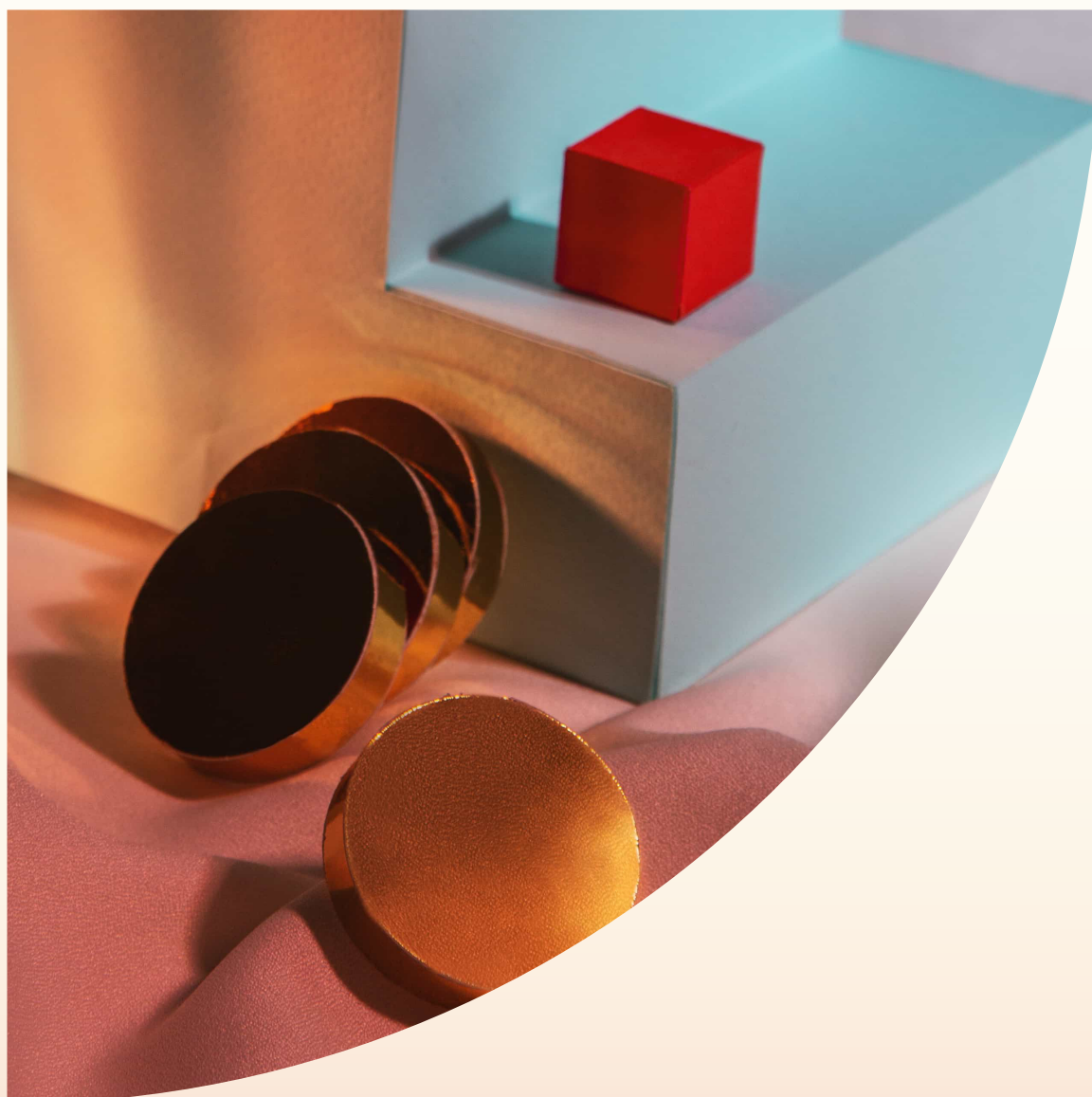


5 ways to maintain brand loyalty beyond the holidays



The holidays are quickly approaching, and in the coming weeks retailers will see peak sales, web traffic surges, as well as opportunities to engage with new and returning customers. As part of its holiday forecast, the [National Retail Federation predicts](#) November and December retail sales will grow between 8.5 to 10.5% over 2020—the highest holiday retail sales on record. How do retailers keep the momentum going?


