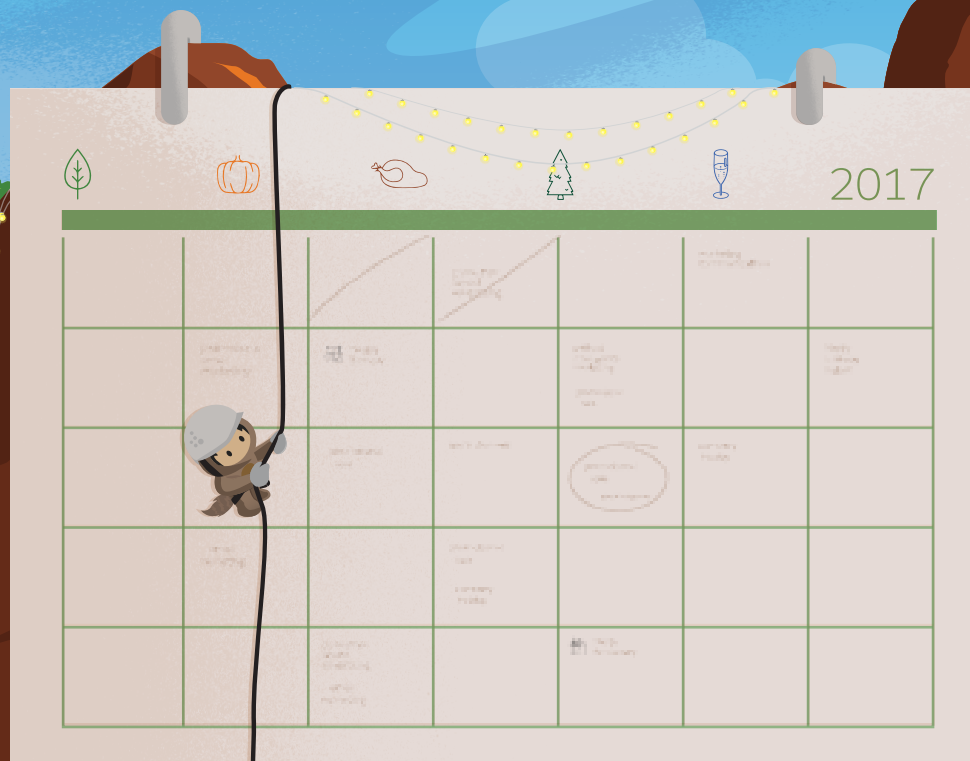


THE MARKETING HOLIDAY CALENDAR

A Guide to Retail Success in the 2017 Holiday Season

salesforce



Introduction

Retailers have reason for optimism for the 2017 holiday season. Holiday retail sales during November and December 2016 increased 4% from 2015, and nonstore sales were up 12.6% from the year before ([NRF](#)). The 2017 holiday season promises more mobile shopping, smarter shopping through predictive analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), and enhanced in-store experiences.

Want phenomenal holiday results? The right plan and the right data will get you there. Use this handy month-by-month calendar with timely tips and stats to send the right holiday message at the right time.

For each of the five core months of the holiday season – from September to January – we’ve included:

- **Important dates**
- **Holiday shopping data**
- **A cross-channel to-do list**
- **A monthly customer journey example**

Whether you’re reading this in September or December, happy holidays!

- 3** September
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Rack Room Shoes
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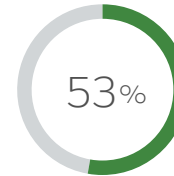
Take advantage of the calm before the storm. Bring new customers into your subscriber and audience base so you can engage them throughout the most important days of the holiday season.



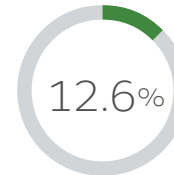
September

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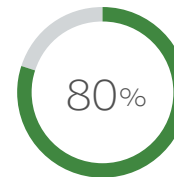
STATS TO KNOW



In 2016, September marked the peak in mobile shopping traffic to retailers' websites, with 53% of traffic coming from mobile devices ([Commerce Cloud](#)).



Online and other nonstore sales increased 12.6%, unadjusted from 2015 to 2016 ([NRF](#)).



Compared to other social channels, Facebook is retailers' number one driver of traffic, baskets, and orders, carrying over 80% of each ([Commerce Cloud](#)).

KEY DATES

September 4: Labor Day (U.S.)

September 10: Grandparents Day

September 22: First day of fall

September 25: Three months until Christmas



September imperatives: Start a smarter journey and acquire new customers.



Email: Email remains a critical 1-to-1 marketing channel, and in 2017, the mobile stakes are higher than ever. Consumers will quickly delete or unsubscribe if your communications don't render well on their mobile devices. So this month, finalize plans to ensure every email is responsive and mobile-optimized, so that the journey continues long after the first email is sent. And don't forget plain-text versions of emails that can be opened on wearables.



Mobile: It's hard to overstate the impact of mobile on modern shopping habits. In fact, 82% of smartphone users turn to their devices while in stores to help them make a product decision ([Google](#)). You can use SMS and push notifications to leverage order history, geofencing data, product preferences, and other data when messaging customers. Early in the season, gather data that will shape hyperrelevant messages in the November and December journey.



Social: Don't discount social media's impact on shoppers' buying decisions, especially among Generation X and millennials: 30% of Gen X and 48% of millennial consumers report using social channels to discover products to purchase ([Salesforce](#)). Social media is increasingly video- and visual-centric, with Instagram Stories and Snapchat making a huge impact recently. Finalize your strategies to use these visual-meets-social tactics to send more social connections to your website during the holidays.



Advertising: Highly targeted ads bring more of the right customers to your product pages. While it's still early in the season, run campaigns that bring the perfect audiences into your email or app program – or anywhere else that your best customers engage with you. Also consider how intelligent ads can boost email by targeting email subscribers on Facebook with the same themes you promote via email, and by using ads to drive customers to email subscription.



Web: Show customers you know them well by using web data in 1-to-1 emails, ads, and mobile messages. As you acquire new customers throughout the season, keep them engaged by reminding them of abandoned browsing sessions, shopping carts, or when items are back in stock.

