you can offer your customers their products.



BOPIS

Once a customer has placed an order online, they can pick the product up at your store if they're excited and impatient to receive their last-minute holiday wish list items. Better known as BOPIS, the 'buy online pick up in store' option gives customers the freedom to get their products faster if they don't want to wait a day or more for delivery. Besides, BOPIS is a perfect opportunity for retailers to increase

wallet spending - promote impulsive buying as they cater to customer demands leveraging the data insights, deliver targeted promotions while they closely adhere to the principles of 'being at the right time at the right place.'

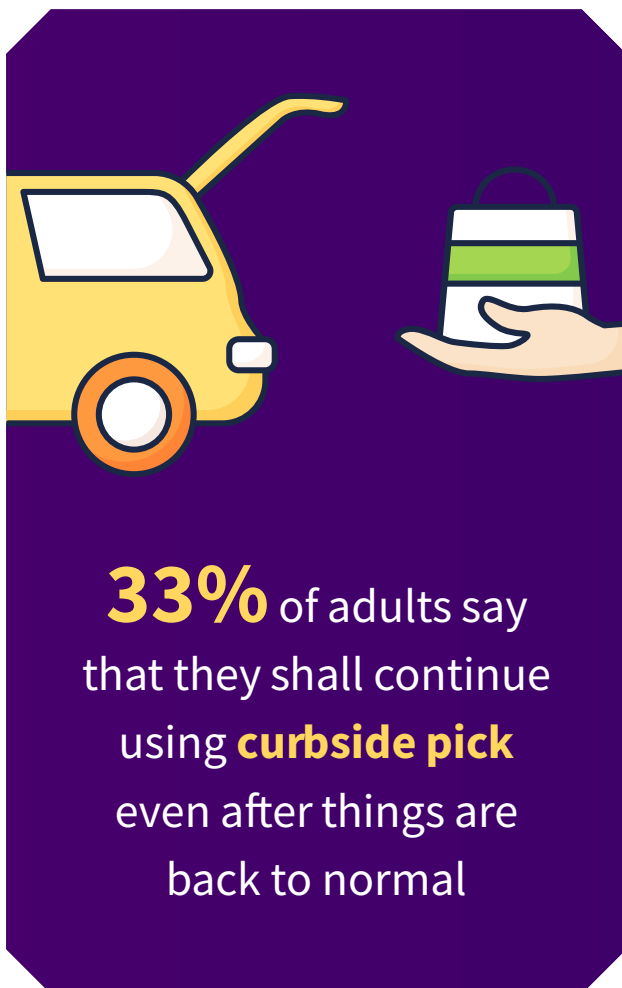
The world's favorite flat-pack furniture brand IKEA demonstrates this effortlessly by offering customers online ordering and lightning-fast pickups especially around the holidays.

Curbside delivery

Will curbside stick even now when things have almost become normal?

Curbside pickup, which became highly popular during the pandemic is here to stay and retailers are all plunging into it.

One of the reasons why these curbside deliveries will work is because it's an important enabler towards long-term recovery. It will remain relevant because it empowers customers with another option. Retailers should completely leverage the concept of curbside delivery since it's an effective way to accommodate more customer demands.





How to leverage the 'Curbside' feature with SFCC?

Salesforce has introduced a new line of pre-built website packages to speed up business processes. These site templates can fill in product descriptions and prices. Also, companies can quicken their transitions to online sales and curbside pickups compared to starting such efforts from scratch.

The SFCC product comprises everything needed to get the sites going, from creation using pre-built storefront templates to site deployment, web hosting, and assistance from Salesforce through managed services as part of the packages. The sites are built up using a combination of no-code clicking to select a wide range of pre-configured options or manual coding by developers to add custom coding as desired.

Holiday inventory

An SFCC exclusive, the catalog and inventory feature let you schedule and monitor holiday stock and selling activity daily. Heavy buying during the holiday season, and especially the last-minute rush, can see orders ranging in the hundreds every minute. Regular monitoring of inventory is necessary to ensure that products are not out of stock and buyers get what they need.

