

Marketing your online business

HELP BUILD YOUR CUSTOMER BASE, YOUR BRAND AND YOUR SALES WITH THESE MARKETING STRATEGIES



First steps in marketing your business

Your online business is up and running. You've taken steps to ensure that your site is trustworthy, and that it provides a seamless shopping experience. But there's more you can do. Now it's time to focus on marketing your business, so you can attract even more new customers while keeping your current ones engaged and satisfied.







Ecommerce marketing may seem daunting at first but building a loyal customer base – and your brand – can be fun. And, it may not be as time-consuming or as difficult as you think. This guide will help you get started on this new adventure, with helpful tips on how to:

- Understand your customers
- ♦ Raise your profile
- Get serious about using social media
- ♦ Deliver a personal shopping experience
- * Meet customers' high expectations for email
- Reward your best customers
- ♦ Expand your presence
- Be proactive about planning for key shopping seasons





Your cheat sheet



UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMERS AND THEIR JOURNEY

Use what you know about customers to create customized experiences that help people find the things they want to buy.



USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS AND DRIVE SALES

Pick the right platforms for your business, use lots of visual content, encourage user-generated content and start a conversation with your customers.



GET MORE STRATEGIC WITH EMAIL MARKETING

Email is still a top marketing tool. Make sure your marketing mails are powerful and professional.



SELL ON POPULAR ONLINE MARKETPLACES

Use popular marketplaces to reach new customers and test new markets. Also, explore their free tools.



USE SEM, SEO AND AFFILIATE MARKETING TO RAISE YOUR PROFILE

SEM and SEO can get you noticed in search engine results, while affiliate marketing rewards others for bringing you customers.



USE PERSONALIZED CONTENT FOR ONE-TO-ONE MARKETING

Effective personalization makes a better, more engaging, customer experience. Make visits to your site personal and follow up with meaningful (and respectful) retargeting.



DEVELOP LOYALTY AND REWARDS PROGRAMS

Show your customers how valued they are ... and earn their loyalty.



RAMP UP EARLY FOR SELLING AROUND MAJOR HOLIDAYS

Attract business before, during and after major holidays with great deals and discounts. Focus on search engine optimization (SEO), making your site easy to navigate, and monitoring search trends.



UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMERS AND THEIR JOURNEY





Understand your customers

If you understand who your customers are, and learn about their interests and priorities, you can more easily provide the products and services they are seeking.

The first stage is to create a profile, or persona, of your typical customer. For example, are they young, single men interested in fitness and healthy living, or are they older married women with professional jobs, plenty of money but not much free time?

Throughout this guide, you'll find tips and ideas for learning more about your customers: using social media, exploring marketplaces and affiliates, learning from SEM and SEO.





As you build a customer profile (and you may have 2 or 3 different ones), think about the following:

- How old are they
- ♦ Is gender an important factor
- ♦ Are they single or married
- ♦ Do they have children
- Where do they live and work
- ♦ What is their income level
- ♦ Where do they hang out online
- ♦ What are their interests





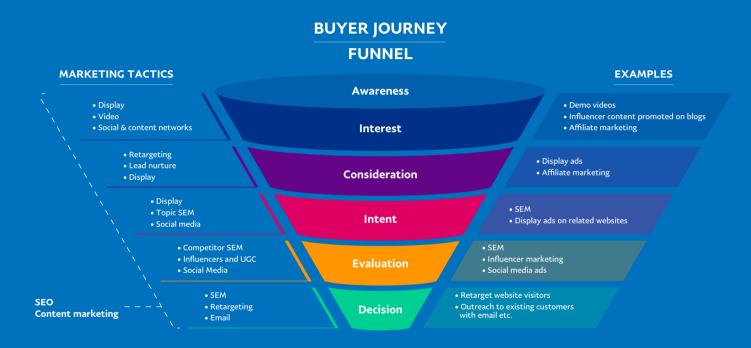
What stage of the buyer journey are they on?