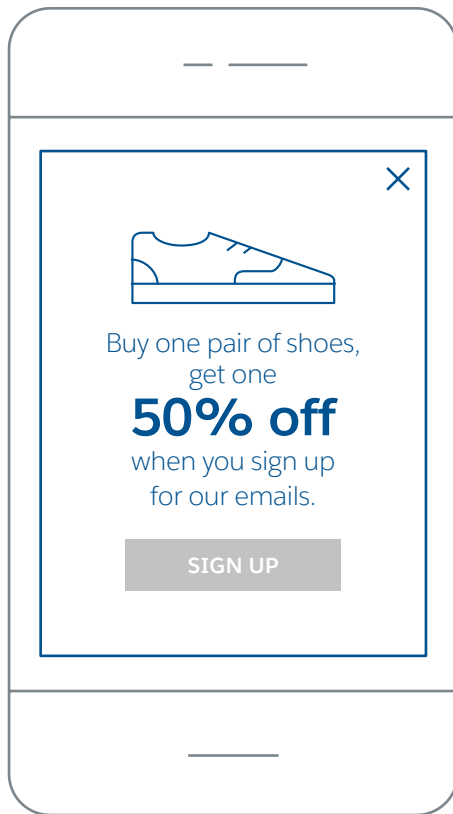


Store: Your stores will be a flurry of virtual and physical activity this year, with more informed consumers than ever before: 32% of consumers believe they know more about a store than a store associate ([Salesforce](#)). With the vast majority of your in-store customers seeking information about your products online, ramp up training so that employees are ready to relate to highly knowledgeable consumers during the holiday season.

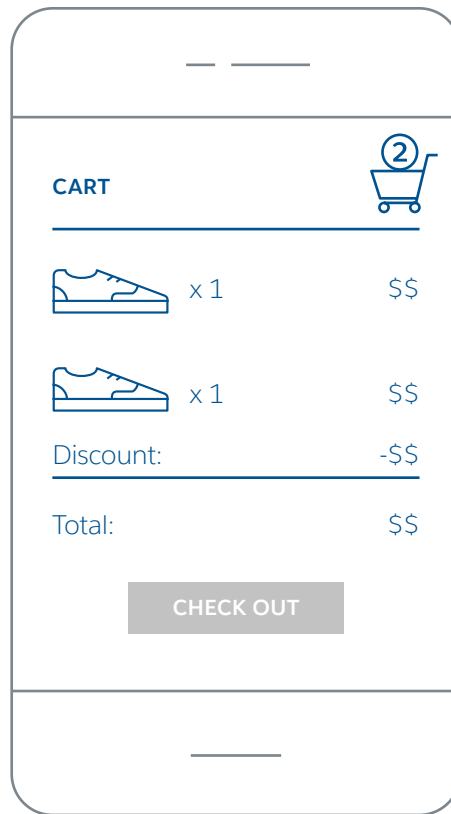
Holiday journey: Acquire new customers.

A prospect clicks on a retailer's social ad: "Buy one pair of shoes, get one 50% off when you sign up for our emails."

Enticed by the great deal, she decides to sign up.



Now that the customer has opted in to receive offers, we can onboard her to receive holiday messaging. See what happens next in the journey in October.



RESOURCE

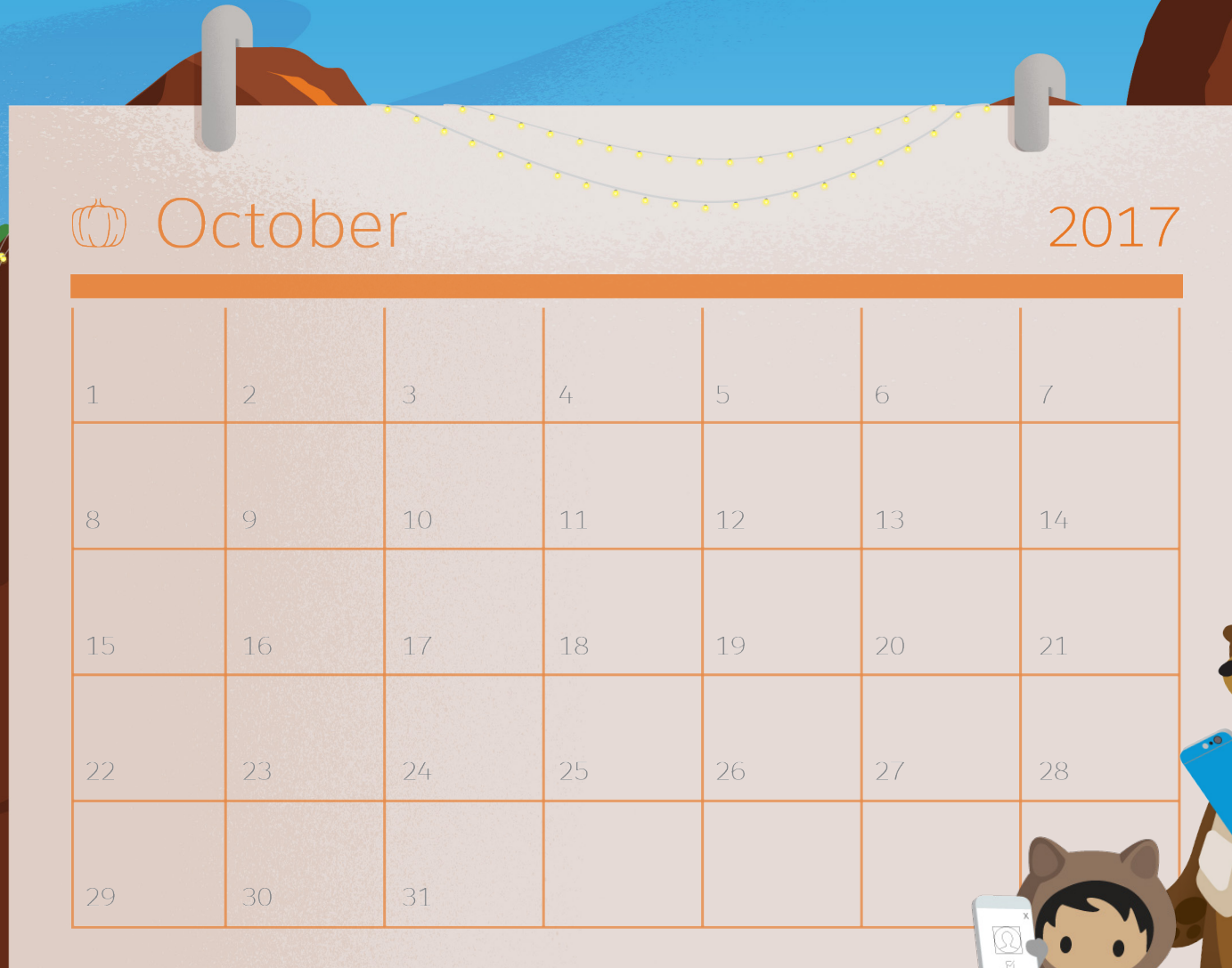
Want to orchestrate and personalize every customer experience? Leverage the intelligent combination of Salesforce DMP, a market-leading data management platform provider, and Advertising Studio, the world's first journey-based advertising platform.