There is another side to the coin. While inventory view is important to cater to the buyers' need sometimes situations are not within control.

What should retailers do then?

Even after a hawk's eye view of the inventory when things do not go as planned, retailers should strive to make the best out of the situation. They can cross-sell similar products. Using **SFCCs Commerce Cloud Analytics** retailers learn about customer's purchasing history, their interaction pattern and other relevant details. All these data can be used both for cross-selling and up-selling. Cross-selling

indeed is a great way to increase customer loyalty and build customer relationships to improve customer lifetime value and retention.

According to a
2022 HubSpot Blog survey
of more than **500 sales professionals**,
72% of salespeople who upsell and
74% who cross-sell say that it drives up
to **30% of their revenue**.

CC Analytics also delivers valuable insights about customer buying patterns from the previous year.

Say, a customer's search for a product that you had in stock last year yielded zero results. What can you do to fix it? Quick SEO fixes like using similar matches, keywords, and synonyms allow you to throw up the product or a similar one in the search, so that the customer is not left in the lurch.

Similarly, Commerce Cloud Analytics can open a great opportunity to up-sell products. It allows retailers to fetch and analyze all relevant customer data, and history, provide individualized offers and promotions. All of these in turn leads to successful upselling of products.

Personalization is a pathway to customer delight.

Publish a new seasonal catalog

The Sears catalog experience will never fade away. You've experienced it, or you've heard about it. Waiting for the newest copy of the Sears catalog and circling what you wanted, was what many of us looked forward to on Christmas Day. The years have rolled on, and plenty has changed in retail. However, online catalogs can evoke a similar sense of excitement in your shoppers.

PART 1

Features for your holiday selling arsenal

The features listed below will need to be incorporated on to your ecommerce platform, so you'll need your in-house team of developers or staff for these ones.

Storefront search

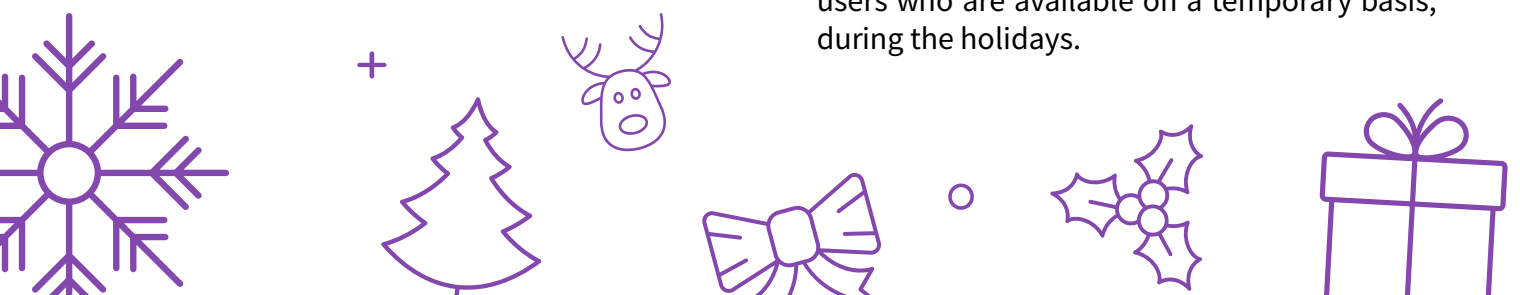
SFCC offers customers an easier way to search for and filter products based on their required search parameters. A storefront sorting option gives your customers the ability to sort search results already returned by a category or keyword search.

Any storefront sorting options you configure appear in the Sort By dropdown list at the top of search results. All storefront sorting options are available site-wide. Merchants need to set up storefront sorting rules to include products that haven't been selling or moving as fast, to generate sales in the peak buying season.

Role-based restricted access

Define and assign roles and permissions to users. Not everyone should have the same access to all sections of the website or storefront. Merchants should only be able to access the products and catalogs. Developers only need to gain entry to the software, testing and development sections. Define and assign roles to specific users, to minimize risks.