When a shopper discovers your brand, explores what you're selling and decides whether to make a purchase, they are on a "buyer journey". If you learn what stage of the journey they're at, you can provide the information they need to move them along to the next stage.

The buyer journey is a bit like a funnel. There will be a lot of people at the initial, awareness stage. They are hearing about your business for the first time and wanting to know more. At the other end of the funnel, the decision stage, there will be a small proportion who have decided that they want to buy from you. They are fewer in number, but much more valuable because they are just about to spend money with you.



The following diagram will help you see the different stages of the buyer journey and the marketing tactics that work best at each stage. Use this to consider the tactics that will be best for you as you read the rest of this guide.



As you plan your marketing tactics, think about how to measure success, based on what you want your customers to do at each stage. For example, it might be the number of video views, number of sign-ups to your email list or a reduction in shopping cart abandonment rate.





Use search engine marketing (SEM) to boost traffic

Search engine marketing (SEM) can help your business stand out from the crowd. It uses targeted advertising to raise the visibility of your business on search engine results pages, making customers more likely to encounter your brand as they search for specific products or services.

SEM ads range in size and format, from text-based messages to visual display ads. Advertisers bid on keywords that shoppers use when they search. The price you pay for a keyword depends on factors like how often people search for it, how much competition there is for the keyword, and how specific it is.



Keep control of your SEM spend

Pay-per-click (PPC) ads can get expensive without careful planning. Follow these 3 tips to help stay in control of your spend:



KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Then, use the search engines' targeting filters to make sure your ads reach the audience most likely to click through and buy your product.



KEYWORDS ARE KEY

Popular, generic keywords can be expensive and may only bring browsers rather than shoppers. Think about more focused terms that may bring shoppers who are more likely to buy; for example, "blue, silk shirt" rather than simply "shirt". Use a tool like <u>Google Keyword Planner</u> to help find the best keywords for your business.



TEST, TEST, TEST

Run lots of small campaigns initially, ideally as A/B tests where you compare 2 versions to see which performs better. Test different keywords, messages, artwork and colors. Experiment with different targeting filters, as well. Once you know which ads are most effective, you can invest more.

With pay-per-click, you are buying visitors for your site. Make sure you are paying for those most likely to turn into buyers.

"When you start out, you rarely have any money, so I adopted a strategy of picking a country and allocating just US\$1 per day for search engine marketing. When I got my money back, I would increase the investment and pick another country."

Wayne Bower, founder-owner of costume specialist, Jedi-Robe.com



Review your SEO

On-page SEO (search engine optimization) is the process of helping your website appear nearer to the top of search engine results by changing the structure and content of your web pages. The words you use (including keywords), the structure of headings and the way you describe images can all affect how easily a search engine "understands" what's on your site.

There are lots of online resources to help you improve SEO, but also remember that the way shoppers search is changing all the time. Try to stay current and consider these 3 important trends:



MOBILE

Is your website optimized for mobile users? Many search engines now prioritize search results from sites that are mobile-friendly.



VOICE

Voice-based, spoken queries are increasingly popular. While short keywords are still important, you should try to include more natural language in your SEO. Include the answers to "spoken" questions such as, "Where can I buy a blue. silk shirt?".



VISUAL

Videos and visual search are also increasingly popular. Include keywords in the titles and descriptions of your videos. Use descriptive file names (for example, blue-silk-shirt.jpg, not 123ab.jpg) and "alt text" for your still images.





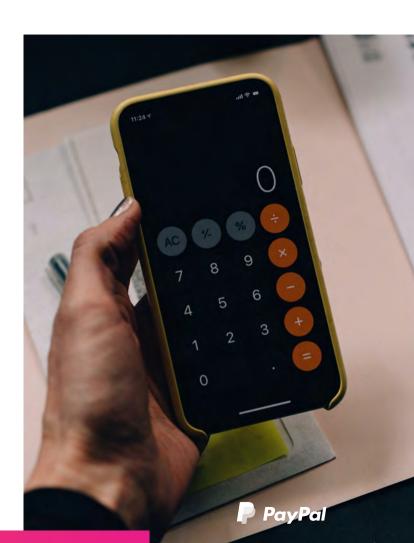
Only pay for results with affiliate marketing

With affiliate marketing, other businesses (affiliates) market your products or services for you, using whatever channel they believe will work best. Often, they have discounted access to unsold ad space on popular sites.

