

2X Your Holiday Sales

Proven Email Strategies to
Maximize Conversions



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Introduction

There's nothing like a good holiday season for a sound business. Last year's holiday season was nothing short of phenomenal, considering the core retail sales during the 2023 holiday season grew 3.8% over 2022 to a record \$964.4 billion, according to the [US Census Bureau](#). With the 2024 holiday season already at hand, there's no better time for you to push up your business numbers.

It's been well-established that email campaigns are effective at driving sales, and, when implemented correctly, can influence customers to spend more money through personalized offers. With a clean email list at hand, a clever marketing team can make the most of the season, but in a crowded market, you need to plan proactively to prosper.

This ebook will help you craft powerful holiday email campaigns that resonate with your customers and positively impact your business's bottom line. From planning your email strategy to personalizing emails and analyzing their performance, this ebook will give you actionable tips that can help you maximize your holiday email marketing efforts.



Chapter 1: Plan your holiday email campaigns

Getting started can be the toughest step for most of us—and so is it for any campaign. But this is also the stage that lays down the foundation for a successful holiday season. Dust off your drawing board and chalk out the basics, from your goals to your target audience. While you might feel like skipping this step, trust us when we say that a good plan is like a strong foundation: It won't let you down.





1.1 Start early

If you're targeting the holiday season, you need to work backwards to make your campaign a success, which means you should start planning the campaign as early as July or August. Start by outlining your objectives, segmenting your audience, and building an interesting content mix. Preparing early also helps you steer clear of the holiday rush and gives your emails a better chance to stand out.

***Pro Tip:** Mark the important holidays you want covered at this stage and plan accordingly. Having a holiday calendar can help you streamline your efforts.*

1.2 Define your goals

Your goals depend on the stage of business journey you're in. If you're a new brand in the market, there's nothing like a holiday season to create brand awareness. For a long-standing brand, it's about maximizing sales, and for a growing brand, it's about attracting new subscribers and customers. Knowing your objective enables you to craft a more focused campaign.

1.3 Understand your audience

As a marketer, you know that one size doesn't always fit all. It's important to [segment your mailing list](#) based on customer purchases, preferences, and behaviors, as they can help you send personalized messages that speak to each group. You should make full use of customer data to personalize your offers and incentives for various segments and maximize your impact.

Pro tip: Understanding buyer personas can help you do more focused campaigns during this season with targeted marketing. Want to learn more about identifying buyer personas? Check out our [blog on this topic](#).

1.4 Clean up your contact list

The next step is to clean up your email contact list, as success in email marketing is contingent upon good deliverability. Look at who's read your emails in the last three, six, nine, and twelve months to get a list of your most- and least-engaged customers. Based on these numbers, you can decide who to send the holiday campaign to.

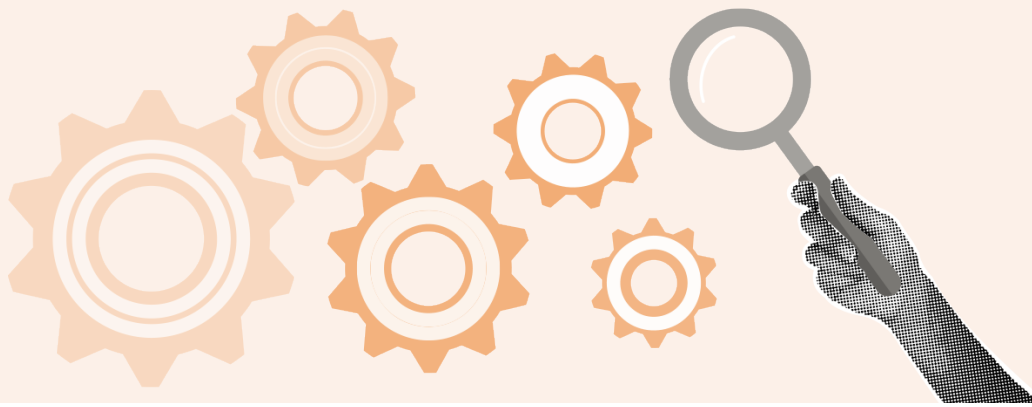




Chapter 2: Write engaging content that converts

Winning the content game is not a one-and-done activity. Just as your work picks up pace with each passing week leading up to the holiday season, your content game too needs to follow suit.





2.1 Optimize the frequency of your emails

The holiday season is the worst time to suddenly appear in someone's inbox after a long absence. You might not be able to do something new all the time. Take a look at the content you've produced in the last year. Sometimes, you can repurpose a blog post into an email. You can even repurpose some of the content you use for your social media for emails (more on this later).