Amidst supply chain challenges and difficulties in hiring seasonal talent, retailers who invest in their post-holiday strategy and champion their customers this season will keep them coming back year-round.


To achieve a base of customer loyalists, retailers must shift their strategy from capturing one-timer buyers to creating lasting customer relationships.

In this guide, we feature perspectives from Zendesk partners [Ada](#), [Klaviyo](#), and [Yotpo](#), and look to outline actionable strategies for retailers to implement both now and through the new year. By outlining proven approaches, our playbook will help retailers maximize their revenue potential and turn one-off customers into loyal brand advocates.

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D1

Build a solid brand relationship with customers during the most critical season

By Lynn Charafeddine, senior content producer |  ada

Black Friday/Cyber Monday (BFCM) 2020 clocked industry records despite—or rather as a result of—the global pandemic. Shopify revealed that the platform’s store owners collectively made a whopping \$5.1 billion USD in sales that weekend, up 76% from last year.

With this shift to online shopping also came a rise in digital brand interactions. In 2020, industry-leading ecommerce brands like Tile, Balsam Hill, and Shapermint automated more than 200 million brand interactions using [Ada's platform](#), and we only expect this number to grow as customers continue to demand access to brands through digital channels.

The fact is customers want to talk to you, and if you show up for them during this most critical time, they’ll notice. Customer experience has become a top differentiator online, and brands that deliver a consistent, reliable, and on-demand experience are seeing the greatest returns.

But if your strategy for dealing with the BFCM volume spike is to shut it down and avoid interaction, your brand is going to get left behind. Let’s put this in no uncertain terms: It doesn’t matter what your website looks like, what your brand’s tone of voice sounds like, or how unique your products are—your brand investments don’t matter if you don’t talk to customers, or aren’t there for them when they need you—before they make the purchase and long afterward.



So, if you're looking to build relationships strong enough to last past the holiday season, you have to start today by ensuring your CX is ready for BFCM. And automation can be the key to your success.

The power of automation lies in its ability to empower brands to have more—and more meaningful—interactions with customers at scale. By automating complex and highly personalized actions, brands can preserve agents for high-value interactions. We've found that almost 80% of brand interactions can be handled by a robust conversational AI, without sacrificing personalization or your brand's tone and voice.

You can automate things like:

- Product recommendations
- Upsell and cross-sell based on past purchases, items in cart, or browsing history
- Styling or size questions
- Stock or inventory updates
- WISMO inquiries and order tracking

By automating these tasks, you free up agents to address the remaining 20% of brand interactions that require a human touch. When escalation is necessary, a brand interaction platform can triage customer needs, route them to the right team or agent, and provide those agents with full context and an AI-powered summary of the interaction so that they can be more helpful with less effort on their part.

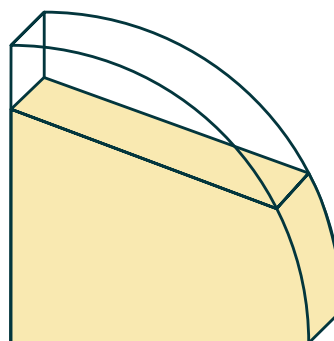
This allows your agents to have more meaningful and valuable conversations with customers who need help the most, as well as reduce time to first response, further reinforcing the notion that your brand cares deeply about customer needs.

With the right brand interaction platform, you can deploy conversational AI on multiple channels such as your website, social media messengers, WhatsApp, and more. You can talk with customers on the channels they prefer and ensure a consistent CX experience across all brand touchpoints.

By creating a positive brand experience for customers during the holiday season, you'll have no problem converting one-time customers into lifelong fans.

80%

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02

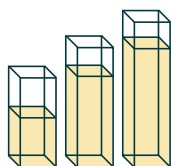
Launch a data-driven email campaign after the holiday rush

By Nicole Hakakian, partner marketing manager |  KLAVIYO

Clearly, there's plenty of money to be made on BFCM. And for many retailers, it's tempting to put every resource into that weekend. But with the inevitable lull that arrives on Tuesday, smart companies are adopting email marketing strategies that will keep their ecommerce sales at or near peak levels year-round.

Launch your January 2022 email campaign

Almost four billion people around the world use email daily. And as ecommerce has grown, email has become one of the most effective marketing tools to reach potential customers. And those customers spend 138% more money on purchases when compared with those who don't receive email offers.