Best of all, most affiliate programs work on a commission basis, so you only pay when a customer, delivered by an affiliate, completes a sale. No sale, no fee.

You can also use affiliates on a cost-per-action (CPA) basis, where you pay for each customer performing the action you want: registration, subscription or installing your app.

You can work directly with individual affiliates, but you may find it easier to start with an affiliate network. These have a large number of affiliates so that you can find ones that best match your product or service. They also have admin tools to help track commissions etc.





USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS AND DRIVE SALES



Engage with customers on the platforms they prefer

Building relationships with customers through social channels such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter can help you grow your brand and generate sales.

Follow these 7 tips to develop an effective social strategy.









CHOOSE THE CHANNEL THAT'S BEST FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Don't leap onto every social media channel available. Look at the most popular channels in your target market and choose the one that's best for your business – the one where your customers are, and which suits your products.

"Social listening" can be a good way to start – following conversations on social media and forums to understand how audiences feel about a subject. This can also help you learn the words and phrases people use regularly. Search online or use the tools provided by each social media network to explore the demographics you could reach.



BE PREPARED TO INVEST TIME IN YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media marketing can be very time-consuming. You need to post fresh, new content regularly to gain followers. Scheduling tools can help you make best use of your time and they help you post updates at the best time for your audience to see them. Scheduling is a free option on Facebook.

Remember that when a customer sends a message, posts a comment or otherwise connects with you on social media, you should always respond promptly, otherwise you risk damaging your business's reputation.





BE PATIENT – BUILDING AN AUDIENCE TAKES TIME

Social media can be a powerful channel, but it takes time to build a following and to get engaged with your audience. Focus on creating a presence and building an audience, then think about how to plug your selling posts into your stream.



ENCOURAGE USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

Make it easy for customers to share their own product-related comments and images. UGC is a powerful enabler of sales, especially at the Interest and Evaluation stages of the buyer journey, so let users create favorites and wish-lists on your site. Use social sharing buttons for each of your products and encourage customers to share images or videos of them using your products.







FOCUS ON BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FIRST

People follow people, not sellers, so focus first on posting images and information that your readers will want to share. Think about the conversation, and sales will follow. Readers are quick to unfollow businesses who push their sales too hard.

Follow people on social media who might to be interested in your products, especially if they already have a large following. Look for opportunities to reply to their posts with suggestions or feedback.



USE YOUR DATA TO IMPROVE YOUR STRATEGY

Social media platforms provide fantastic free data and analytical tools. Use them to understand your audience. Who are they and where are they located? Are you engaging the people you intended? And what type of content is getting results? What about timing: do posts on a Saturday perform well but not on a Monday? Review your results regularly and adjust your strategy accordingly.



USE PAID CONTENT TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS

Once you understand what works best, try amplifying your successful posts with paid promotion. Each platform has its own tools and guides to help you target specific sub-sets of audience and get your message in front of them.





Sell on social

Make it easy for customers to shop with you, even if they are not on your site.

Social commerce – buying directly from a social media platform – is already popular in some countries and growing fast everywhere. See which of your chosen platforms would be best for selling direct and start experimenting with shoppable posts.