***Pro Tip:** Email Strategist [Samar Owais](#) suggests that if you're emailing your list once a week, maybe bump it up to twice a week a couple of months before the holiday season kicks off so that people don't think your intentions are entirely transactional.*

2.2 Write captivating subject lines

The subject line is the first thing that captures recipients' attention, so it's naturally a make-or-break factor when they receive your email. Today, most emails are viewed through smartphones, so we recommend that you write a subject line with 25-30 characters. For holiday campaigns, think about adding a dash of festive fervor and urgency like Limited-time offer, or an emotion like We wish you holiday cheer! You know your audience and your brand voice better than anyone else, so choose a tone that will work well with them. Here are some expert tips on writing subject lines that convert.

2.3 Personalize content for better engagement

Personalization doesn't just mean you begin the email by addressing the recipient by name. Try to find a pattern in each recipient's past purchases or viewing history and use relevant parameters to segment them. Personalized campaigns generate higher open and click-through rates that you can use to drive higher conversions.

***Pro Tip:** You can follow different segmentation strategies, be it geographic, content-specific or behaviour specific. Check out our blog on [email personalization techniques](#) to learn more about how you can implement this in your holiday campaign.*

2.4 Incorporate storytelling

Everyone loves a good story! Storytelling in email marketing can affect your audience emotionally and make your brand more relatable. A good story can also help you beat the problem of poor attention span. For instance, if you're an NGO into child welfare, you can share a story of how the last year's festive season was made special for kids because of the special fundraising campaign during the Joy of Giving Week. Use videos and pictures to make your stories more effective. Share your brand's story, spotlight people behind it who make the products, or talk about how your product can influence your customer's lives. This makes your brand more human!

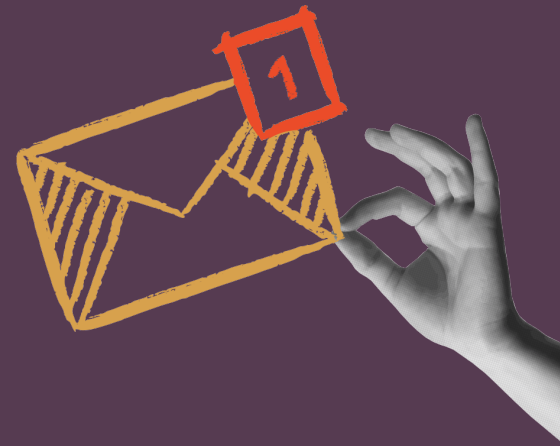


2.5 Create strong calls to action

You can turn emails into a powerful tool of engagement and action using by calls to action (CTAs). A good CTA drives engagement and conversion, shapes the customer journey, and helps you measure success. Your CTA should be clear, concise, and creative. Set a clear goal while coming up with a CTA and use action-oriented language while avoiding general terms.

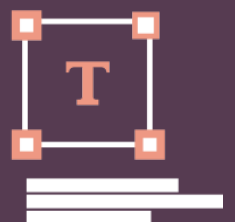
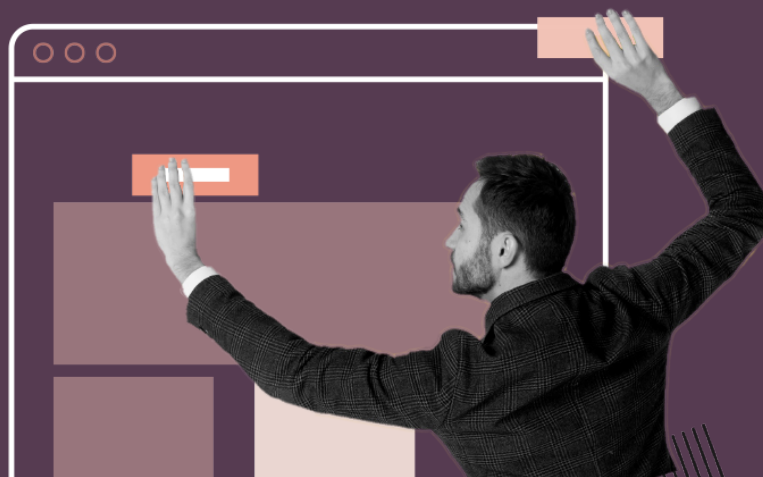
CTAs like **Get my holiday deal** or **Grab your gift** are good examples. In our blog on CTAs, we've listed out some time-tested and underused [CTA strategies](#) that can make your email campaigns successful.





Chapter 3: Follow best practices for email design

While content is in the heart of design, a good design gives your campaign the perfect look. Here are a few pointers to keep in mind while you design your holiday emails.



3.1 Use a mobile-first design

Since people consume content across multiple device types—like phones, laptops, and tablets—it's important that your webpages and emails adapt dynamically to each user's device, screen size, and orientation. In the context of email marketing, responsive design ensures that emails render correctly across a wide range of devices, from large desktop monitors to small smartphone screens. By utilizing flexible layouts and fluid images, [responsive design](#) optimizes the user experience and maximizes engagement.