[LEARN MORE >](#)



Black Friday is just around the corner. This month is all about smart onboarding and engaging of new customers – so you can tailor the perfect November and December journeys for them.



October

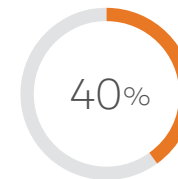
2017

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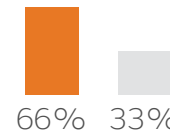
October

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STATS TO KNOW



Forty-one percent of consumers say they kick off their holiday shopping in October or earlier ([NRF](#)).



In Q4 of 2016, iOS beat Android in mobile order and traffic share by 66% to 33%, respectively ([Commerce Cloud](#)).

>50%

More than half of consumers feel overwhelmed with the various marketing communications sent by retailers via text, email, and other channels throughout the holiday season ([Salesforce](#)).

KEY DATES

October 1: Breast Cancer Awareness Month begins

October 9: Columbus Day (U.S.)

October 24: One month until Black Friday

October 25: Two months until Christmas

October 31: Halloween



October imperatives: Execute intelligent onboarding and engagement.



Email: As the holiday season unfolds, keep emails fresh so that subscribers don't get fatigued and unsubscribe. Onboard new customers and get them ready for November by offering opportunities for deeper engagement. For example: "We'd like to get to know you better. Complete your profile in our preference center."



Mobile: SMS is an effective way to reach on-the-go customers on their mobile devices. Do more than promote and offer coupons; invite a two-way conversation. When customers enroll in your SMS program through in-store promotions, invite them to review their recent store experience. You'll deepen the relationship and score valuable data.



Social: You don't want to bother customers with too-frequent or irrelevant social posts in October – it's more important to keep them in the loop for November's marketing efforts. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter pull the best messages to the top of a user's feed, so for now, post consistently on social only when you have useful content to share.



Advertising: You're probably finalizing plans for your holiday ads. Meanwhile, leverage all of your CRM data to target existing customers and focus on location-based ads that can bring customers into stores. For example, Google offers advertising options with Maps that promote nearby stores. Customers care about what's in their area, so capitalize on that local interest through your digital advertising.



Web: During the holiday season, marketing noise is at an all-time high, and customers delete and scroll past any marketing that isn't relevant to them. Enact a progressive profiling campaign in October so you can learn more about customers and use that information to better target the season's emails, SMS, push messages, and ads.

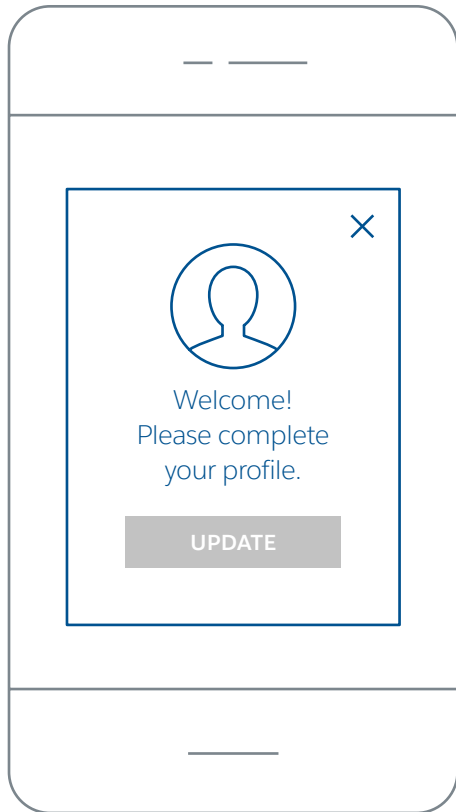


Store: Your stores will be the first point of contact for many holiday campaigns. Onboard your existing customers to receive holiday promotions throughout October to get maximum impact on November. For example, are all cashiers asking customers to subscribe to holiday emails or SMS communications? October is the perfect time to go big with these efforts.

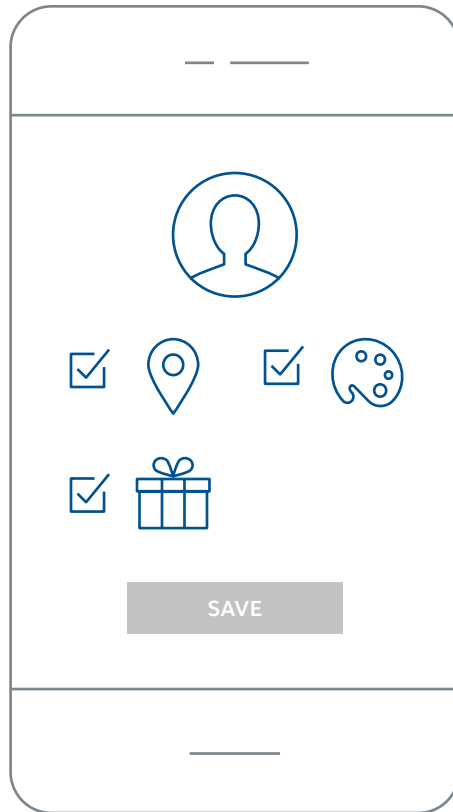
Holiday journey: Onboard and engage.

Our customer receives her first email after subscribing and redeeming her BOGO offer.

This onboarding email asks her to complete her profile to receive more tailored offers.



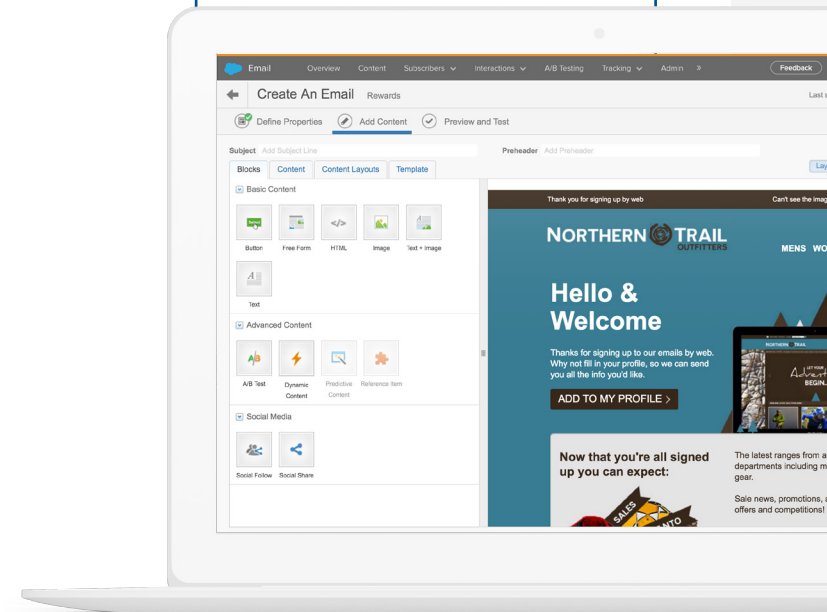
The customer volunteers information about her shopping preferences – colors, store locations, gifts ideas, and so on. This is data that will be used in November and December.