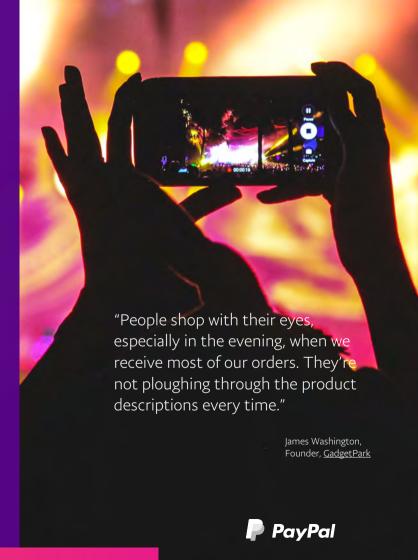
PayPal can help. With <u>PayPal.me</u>, you can create a personalized link to send to customers by email, WhatsApp or any other messenger service. You can even share it on the phone.



Use video and visual content to attract the eye

Online shopping is very visual. Shoppers, especially on smaller phone screens, often prefer to view high quality images or eye-catching videos instead of reading text descriptions. They can help boost sales, too. Online buyers can't inspect your goods as if they were in a shop – you need to let videos and images do that job for them.

Short-form video has become very popular, especially with a younger audience. If this is your market, explore how you can use video to promote your products.





Make interactions meaningful and memorable

Personalized content is a powerful way to catch customers' attention in an increasingly noisy world. Try these 3 tactics to help you stand out:

- On-site personalization
- Personalized retargeting
- Personalized email







ON-SITE PERSONALIZATION

Help shoppers to personalize their visits to your site (and make their return visits even better). Give them the ability to create wish-lists, to mark favorite items and easily share them on social media. You can also personalize what they see based on their previous history on the site or even the local weather.

Look out for the many low-cost (and even free) solutions designed for the needs of smaller businesses. These can make it easy to automatically tailor your site content based on customers' preferences and interactions.





PERSONALIZED RETARGETING

Retargeting – also known as remarketing – can be a huge opportunity for your business.



On average, only 1-3% of visitors to your site will be buyers.² The rest will browse and leave.

With retargeting, you can track users' behavior on your site (with their permission). This information can then be used with email marketing, online ads or social media to help bring those browsers back to your site.

The main search and social media platforms each offer their own retargeting services and these are often the simplest way to get started. For example, try these:

- Facebook Retargeting
- Google Remarketing

These services help you target (or retarget) your own customers and they can also help you comply with local privacy laws like the European Union's GDPR.







PERSONALIZED EMAIL

You want all your customers to feel like VIPs, but that won't be the case if you send them generic emails or always seem to be selling something. Instead, use personalized emails to inform and entertain (as well as sell). Send links to related blog posts, online videos or newsletters etc. And, don't forget simple things like sending customers birthday emails with special offers.

You can use customers' order history or on-site behavior to recommend related, complementary items and to send targeted, personal discounts. Don't forget to send a thank-you email after their first purchase or perhaps ask for feedback after a purchase.

Where shoppers have created wish-lists or favorite items, use email reminders, perhaps with a discount to encourage them to buy.

Email can be an effective marketing tool but remember that, in many markets, it is illegal to send marketing emails without consent. Always ask customers to actively opt in to continue receiving emails from you.

You may wish to check out marketing automation solutions that can save you time.



Two things to remember

Personalization can be a powerful tool to build engagement and drive sales. But, be careful of these 2 things:

THE RIGHT LEVEL OF PERSONALIZATION

Poor personalization – for example, simply putting "Dear John" at the start of a generic sales mail – can be worse than no personalization at all. But also, beware of over-using the data you have. No-one likes to feel stalked and too much personalization soon becomes "creepy".

COMPLYING WITH PRIVACY LAWS

Today, shoppers are often concerned about privacy issues and the possible misuse of their personal data. Make sure you comply with the local privacy laws of any countries you target.

Examples include the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)³ and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).⁴



Offer a personalized payment experience

Online shoppers often abandon their shopping carts without completing the transaction. In fact, the average abandonment rate is 3 in 4^5 and this is often because of the payment experience.

PayPal delivers smart payment experiences designed to help lift conversion rates and personalize the way your customers shop.