During the holiday season however, retailers like you depend on extended and short-term staff, just for the holidays. As a result, there will be additional users added to backend portals to manage content and its deployment. Roles during the holidays will also need to include users who are available on a temporary basis, during the holidays.





Those new releases can wait

Avoid unnecessary releases and replication. The holiday season is perhaps not the time to offer new releases that are heavy on development. When your website gets overloaded because of high traffic, customers can't buy and will move away. Focus on optimizing your site to handle heavy traffic loads and offer quicker loading, by keeping the releases and new services and products for after the holiday season. Ensure the focus remains on holiday buying.

Set up alerts on trust site

Sites always go down when they're overloaded. Use the Salesforce Trust site to check system status, performance, and security and be enabled for initiating proactive measures to keep your site delivering experiences without lag, irrespective of customer volume.

Make SEO URLs easy to read

Bless the developers' hearts for creating URLs that point to your products. However, a string of characters that reads like gibberish isn't exactly a good look when you're a customer. Try incorporating your keywords into your URLs for neater finish and better readability.

These tags are meta

The little headings at the top of searchable web pages are called meta tags. These meta tags describe the subheadings on your website. Just like with the random string of characters in the SEO URLs, update these so that it can actually be read, and doesn't read something like '45kHc2gg2bV1'!



PART 2

Features for your holiday selling arsenal



Land on these pages

Consider implementing new content using the SFCC Page Designer. Marketing landing pages (LPS) are an excellent way to divide and conquer customers based on their demographics, interests, age maybe, and other parameters. Audience-centric LPS don't bore readers, because they've gone to exactly where they should be, catering to their interests.

Manage fraud

Now is the best time to lay down, recheck, and improvise fraud management rules. Bigger buying also attracts individuals and malware that are up to no good, so minimize fraudulent transactions and protect your customer so they actually proceed to the checkout.

Storefront security strategies

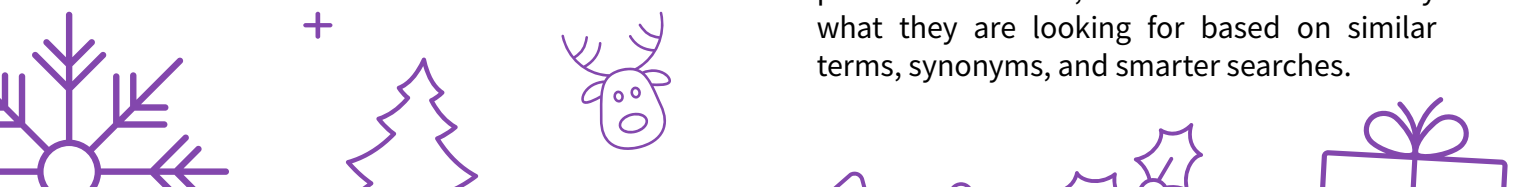
Providing the added layer of security with https ensures customer and merchant data and connections stay safe. Don't be skimping by skipping!

Ensure Faster Page Loading

Customers can't afford to lose 5 seconds waiting for a site to load. Site load timing is crucial but often overlooked. Returning visitors have site information in the form of caches on their computers or devices, which ensures that subsequent website visits load even faster. Caching needs to be implemented site-wide and especially on static pages for optimal load times.

Leverage SFCC's Einstein Recommendation

If you've already got the Commerce Cloud Einstein (CCE) extension, now is a great time to consider implementing Einstein Recommendations. Predictive analytics tools like Einstein help your customers find what they're looking for - faster. CCE works by analyzing the customer's profile and purchase history to offer predictions based on these parameters. It also offers customers *Smart Search* with a special synonym dictionary to match product names to similar terms and synonyms to increase the number of relevant product hits. Hence, customers can find exactly what they are looking for based on similar terms, synonyms, and smarter searches.