RESOURCE

Ready to create email experiences that grow more personalized with every click? Learn more about [Email Studio](#), the world's number one email marketing platform.

LEARN MORE



CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT:



Rack Room Shoes sells private-label and brand-name footwear and handbags to thrifty customers in 420 stores across 35 states. A few years ago, the company lacked an internal database with centralized customer communication. It was also sending disjointed messages across channels – and needed a more seamless experience between online and in-store.

Now Rack Room Shoes is using Marketing Cloud to consolidate data and create a single, 360-degree view of every customer. Since creating 20 unique customer journeys, the company has seen a 15% increase in email click-through rate and 100% return in ad spend. With customers more engaged and opting in to more offers, Rack Room Shoes can set its sights on automating a greater number of campaigns and focusing on more optimization.

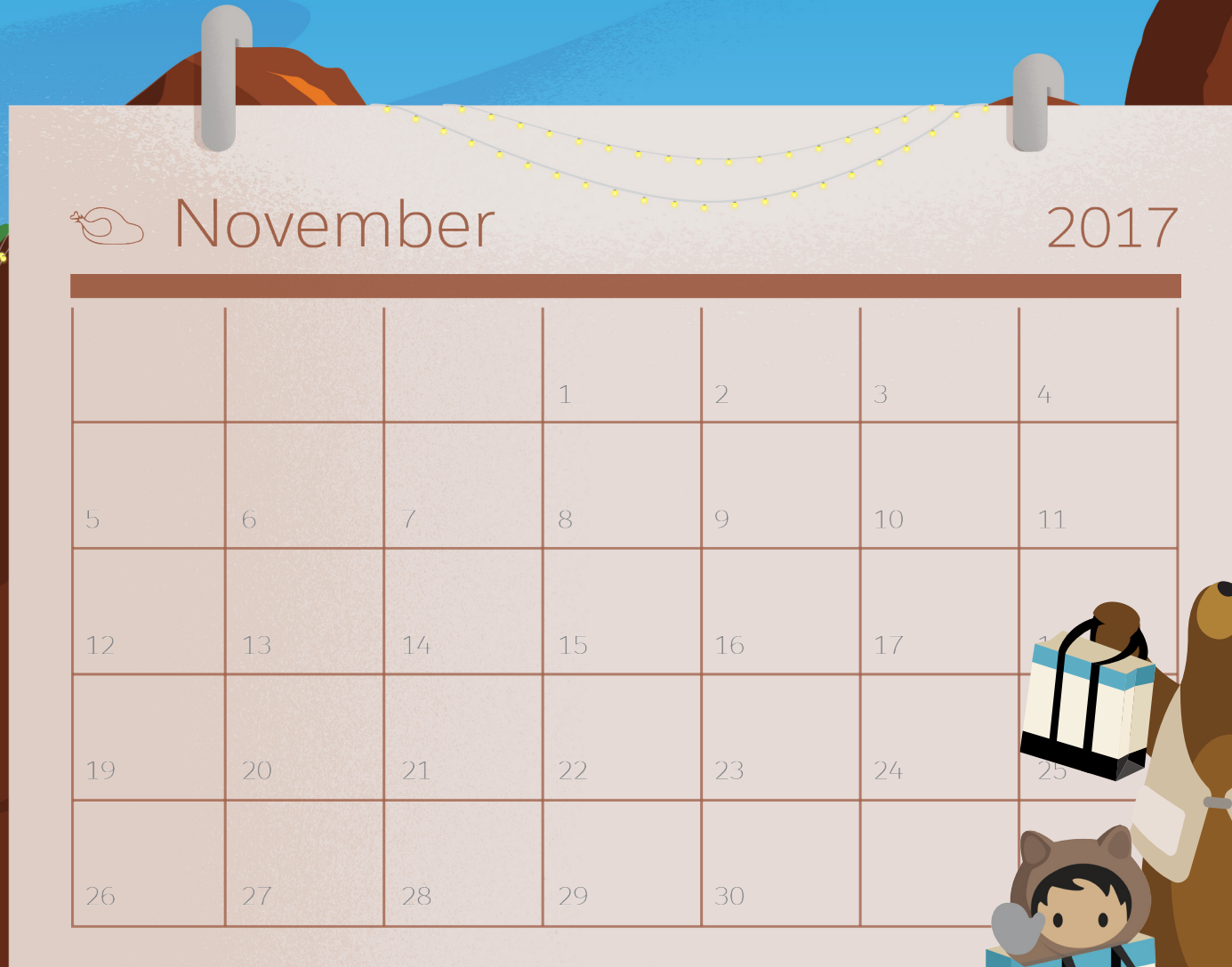
“With Marketing Cloud, I’m able to quickly identify the right segment and execute, versus spending all my time building campaigns.”

Paul Voss, Director of CRM,
Rack Room Shoes and Off Broadway Shoes





They're here: the busiest shopping days of the year, and the most important times to deliver intelligent and connected customer experiences. Stay on track with these tips.



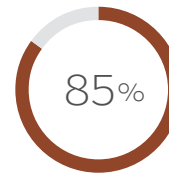
November

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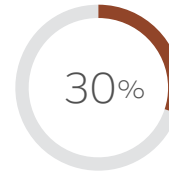
STATS TO KNOW



In 2016, Black Friday garnered 19% more revenue than Cyber Monday ([Commerce Cloud](#)).



Eighty-five percent of executives with service oversight (for example, CEOs and service VPs) believe customer experience is a key competitive differentiator ([Salesforce](#)).



Last year, over the entire month of November, mobile orders accounted for 30% of all transactions ([Commerce Cloud](#)).

KEY DATES

November 1: Holiday messaging takes off

November 11: Veterans Day (U.S.)

November 22: Thanksgiving Eve

November 23: Thanksgiving Day/Gray Thursday

November 24: Black Friday

November 25: Small Business Saturday


November 26: Cyber Sunday


November 27: Cyber Monday


November 28: Giving Tuesday





November imperatives: Provide responsive service and follow-through.


 **Email:** This month, remind subscribers that they face a limited time to receive certain discounts and products. For example, countdown timers (showing one day left or only 300 units remaining) are effective tools in emails in late November. Avoid “no reply” email addresses that don’t let customers respond if they have a problem. Instead, filter through all email replies to ensure no customer service query falls through the cracks.