Here are some ways to personalize your customers' payment experience:



PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PAYMENT OPTIONS AUTOMATICALLY

Our payment buttons adapt to each customer and their location, showing locally relevant payment options to help drive sales.



SELL GLOBALLY – AND OFFER LOCAL CURRENCIES SEAMLESSLY

With PayPal, you can give many customers the option to pay in their local currency or yours. Depending on your market, a single PayPal account enables you to receive payments and sell to customers in around 200 other markets using up to 25 currencies.

Check your local <u>PayPal User Agreement</u> to see the currency features that are available to you.



SUPPORT THE DEVICES SHOPPERS PREFER

PayPal provides a simple checkout experience whichever device your customer prefers: mobile phone, desktop computer or tablet. Mobile is fast becoming the device of choice and PayPal is optimized for users on a small, touchpad screen.



MAKE CHECKOUT EVEN FASTER

PayPal One Touch™ makes the payment experience even faster and more convenient. PayPal shoppers can move easily from site to site without re-entering their PayPal credentials each time.





GET MORE STRATEGIC WITH EMAIL MARKETING



Use professional-looking, targeted emails to increase open rates

With so many social media platforms and new digital offerings like online chat, you might think email is old-fashioned and no longer relevant. In fact, almost the opposite is true. While we are often overwhelmed by our social media feeds, we typically have more control over (and are more protective of) our email in-boxes. If you respect readers' privacy and their communications preferences, email is still a powerful sales tool.



Follow these tips to create a professional email marketing strategy:



USE CRISP, CONCISE SUBJECT LINES AND RESPONSIVE TEMPLATES

Get to the point quickly and encourage readers to open your mail. Remember that emails are often read on a mobile phone: long subject-lines will be cut off. Use responsive templates that adapt to multiple devices and screen sizes.



HAVE A CLEAR AND SIMPLE CALL TO ACTION

Make it easy for the reader to do what you want (e.g. visit a web page). Have a single action that you repeat in the header, body and bottom of your mail. Features like a button labelled "Learn more" can be compelling.



AVOID SPAMMING YOUR CUSTOMERS

Don't send too many emails and be sure to balance sales emails with information that your customers will value. Segment your customer list to personalize messages, for example to new contacts, leads, opportunities and loyal customers. Readers will quickly unsubscribe from a mailing list that sends only hard-sell emails.



CREATE AN EMAIL CALENDAR

It's important to be strategic with the number and timing of the emails you send. Organizing your email strategy into a calendar helps you visualize how many emails you're sending.



More ways to help ensure a successful email program

Here are some additional tips to keep in mind when creating an email program:



A/B test your emails



Manage your mailing lists and understand local laws



Investigate marketing automation technology



Consider working with a third-party provider







A/B TEST YOUR EMAILS

In an A/B test, you compare 2 versions of something to see which performs better. For example, you can test 2 subject lines for better open rates; test click-through rates by changing the style, length, and voice of the email's body copy; and even test different colors of your call-to-action buttons. Keep records of your tests so you can implement the winning versions and iterate your tests.





MANAGE YOUR MAILING LISTS AND UNDERSTAND LOCAL LAWS

Have an email sign-up option on every page of your site and at the bottom of your emails (in case the reader shares your mail with others). But, be sure you also include an Unsubscribe option on every mail. Make it easy for customers to manage their communication preferences and be sure to comply with the privacy laws in your target markets (such as GDPR in the European Union). The fines for non-compliance can be severe.







INVESTIGATE MARKETING AUTOMATION TECHNOLOGY

Marketing automation solutions can save you time and make it easier to manage professional email campaigns. Consider using a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, a tool that helps you to keep track of interactions with prospects and customers, throughout their lifecycle. CRM tools allow you to segment your database into marketable lists, from which you can create targeted, automated email campaigns to nurture the customer relationship at every stage.