Email marketing
sees an average **122%** ROI

For anyone looking to extend their company's online reach beyond the holidays, email yields an impressive return on investment (ROI) and a high conversion rate for those customers that respond to promotional messaging:

- With an average ROI of 122%, email marketing provides a significantly higher return than other marketing channels.
- Roughly 4% of people responding to email marketing traffic will make a purchase online versus just 2% of search engine traffic and less than 1% of social media traffic.
- [Conversion rates for email](#) are at least three times higher compared to social media, with companies posting average order values (AOV) of \$100-500 using email to successfully recover an average of 4-5% of their abandoned shopping carts.

In 2020, Klaviyo helped brands worldwide generate over \$3.7 billion in revenue. Part of the key to earning that kind of money is delivering a more personalized experience online—including through email.

If your resolution for 2022 is an improved bottom line, a strategic email marketing plan can help you get there.



Make owned marketing work for you

You probably have a website. You also likely have a presence on social media. You may even have a blog. By using your brand channels in a smart way—along with email and text messages—you can build and strengthen your customer relationships as you scale your business.

The BFCM assets that you develop over the holidays can make your future email marketing campaigns even more successful. Effective campaigns can also maximize customer lifetime value (CLV), a metric that projects the amount of money a customer will spend with your company over a lifetime. CLV tracks the complete customer journey—and the more money a customer spends on a consistent basis, the better it is for your bottom line.

Put your behavioral data to good use

Data on how people interact with your business can tell a more useful story than just demographic or psychographic data.

Tracking customer behavior can help you determine the most effective marketing message. The insights gleaned from following where people get stuck in the customer journey—including what products they're interested in and who is more likely to convert—can help you customize your message for that customer.

You can tailor that message further, depending on whether they made a purchase, subscribed to an email, or responded to a text.

Using the behavioral data collected during BFCM, you can segment customers and prospects according to what they actually do during the customer journey.

For example, you can send one message to a customer who has yet to make a purchase but keeps returning to look at the product, and an entirely different message to a customer who has a habit of buying lots of gifts during the holidays. If you take advantage of this behavioral data to personalize how you interact with customers and prospects in 2022, you'll find that you have a new loyal customer base.

03

Use holiday data to get personal with customers in the new year

By Nicole Hakakian, partner marketing manager |  KLAVIYO

Now that you've built a strong foundation of new and existing customers over the holidays, don't let that good work fall by the wayside just because BFCM is over. Your customers are likely to come back and shop with you again—but they may need a new incentive.

The customer emails you collected over the holiday season are valuable. Put those emails to work by creating thoughtful, targeted communications. Some incentives include a special offer, event invitations, VIP coupons, and other enticements.

Data is your friend

Thanks to BFCM, you now have access to a lot of new data in your account. Put that data to good use and analyze your performance over the holidays. From there, you can replicate any successful initiatives—and address areas that need improvement. Aim to create content that resonates with subscribers and boosts engagement.

When assessing your owned marketing, pay close attention to the ability of your message to reach your subscribers. Deliverability is crucial to your brand's growth and signals whether or not your message resonates with—or even reaches—your intended audience.

If you're not hitting desired engagement rates, you may want to try these strategies:

- Create a clear call to action (CTA) for every message
- Send content to an engaged audience
- Be sure that your links work
- Use a link shortener
- Scrub your lists clean of inactive customers
- A/B test your campaigns and flows to find what resonates best with your customers
- Check the results of your experimentation and maintain any successful initiatives going forward, if you launched tests over the holidays

How did you perform?

To successfully leverage your holiday data into targeted, personalized communications for 2022, you'll also want to analyze your performance. Here are three key areas to assess:

- **Campaign, flow, and form overview reports:** Look at deliverability metrics and overall engagement by customers.
- **Benchmarks:** After December 10, access your BFCM benchmark data. Focus on the engagement across key performance indicators to pinpoint where you excelled—and where you need to improve.
- **Custom reports:** Hone in on the metrics that matter most to you with custom reports. You can either build this from scratch or use your email platform's prebuilt reports as a starting point.

You'll also want to look at where you stand in regard to business key performance indicators (KPIs), including inventory, prior forecasting, and social media. Check what products were your top sellers versus those which may not have performed as well. This will help you understand what products resonate best with customers, and what items may need a discount to encourage a conversion.