 **Mobile:** Engage customers on their smartphones via SMS, push, mobile email, and location-based ads, to reach them whether they’re out shopping or browsing at home. Your customers will be more mobile in 2017 than any holiday season before, so ensure every message and customer service touchpoint is optimized for small screens.

 **Social:** Social media is one of the most important tools in your November customer service and marketing arsenal. For one, on-the-go customers with mobile devices will no doubt be letting you know if an in-store experience isn’t up to par. For another, missing a customer’s tweet or Facebook message may mean a lost sale. Staff service channels around the clock, especially when key digital campaigns go out.

 **Advertising:** Ads are a great lever for last-minute messaging and strategy tweaks. If you find that an email or product page isn’t performing with shoppers as well as you’d hoped, follow up the message with a social ad. We call that the stereo effect, because the same message is coming through multiple speakers. Check numbers with your analyst teammates to make sure ads are reaching the targeted audience.

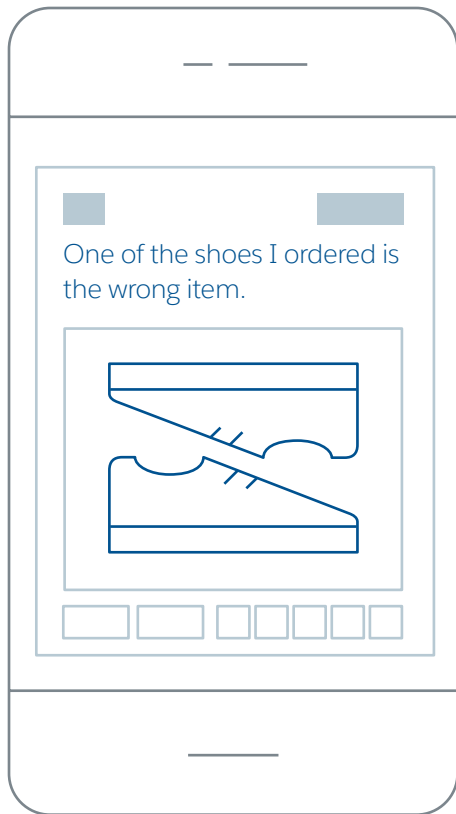
 **Web:** Your website and product pages should always have clear links to get help when customers need it. If you’re expecting big holiday sales from your website but a technical issue prevents people from buying or someone can’t reset a password, that’s a major problem – especially on your biggest shopping days of the year. Hold frequent meetings with your service team throughout November and December to make sure fast, responsive help is part of the holiday game plan.

 **Store:** You don’t need to be reminded of the importance of November in your in-store strategy. Combine elements from your digital marketing plans for the optimal store experience: Provide responsive service just like you do on social, offer personalized communications like your ads, and focus on the most important offers like your emails. And no matter how stressful the stores get, remind employees of the importance of a holiday-appropriate attitude.

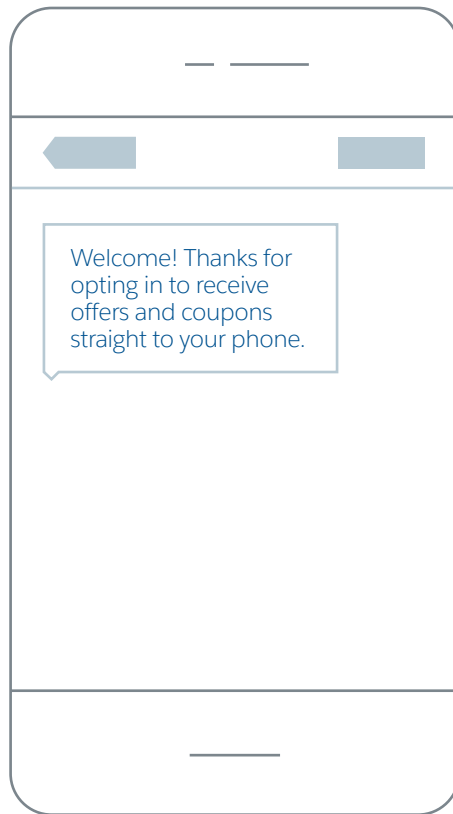
Holiday journey: Offer service in real time.

Our customer receives an email with a targeted Black Friday offer to buy for both herself and someone on her list – all per her preferences she selected last month.

When her gifts arrive, one item in the order is wrong. So she tweets a photo showing the problem.



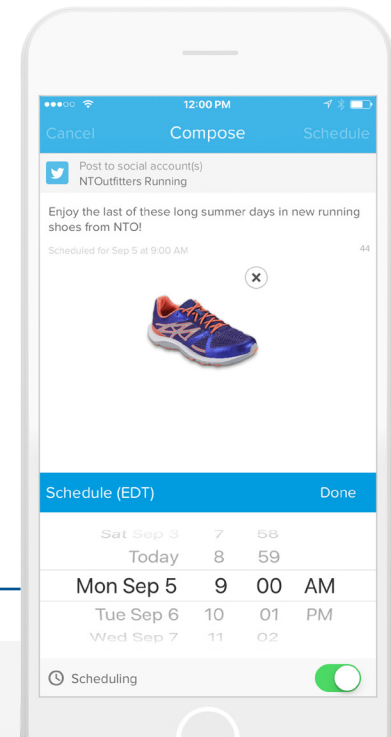
She receives a response in less than an hour with a resolution. She decides to follow the shoe brand on Twitter and subscribe to its SMS program to stay up to date with the latest designs.



RESOURCE

Social media can be an incredible real-time service and marketing tool. Listen, engage, and publish – and unite marketing with sales and service – with [Social Studio](#).

LEARN MORE





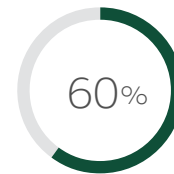
You're in the home stretch now, but there's still more to do. Learn how to maximize every touchpoint in December for more in-store success and lasting shopper relationships.



December

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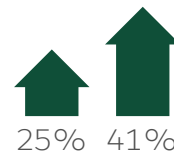
STATS TO KNOW



During the 2016 holiday season, the day with the highest mobile traffic share was Christmas Day, with 60% of customers visiting retailers' mobile websites ([Commerce Cloud](#)).

DEC > NOV

More people said they planned to shop on Super Saturday, the last Saturday before Christmas, than those who said they planned to shop over Thanksgiving weekend in 2016 ([NRF](#)).



Shoppers have made a late-season push over the past two shopping seasons, as pre-Christmas-week sales surged 25% and 41% respectively ([Commerce Cloud](#)).

KEY DATES

December 11: Green Monday

December 12: Hanukkah begins

December 15: Free Shipping Day

December 21: First day of winter

December 23: Super Saturday

December 24: Christmas Eve

December 25: Christmas Day

December 31: New Year's Eve



December imperatives: Encourage foot traffic and last-minute purchases.