Do Not Forget Load Testing

System performance and scalability can make or break a merchant's business during the holiday season. Performing load testing is crucial as a part of holiday readiness program. Load testing gives an accurate picture of how the site will scale during the holiday season. Despite the platform looking stable, some of the factors that might impact the performance of the site includes:

- Changes to custom code
- Changes to data configurations
- Traffic volume, both times and amount

Retailers can choose to perform load testing while on production but that might disrupt shopper's experience, hence the other option includes:

- Maintain a dedicated realm for test and development
- Test on a temporary rental realm
- Hire a third-party load test vendor to help



If retailers decide to monitor their own tests, Salesforce customer support configures the realm based on agreed upon specs, and assists with errors on or related to the platform.

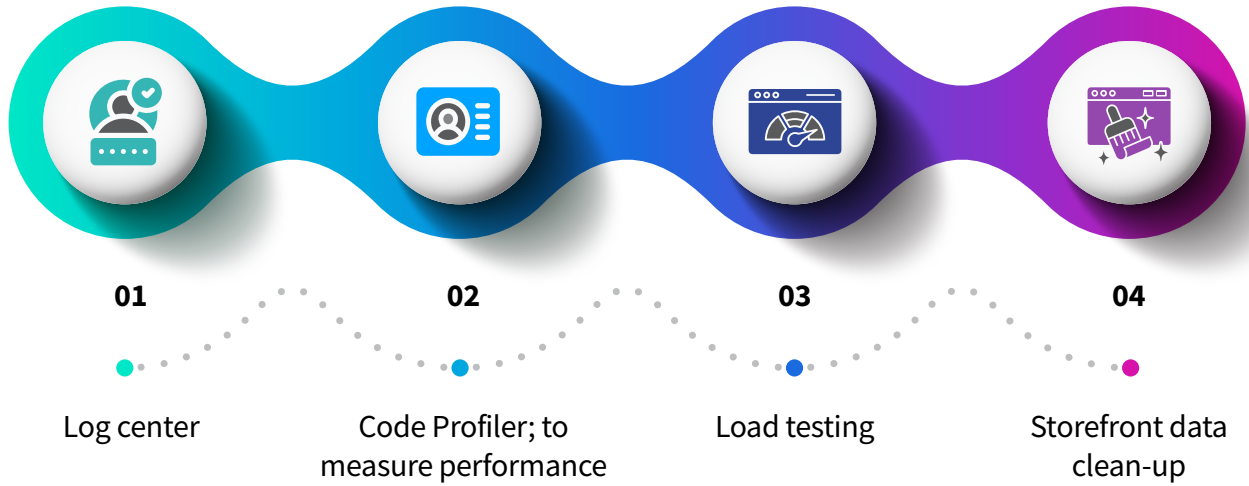
Rental realms are time-limited, typically up to 60 days. There's no load testing after October 31, due to the impending holiday season. However, load testing is indispensable but using the right tools and the right approach for it is equally important.





Nifty tools for developers

Here's our round-up of the four tools for developers to streamline the holiday season strategy for your brand:





Let the right preparation meet the right opportunity

During the holiday season retailers craft rigorous strategies to beat the huge volume of holiday sale. However, just the way an examinee revises thoroughly before the exam night, similarly, retailers should leave no stone unturned before they actually hit the holiday season. It leaves lesser room for misses; because at the end, sales figures will remain the most crucial determinant.