Keep the wheels turning

As you plan your 2022 campaign, use your newfound BFCM insights to inform that campaign strategy. Since shopping value is often higher during BFCM, your high-value customer segment may have grown during this period. Capitalize on this engagement and encourage your VIPs to keep up the momentum in order to stay in this exclusive community. When creating your segment, input numbers that align with what you consider to be a high-value customer.

You can take a similar approach with customers who purchased a specific product, collection, or promotion by targeting them with content that directly relates to that purchase.



Finally, don't forget to target customers who engaged with your content or shopped with you in 2021—but never placed an order during BFCM. A proven strategy is to send these customers an exclusive deal that will expire if they don't act fast. Be sure to highlight positive customer quotes in your email message and emphasize that this is their "last chance" to cash in on exclusive savings.

D4

Reconsider your product review strategy

By Moran Khoubian, director of global partner marketing | [yotpo.](#)

Many brands think of reviews primarily as a tool for conversion, and with good reason. User-generated content (UGC) is highly effective in nudging customers toward a purchase. In fact, Yotpo data shows that UGC can [increase conversion rates](#) by as much as 200%.

Reviews are an important tool for converting shoppers during the holiday season, but they can also help to boost retention. All you need is a solid strategy for leveraging the UGC you've collected. Here are three ways that product reviews can help your brand increase repeat purchases, and more importantly, Customer Lifetime Value (CLTV).



Help shoppers find their perfect next product with quality reviews

A mistake that many brands make is assuming that all you need to convert is a bunch of 4-star+ reviews. But this isn't always the case. Think about an apparel company where a clothing item is going to look different for every customer who buys it; if a shopper can filter reviews to find out how the item will look on someone with their height, size, and approximate body type, they're more likely to find a product that they'll be satisfied with.

Even better? Incorporate visual UGC like customer photos and videos, so shoppers can see the product in real life.

The best way to ensure a second, third, and fourth interaction with a customer is an outstanding first interaction. And one of the most effective ways to close the deal is with high-quality user-generated content (UGC) and product reviews that lead to informed purchases. An added bonus for brands is that meeting customers' expectations means fewer returns.

Boost brand trust by responding to reviews

If a customer takes the time to write a review they should receive a response from the brand—especially when it comes to negative reviews. [Research from ZenBusiness](#) shows more than 56% of shoppers in their 20s stopped patronizing a business because negative reviews weren't addressed. In shoppers older than 40, that number jumped to 76%.

Responding publicly to a bad review with an apology and offer to make things right doesn't just placate a disappointed customer; it shows other shoppers that your business is listening. It's also important to show happy customers that you're all ears, too. Thanking someone for a positive review will go a long way towards building a lasting relationship.

Use reviews to improve the customer experience

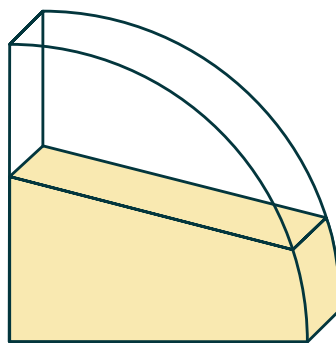
Reviews are an opportunity to collect qualitative feedback, and if you keep seeing the same issues highlighted over and over, then you aren't meeting customer expectations. Using a reviews solution that provides detailed insights and sentiment analysis can help you to quickly identify a widespread problem that needs to be fixed.

Integrating Q&A into your reviews is another way to collect qualitative data. What questions are your customers asking? You can incorporate common questions into an FAQ or make site updates to address concerns that are mentioned frequently.

Deep dive: Green People built a better buyer journey with reviews

Organic beauty brand Green People needed a way to help shoppers figure out which products were right for them. To do this, they wanted to provide as much useful customer feedback as possible, throughout the very personal experience of shopping for health and beauty products.

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[Green People](#) implemented Yotpo Reviews onsite and used Custom Questions to solicit specific, highly useful information from customers, including age, duration of time using the product, skin type, and much more. By adding Smart Filters and Q&A to product pages, they empowered shoppers to search for the reviews most relevant to their specific concerns and could respond directly to customer questions. The result? Visitors who engaged with reviews were 48% more likely to return to Green People's site.

Happy customers are your best marketing tool. Hold onto those shoppers post-holiday by making sure you get the most out of your reviews. [Yotpo Reviews](#) gives brands the tools to turn customer content into sales by collecting and leveraging reviews, ratings, and Q&A with AI-powered solutions.