Email: For your last few emails of the holiday season, make a special note of design and CTA elements (like a header image or “buy now” button) that convert particularly well and leverage those to encourage customers to make last-minute purchases and come in-store for the year’s last sales.



Mobile: Text messages boast an amazing open rate by customers, even in the busiest months. Customers will expect coupons in December, and SMS is a great way to distribute them – but invite a two-way conversation instead of letting SMS become a discount machine. For example, allow customers to text in to answer a question, get more information about a location near them, or even make a purchase.



Social: Social channels can be the perfect place to showcase the exciting holiday hustle and bustle in your stores. Consider hosting a Facebook or Instagram Live video from one of your flagship locations to drive in-store visits and purchases in your last sales. As Christmas Day draws nearer, remember that customers go to social media to share photos of family and friends, not just to be marketed to – so respect the holiday-oriented space.



Advertising: What subject lines, social messages, and products performed best in November? Your December ads should be a greatest-hits version of your holiday messaging, as you count down the days until 2017 sales are a thing of the past. Above all, don’t advertise something people can’t have. Cease ads when promoted products sell out or shipping dates pass the cutoff.



Web: In the final days of the holidays, provide personalized content on the web to tell customers you’ve been listening to what they’ve searched for and coveted all season. As shipping cutoff dates draw near, focus on location-based offers they can redeem in a store near them.

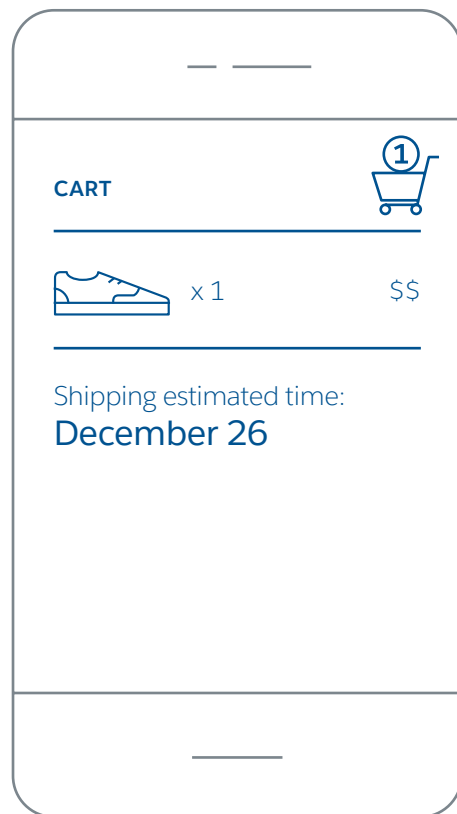


Store: No matter how much we encourage shoppers to plan ahead, procrastinators will always visit stores in the final days of the season to return purchases or buy gifts. Use digital channels to showcase opportunities for BOPIS (buy online, pick up in stores) and mobile POS (for shorter lines) in your brick-and-mortar locations. For even more satisfied in-store customers, [find out how Commerce Cloud Endless Aisle](#) helps you locate out-of-store inventory for in-store customers with a few simple clicks.

Holiday journey: Bring the experience in-store.

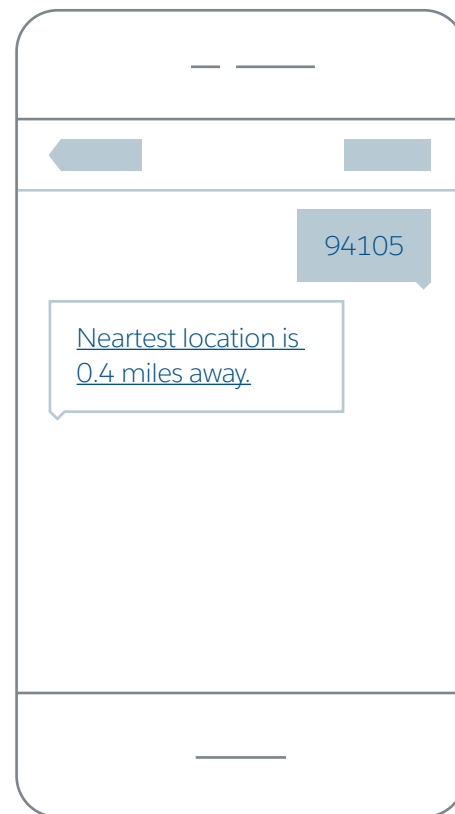
In mid-December, our customer realizes she needs one final gift (albeit last minute) for a child in her family.

After having a great experience with a shoe brand so far, she thinks a new pair of shoes would be perfect.



The new shoes probably wouldn't be shipped to her in time, so she texts the brand's SMS shortcode with her zip code to receive the location of the store nearest her.

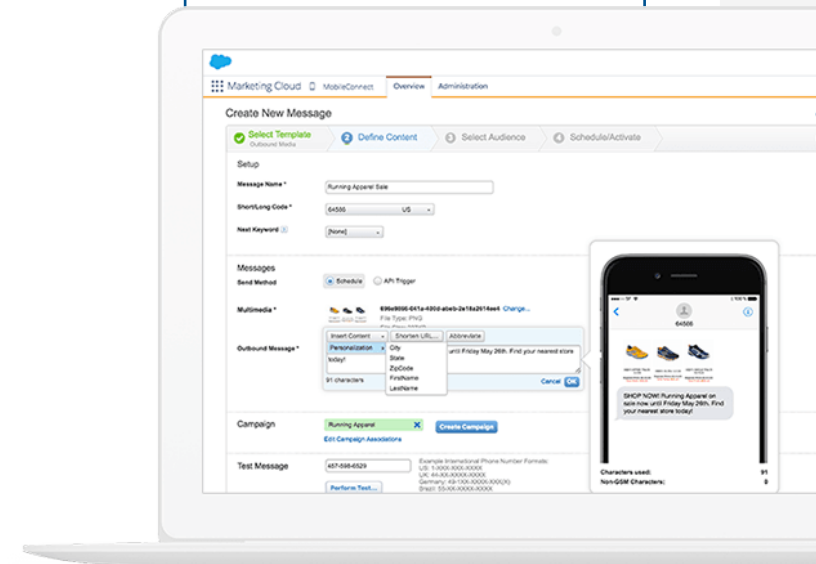
After receiving an instant reply, she heads to the store to capitalize on a last-minute in-store deal, and receives the same friendly service she enjoyed online.