Be watchful

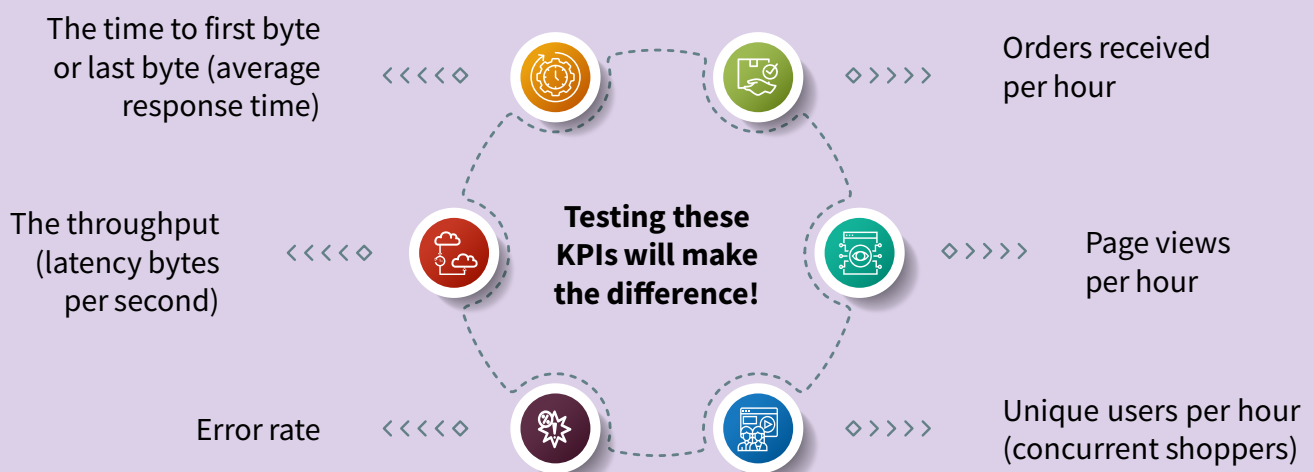
It is important to monitor holiday buying-related tasks and jobs to ensure they were deployed successfully so that the holiday season sales see a significant boost without the hiccups and glitches that cost precious time and money the previous years.

Have a strong team to mend Defects, if any

When things go wrong, it's good to have had the foresight to predict it so that you're not scrambling to carry out disaster management. With protocols in place and a dedicated team to resolve and fix problems you may run into, it's easier to move ahead with your holiday strategy.

Experiment before you nix it

Sometimes, some things don't sell. You've tried every tactic in the sales book, but it just sits on your shelf. Try a new approach before nixing it - you may get a sale if your strategy worked. You might want to consider offering a package deal by bundling this product with other best-sellers to see if that moves it.





Looking Back!

“Make hay while the sun shines.” Buckle up and start using customers’ digital footprint, data and analytics from 2022’s holiday season to plan for 2023’s. A good time to start planning the upcoming holiday season strategy is at the beginning of 2023. This gives a significant time improve upon the previous year’s experiences. Doing the same thing results in the same outcome. Up your game with SFCC, which offers a lot more than what you may be using currently. If you haven’t yet implemented Einstein recommendations for the past season, the upcoming one is a great time to start.

With analytics reports generated by SFCC, you can have valuable insights to plan next year’s holiday season strategy.

You can have a Headless Commerce approach if you think of launching a mobile version of your storefront. By decoupling the frontend from the backend through helpful and secure APIs, your customers will have the power to check everyone off the ‘naughty and nice lists’ right from their smartphone!

Moreover, a headless commerce approach enables developers to create robust e-commerce platforms that give visitors a richer user experience. This, in turn, drives customers through the sales funnel quickly and seamlessly.

Finally, leverage the power of MuleSoft by automating manual processes in your holiday strategy task execution and deployment.





Crucial KPIs for the post-holiday business

Availability of inventory vs. Inventory sold: This is an important performance metric. What's the solution to unsold products? Maybe hold a clearance sale to clear out old stock, OR move the inventory to another region where it had better sales. There are multiple insights to check out what works for you, and SFCC can give you that.

Functionality:



1. Subscriptions: Subscriptions ensure periodical deliveries of products to mitigate sales loss if customers had to manually select and buy every week, month, etc. This is a win-win functionality for both retailers and customers alike. Customers automatically get their products every month, and retailers get assured orders to boost revenues.



2. Loyalty programs: Another way to ensure customer loyalty is through establishing loyalty and rewards programs. By rewarding your shoppers with points to be achieved by buying, you can be assured of steady buying. You'll have to offer quality products and services as rewards, to captivate your buyers' interest.



3. Multiple Payment Options: As a retailer you should ensure that customers can efficiently make their online payments. Moreover, customers should have the necessary flexibility.



6%

of shoppers abandon checkout if the payment method they want to use isn't available.