05

Optimize your loyalty program investment

By Moran Khoubian, director of global partner marketing | [yotpo](#).

Ecommerce brands can expect to acquire many new shoppers during the holiday season, but unfortunately, many of them will be one-time customers. Retail CX leaders must go into the holiday with a built-in retention strategy. And at the core of a great retention strategy is a loyalty program.

Customers want robust loyalty programs. [Salesforce reports](#) that 78% of consumers are more likely to buy from a brand with a loyalty program, and [Yotpo data](#) shows that nearly 70% of shoppers can be incentivized to buy directly from a brand with the promise of discounts, coupons or points toward their next purchase. A loyalty program provides the experiences that will keep customers coming back, even after their holiday purchase.

Loyalty programs help brands collect zero-party data

Recent privacy changes have made a big impact on ecommerce brands and more are on the horizon. Apple's iOS 15 updates gave users more control over what businesses can track, and Google's push to phase out cookies will impact targeting.

It's more important than ever for brands to own their customer data so they can collect actionable insights. Loyalty programs give brands the tools to unlock zero-party data in a cookieless world.

Customers don't want to be tracked and targeted unknowingly. They want bespoke experiences on their own terms. Asking consumers directly what they want from your brand delivers both experiences, while also combating the cookie dilemma. Use that data you collect to deliver personalized experiences, deepening the connection with your loyal members.



Loyalty helps incentivize referrals

Consumers trust the recommendations of friends and family more than advertising. In fact [Nielsen reports](#) customers trust friends and family up to 92% more.

Your VIPs are your best customer acquisition tool. By incentivizing referrals through your loyalty program, you can help to boost brand discovery and reach new customers. And by offering both the referrer and their connection a discount, you can improve both acquisition and retention.

Activewear brand [POPFLEX](#) launched a loyalty and referral program and within three months [5% of the purchases](#) made on site were coming from referrals. Plus, referred customers had a 2.9 times higher LTV in comparison to other customers.

How to build a loyalty program that keeps customers coming back

To get the most out of your holiday marketing strategy, focus on continuing to build loyalty across digital channels after a shoppers' initial purchase. Encourage shoppers to join your loyalty program for an additional, holiday-inspired incentive, then use the program to continue to communicate with the new members and maximize engagement in between purchases.

Send them post-holiday follow-up messages via SMS or email (or both!), depending on which channel they prefer and encourage them to engage across your social channels or in-store to continue to rack up points. You'll then have the ability to engage them on a regular basis with updates about points, rewards, and exclusive offers.

When it comes to your loyalty program, there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Segmentation and personalization are key for retention. Creating loyalty tiers is a great first step to segmenting your audience for campaigns—for example, offering your top tier access to promotions first—but you can go deeper, and combine customer preferences with that customer's engagement level to deliver the messages most likely to boost conversion.

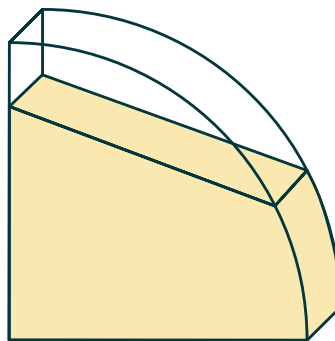
How HomeWorx uses loyalty to drive retention

Home fragrance brand [HomeWorx](#) needed a loyalty solution to help them reach more customers, retain existing ones, and compete in the market. The brand created Club HomeWorx Rewards, a tiered loyalty program that incentivized their customers with perks, rewards, and early access to products and promotions for the top tier.

Since implementing [Yotpo Loyalty](#), HomeWorx increased its retention rate by 25%. The brand also achieved an 11x lift in ROI in the first 90 days, almost doubling the 4 to 7 times lift brands typically see at the 6-month mark. And program members have made four times as many purchases as non-members.

Yotpo Loyalty gives brands the tools they need to build customized rewards and referrals programs to engage existing customers and reach new ones, throughout the holiday shopping season and beyond.

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How Zendesk can help retailers

Creating great customer experiences in retail is tough. Keeping customers happy means making every interaction matter. With Zendesk, you can make sure your customers get the support they need—wherever they're interacting with your brand. Because happy shoppers are repeat customers—and that's what makes a good brand great.

To learn more about how Zendesk and our partners can support your retail organization and join these leading companies in delivering exceptional experiences visit our [Zendesk for Retail](#) page.



StanleyBlack&Decker