RESOURCE

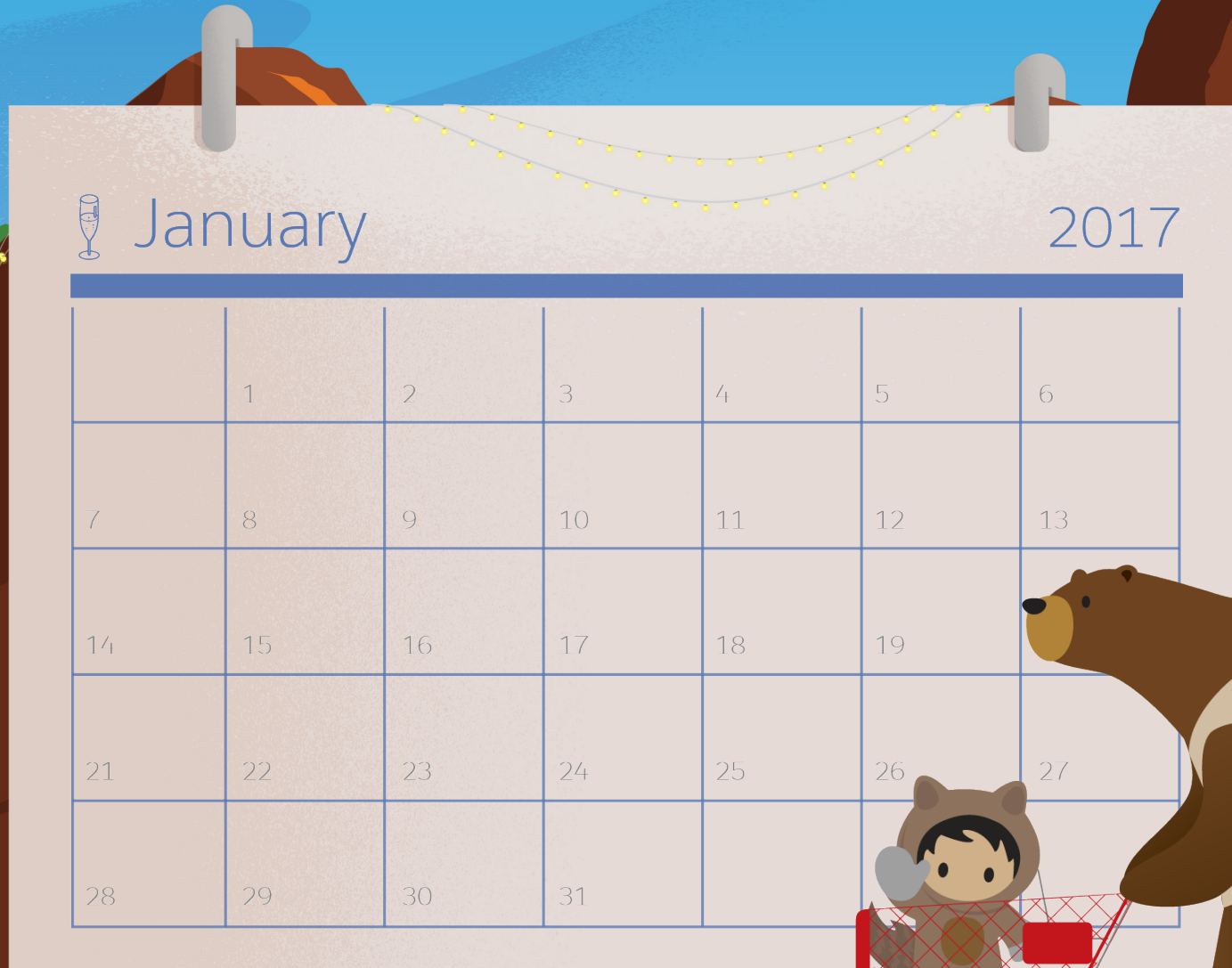
Mobilize your customer journey with captivating SMS and MMS messages. Find out how [Mobile Studio](#) helps you engage at the right moment based on events, location, and proximity.

LEARN MORE





Measure your results from November and December – and get creative and more personal – to retain your new customers throughout 2018.



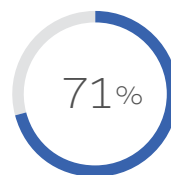
January

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STATS TO KNOW

+6 trips
+4 channels

In 2016, multitrip and multichannel shopping were mainstream, as consumers planned to take over six trips and include over four channels to make their holiday selections ([Deloitte](#)).



Seventy-one percent of U.S. internet users planned to purchase holiday gifts online. That contrasts with 50% of respondents intending to buy from big-box retailers and 31% from department stores ([Harris Poll](#)).



In the 2016 holiday season, crowds were the number one reason for consumers not shopping in stores, along with traffic and the greater convenience of online shopping ([Salesforce](#)).

KEY DATES

January 1: New Year's Day

January 9: The Marketer's Resting Day

January 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Day



January imperatives: Retain customers with a post-purchase journey.



Email: After-Christmas sales and gift card redemption reminders will fill your customers' inboxes in January. So prove that you were listening throughout November and December with more personalized offers that speak directly to their interests, purchases, and overall journey with your brand.



Mobile: If you focused on growing your list of app downloaders or SMS subscribers during the holiday season, your list is probably the largest now that it will be all year. You don't want to lose these customers, so focus on sending only the most personalized content and best offers. On the other hand, you don't want to risk people forgetting they subscribed when you text them in March after a long silence. So, send messages that are timely and relevant to their interests.



Social: It's clear from taking a look at your Facebook or Instagram feed: People turn to social to find and share inspirational content, and no month more so than January. In the new year, shine a spotlight on self-improvement resolutions and CTAs for organization, health, and happiness on your social channels. This type of content marketing-meets-social approach helps to prolong a more lasting social journey than product pitches alone.



Advertising: You collected a lot of data from your ads over the course of 2017. Now's the time to gather your data on the most-clicked images, best copy, highest-performing channels, and overall impressions to create better ads in the year ahead. Also make sure your CRM system is tracking clicks at the individual level so you can use all of those advertising analytics to craft more 1-to-1 journeys for customers in 2018.



Web: It's time for a new year and a more predictive web experience. Set up triggered emails so customers are notified if a product on their holiday wish list comes back in stock. Offer recommendations for products to accompany or accessorize what customers received over the holidays. And consider a refresh of your website that puts personalized content front and center on every page.