However, **Salesforce Payments** brings a world-class payment processing solution by providing a fast, easy, and trusted way. It allows you to launch faster, prevent fraud, and grow and scale

globally. SFCC offers multiple payment options and retailers can choose the one that perfectly suits their need. Some of these include:

Klarna.



Klarna: Klarna is available as a multistep checkout method. With Klarna, shoppers can split the cost over three or four interest-free payments. After selecting Klarna shoppers are redirected to Klarna to complete their cart checkout. In the Klarna window, the shopper reviews and agrees to the payment terms. If the shopper chooses to complete the purchase, Klarna authenticates the shopper's identity and account. The shopper completes the purchase and is redirected back to the merchant's site where the transaction details are displayed.

Venmo: Salesforce Payments supports Venmo as an express and multi-step payment service for U.S.-based merchants and shoppers using U.S. currency. Shoppers can use Venmo from their mobile or desktop Storefront Reference Architecture (SFRA) sites. Using Venmo on the SFRA storefront requires a PayPal integration with Salesforce Payments and a payment zone configured for the Venmo U.S.-based criteria. The Venmo buyer experience is different for mobile and desktop shoppers.



EPS: EPS is an Austria-based payment method supported by all Austrian banks. Retailers can add the EPS option to the storefront in Business Manager Payment Settings.





Concluding Thoughts



The Holiday Season success will be determined by a retailer's adaptability and agility. Optimizing the technology that you have in place, leveraging new and advanced technology and coalescing with support partners like SFCC can help you have a robust planning and execution strategy in place.

However, there are certain factors that you can't ignore if you want to lead from the front.

- Keep your lights on even during the last week of December
- Expand coverage of last-minute holiday searches and sales
- Remarket to your most valuable customers

Besides, creating seamless buying processes that result in impeccable fulfillment via delivery ensures that your customers buy, and buy again. Giving them an easy and engaging shopping experience—by offering support every step of the way, right up to delivery and beyond—matters.

Now when it will be done and dusted!

What should you do?

OPTION 1:

Wait till the next holiday season starts knocking

OPTION 2:

Start gearing up at a slow pace so that you have enough time to craft an immaculate strategy

Choosing option one can have an ending like the story of the Hare and the Tortoise. On the other hand, option two gives you enough time to look at the misses of the previous year, dig down the reasons of failure (if any), leverage the opportunity of the coming year and choose the best technology along with the eCommerce platform for your business.

If you have not yet explored SFCC, the time is just ripe, so that you are full on the SFCC platform during the 2023 Holiday Season. The possibilities are endless, you just need to identify your requirement and the solution will be there.

Last and not the least rewards are guaranteed for the proactive retailer under the Christmas tree! Tie your belts and take off to soar high!



References:

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2. IDC - "U.S. Consumer technology spending went up 17% last month as holiday shopping began."
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7. HubSpot: "Cross-Selling and Upselling: The Ultimate Guide"
8. APNORC: "Visualizing Americans' Readiness to Emerge from the Pandemic and Changes to Daily Life"
9. Trailhead: "Prepare for and Implement Load Testing"
10. Trailhead: "Discover Salesforce Payments"

Aspire Systems Journey with Salesforce

Aspire Systems is a global technology services firm serving as a **Salesforce** trusted partner for our customers. With a team of certified Salesforce experts, we specialize in helping growth companies and other small businesses win with Salesforce. Commerce Infinity, our homegrown accelerator, helps you with quick & hassle-free implementation, future-ready solutions & speed to market.

In-depth partnership, acknowledge the unparalleled partnerships that we create with our customers throughout their digital transformation journey. From complex integrations, full-site build-outs, and beyond, each of our offerings is built and implemented with your consumers' needs in mind. We have our customer base in North America, LATAM, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific.

Our core philosophy of "Attention. Always." communicates our belief in lavish care and attention on our customers, employees and society. We are CMMI Maturity Level 3, ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 27001: 2013 certified. In recognition of our employee-centric and flexible work culture, we have been ranked among the Top 100 best companies to work for by the Great Place to Work (GPW) Institute for the 12th year in a row.

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