CONSIDER WORKING WITH A THIRD-PARTY PROVIDER

There's no need for you to reinvent the wheel when email providers have years of experience developing best practices for email marketing. A professional email marketing agency can help you comply with regulations, provide insightful data and their email servers should be whitelisted, so you don't need to worry about being categorized as a spammer.





DEVELOP LOYALTY AND REWARDS PROGRAMS

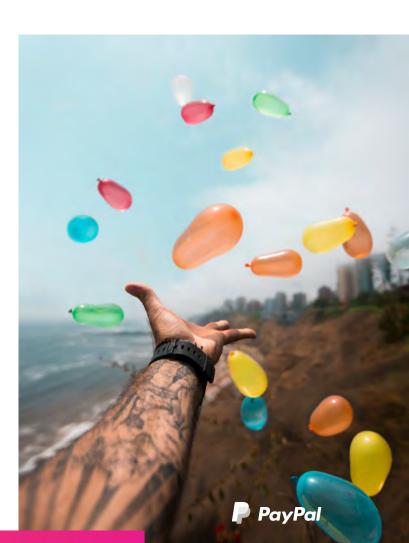


Understand loyalty and rewards program options

Rewards and loyalty programs show your customers how much their business is valued, and they can help increase customer engagement, which can equate to higher spend.



According to Accenture, members of loyalty programs generate between 12% and 18% more incremental revenue growth per year than non-members.⁶



There are various types of programs:

Loyalty programs create a personal connection between the brand and the consumer, tailoring offers based on the consumer's profile. These programs are often called "consumer engagement programs" since they provide personalized offers based on the customer's experience with the brand.

Rewards programs are based on behavior, not so much on the customer profile. Successful rewards programs use a tiered approach, offering customers an easy-to-earn reward for participating in the program— and greater rewards as their engagement increases. For example, points programs let customers earn points for certain behavior, which they can then redeem for rewards.

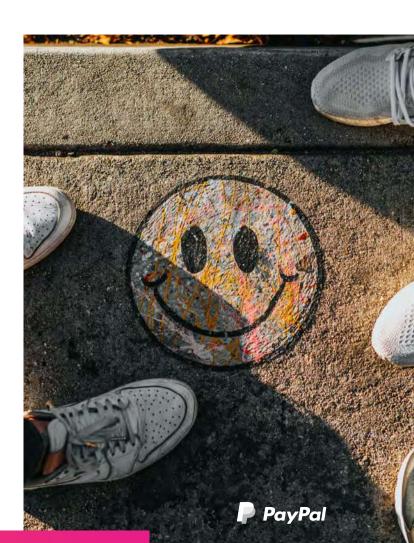
Experiential rewards can generate higher engagement and loyalty and can actually cost less money. A tiered program (e.g., silver, gold, and platinum levels) allows customers to participate in different types of rewards, such as private shopping opportunities.



How to plan your loyalty/rewards program

There are many apps and loyalty platforms available that you can easily integrate with your site. However, before you start developing a loyalty or rewards program, consider the following points:

- Define the goal
- Define your customers
- Build your value offer based on customer experience
- How will you promote your program?



Here are some considerations to help plan your loyalty or rewards program:



DEFINE THE GOAL

What do you hope to achieve? Is it new customers, increased visits or purchases from existing customers, or higher average order values?



DEFINE YOUR CUSTOMERS

To understand what motivates your customers, examine each customer segment and whether you want that segment included in your program. For instance, identifying regular buyers is important because their repeat business is key to your long-term success. Providing status, recognition and appreciation, along with access to exclusive experiences or rewards, goes a long way to increasing engagement with this segment.



BUILD YOUR VALUE OFFER BASED ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Once you've defined your goals and customers, you can begin to build your program. Keep in mind what motivates your target customers and focus on providing value that will excite those customers.



HOW WILL YOU PROMOTE YOUR PROGRAM?

Give your customers plenty of opportunity to sign up to your program – and make sure the process is simple. Then, remind them of the great offers and other benefits they receive.