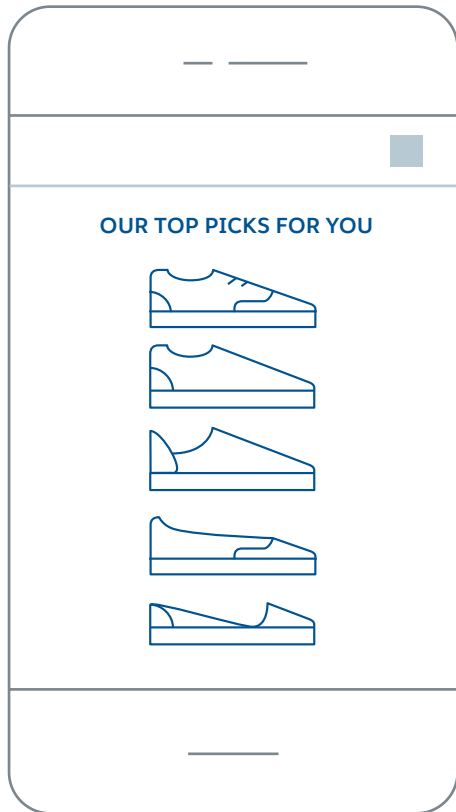


Store: Now's the time to plan for a better holiday season in 2018. What were your biggest in-store pain points in 2017? Focus on POS improvements, adding more mobile payments, factoring in budget for more seasonal employees, or whatever else will provide a better customer experience. Just as you ask your customers to craft a wish list for coveted gifts, create your wish list for in-store enhancements.

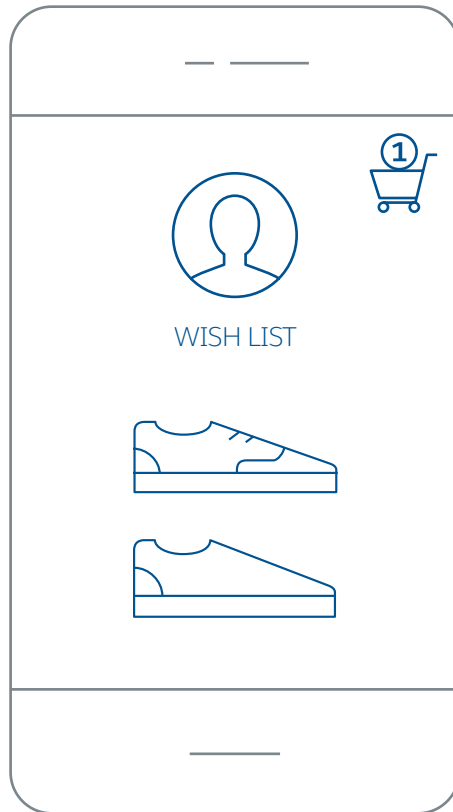
Holiday journey: Retain customers and continue the journey.

In December, our shoe-loving customer received a gift card to the footwear brand from one of her family members.

Now in January, she begins browsing the website for ideas of what to purchase. The top five pairs of shoes on the page are all tailored to her past purchases, browsing data, and volunteered preferences.



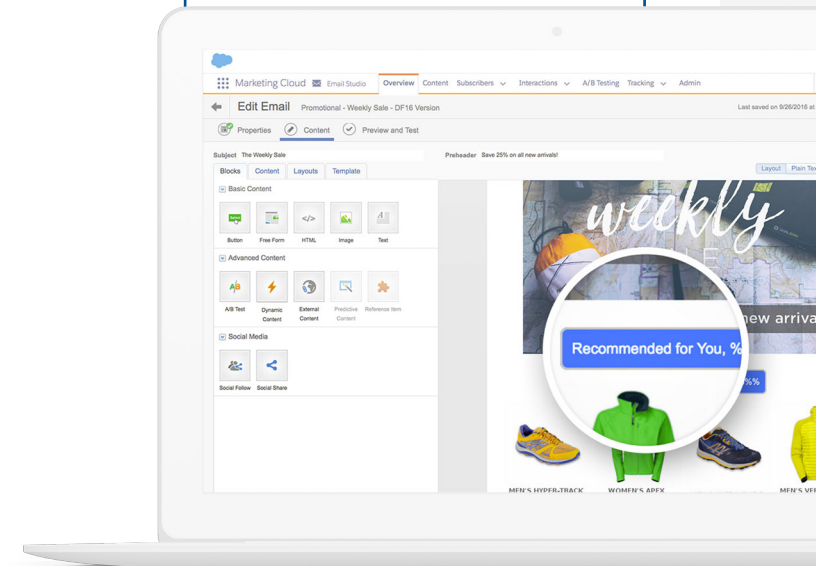
She chooses one pair of shoes for now and adds two more to her wish list. In the coming weeks, the footwear brand will send her an email highlighting the wish-listed shoes.



RESOURCE

Is your marketing this smart? Use [predictive intelligence, powered by Einstein](#) to automatically personalize content in email, mobile apps, and on the web.

LEARN MORE



Marketing Cloud Guided Tour

Interested in how Marketing Cloud can transform your shoppers' experience with your brand? See its power in action with this hands-on experience.

With the Marketing Cloud Guided Tour, you'll explore new ways to unite your marketing strategy with sales and service through:

- An easy-to-follow interface
- Interactive product screenshots
- A helpful narrative
- Hints to grow your business

GUIDED TOUR

The screenshot displays the Marketing Cloud Guided Tour interface. At the top, it says "Marketing Cloud Guided Tour" and "PLAN CROSS-CHANNEL CUSTOMER JOURNEYS". The main content area shows a "Journey Builder" interface for a "High Priority Service Case" journey. The journey plan is a flowchart starting with an "ENTRY EVENT" (Service Case Closed) and branching into three paths: "Thank You Email", "Survey Push", and "SMS Discount". The "Thank You Email" path leads to a "Task" (Opportunity) and then a "Join" node. The "Survey Push" path leads to a "Task" (Opportunity) and then a "Join" node. The "SMS Discount" path leads to a "Task" (Opportunity) and then a "Join" node. The "Join" nodes merge the paths, leading to an "Add Member to Campaign" task. The journey plan includes details such as "NAME: Service Case Closed", "EVENT SOURCE: CustomerComplaints_List", "SCHEDULE: May 17, 2016 3:00 PM", "REPEAT EVERY: Daily", and "END: Dec 25, 2018 3:00 PM".

2. Plan, Personalize, and Optimize Journeys

Journey Builder manages 1-to-1 interactions across channels. You can design customer journeys, listen for customer activity, and automatically respond with customized communications.

NEXT

Conclusion

Customer experiences during the holiday season should feel like a delightful gift, not a lump of coal. With the tips and strategies in this calendar, you'll be fully prepared to make all customers' holiday journeys smart and personalized, regardless of where they choose to engage with you – from stores to social media to email.

From all of us at Salesforce, we hope your stocking is filled with abundant marketing ROI this year.

RESOURCES YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE



Marketing Trends Across Retail and Consumer Goods

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The Marketing Cloudcast

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2017 Guide to Holiday Readiness

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Connected Shoppers Report

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CONNECT TO YOUR CUSTOMERS
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