Once you've launched your program, use the data you receive to better understand your customer segments and to constantly refresh your program. You could offer different one-time promotions to each segment based on what is appealing to them and what you want to achieve.







Expanding your customer base? Use marketplaces

With millions of users around the world, online marketplaces can help you sell locally or internationally. Many of the best-known marketplace sites are general retailers, but it's worth exploring those that specialize in the products you sell or are popular in your target countries. They may have a smaller audience, but those visitors may be more likely to buy from you.

Haider Ali launched his mobile phone accessory business, Finest Bazaar, on eBay. The business has grown quickly on domestic and international sales.

"With the turnover we have, we're just touching the tip of the iceberg," he says. "We haven't maximized eBay, yet. We've only localized about 5 percent of our listings for international markets. That's the first job. Then we want to grow our other sales channels. Once you have the stock, you may as well open it to as many customers as possible – providing you don't drop your standards."



RAMP UP EARLY FOR SELLING AROUND MAJOR HOLIDAYS





Attract new business you can keep all year

Major holidays present an opportunity for your business to earn new customers and deepen relationships with existing ones by offering special promotions. Think about how you can use deals and discounts to attract new customers and reward loyal ones. You need to plan ahead. Here are some tips:

- Optimize for search
- Create "quick navigation" paths
- Expand email lists
- Build holiday promotions into your social media efforts



Follow these tips to engage your customers all year round:



OPTIMIZE FOR SEARCH

Update your keywords for better SEO, adding any product or category keywords you know will be hot sellers this year (for example, "Singles' Day gifts" or "Christmas"). If you have the budget, consider investing in paid search campaigns. You bid for ad placement in a search engine's sponsored links for keywords related to your business; you pay the search engine a small fee for each click.



CREATE "QUICK NAVIGATION" PATHS

Make it easy for customers to find what they came looking for – and what they didn't even know they wanted – by adding navigational elements ("quick links") to your home page, linking shoppers directly to seasonal bestsellers.



EXPAND EMAIL LISTS

Make it easy for customers to opt in to your email marketing program and provide their email address. Enticing them with a special offer when they arrive on your site, such as "10% off your first purchase," can help. Follow up with an email campaign, thanking them for visiting and letting them know about products, services or offers they might have missed.



BUILD HOLIDAY PROMOTIONS INTO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS

Launch a holiday promotion through your Facebook page and Twitter account, offering special coupons to people who follow you online. Fans are likely to forward promotions and discount offers to family and friends, bringing more first-time visitors to your website during major holidays – and all year round.



Another tip: use Google tools to stay on top of holiday shopping trends.

Optimize your online ad strategies during major holidays by monitoring <u>Google Trends</u> pages to see the searches most popular in geographic regions around the globe. The site can help you identify emerging searches that might benefit your business.

For example, if you sell clothing, and you notice there is a spike in searches for cocktail dresses among shoppers in Sao Paolo, you can get in front of those customers online with a locally targeted Google AdWords campaign.

Read more about using Google AdWords to target ads to specific geographic locations <u>here</u>.





Set a course for sales success

You don't have to adopt all of the steps we've discussed to attract more new customers while keeping your current ones engaged and satisfied. Following just 1 or 2 of these steps can help you become a successful marketer.

Pick a couple to experiment with. Start small, see what works and then try something else.

To learn more about how PayPal could support your business, visit <u>paypal.com</u>.





REFERENCES

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- ² Econsultancy (2018), What is a good ecommerce conversion rate?, https://econsultancy.com/what-good-ecommerce-conversion-rate-average,
- 3 GDPR is an important regulation that is affecting ecommerce businesses all round the world. To learn more, visit https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/dealing-with-customers/data-protection/data-protection-gdpr/ index enhances.
- 4 CCPA is one of the stricter new consumer privacy laws enacted in the US: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml/?bill.id=201720180AB375
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To find out how PayPal can help support your business, visit **PayPal.com** or the **Help Center**

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