3.2 Incorporate festive imagery and colors

Holidays are about getting people into the right mood, so your emails need to pep up their inboxes accordingly. Get into the holiday spirit with festive imagery, icons, and color schemes. Thankfully, there are ready-made options available online today. Pre-designed, holiday-specific email templates offer a distinct aesthetic, with images, fonts, messages, colors, and interactive elements that resonate with various events and festivals. You can also check out our [blog on festive designs](#), where our designers share their tips on what makes for a great holiday design.

Pro Tip: Think reds, greens, golds, and silvers for Christmas campaigns and oranges and browns for Thanksgiving. But keep it brand-focused! Use email marketing platforms like Zoho Campaigns to get [pre-built responsive templates](#) made specially for the holiday season—and then customize them to suit your brand.



3.3 Balance text and images

Using the right images is important to grab recipients' attention, but the information you convey through the email's text will still be the star of the show. If your emails are too image-heavy, they might take too much time to load. So make sure you balance them out so as to ensure you convey your message even if images take time to load.

3.4 Keep your design simple

You have the right tools on hand and some great content to go with—but don't go overboard. A clean and simple design will help guide readers' attention to the most important parts of your email, like your offers and CTA.



Chapter 4: Maximize efficiency and results using automation

Holidays are busy times, and one can't just be focused on sending out emails every few days. But at the same time, you need to keep your customers engaged. The solution? Automate your emails. In fact, this is essential to scaling your holiday campaigns.



4.1 Set up automated workflows

The idea is to [create workflows](#) that automatically send emails to drive certain user actions, such as abandoned cart reminders, post-purchase follow-ups, or special holiday offers. Automation can help ensure that your recipients view your emails at the right times without your personal involvement at every step.

4.2 Implement drip campaigns to extend engagement

A good way to automate your holiday emails is to set up drip campaigns, which involves scheduling series of emails at a steady cadence. This type of email campaign helps you reach the right people with the right content at the right time while avoiding a one-size-fits-all strategy.

***Pro Tip:** Create lists of [holiday-focused drip campaigns](#) to nurture leads over time, per your business needs. For instance, you may want to send out a 'Holiday gift guide' email in the first week of December and follow up a week later with a 'Limited time offers' email, and then finish up with a 'Last chance to shop'.*

4.3 Use behavioral triggers

Send targeted holiday emails at the right time, depending on each customer's behavior. Email marketing solutions like Zoho Campaigns help you increase the effectiveness of your campaigns by using data the software gathers. Knowing more about your audience empowers you to tailor and personalize drip emails in ways that generate more engagement. For example, you can send them abandoned cart reminder emails with discount codes.

Chapter 5: Optimize conversions by tracking key metrics

Whether yours is a small, mid-sized, or enterprise business, email campaigns can help you make the most of the holidays. But all the steps above mean nothing if they don't translate into increased business. Hence, it's important to track the performance of your campaigns from time to time, and while doing so can be challenging, we'll break down some of the most important parameters for you.



5.1 Track open rates

Open rates tell you how many people opened your emails. Due to the prevalence of spam, cracking this can be the first big task. If your open rate is low, this may either mean that your subject line isn't catchy enough or that your emails are going directly to recipients' spam folders. Go back to the drawing board and see how you can rework your subject line and timing.

5.2 Measure click-through rates

Your click-through rate (CTR) tells you how many recipients clicked on a link in your email. A low CTR might require that you redesign your email. Sit down with your team or seek help from experts to figure out what else you can change. Perhaps redesigning your CTA or arranging content in a better layout might do the trick.

5.3 Keep an eye on your conversion rate

Your conversion rate is the bottom line for any email campaign. It tells you not only how many people clicked through but also how many recipients ended up making a purchase or signed up—whatever your CTA is. This also means you make sure your landing page is just as engaging and persuasive as your email.

Pro Tip: *If numbers make you nervous, worry not! A good email campaign software helps you derive these metrics and saves you the trouble of analyzing them yourself. If you want to learn more about campaign metrics, check out our [blog](#).*



Chapter 6: The best holiday email campaign ideas to inspire you

The success of your holiday campaign depends heavily on its timing. It's best to consider your subscribers' locations and your capacity to handle the influx of sales when launching your holiday campaigns. Having a holiday calendar helps you focus your efforts.



6.1 Offer Black Friday and Cyber Monday deals

Black Friday sales can give even struggling businesses a second wind. Offer your subscribers special promotions by email on Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Enable early access to deals and create a sense of urgency with limited-time deals.

6.2 Put together a holiday gift guide

People are looking for quick solutions for busy holidays. Make gift-finding easy for your customers by creating a personalized holiday gift guide. Segment your audience and recommend products of interest based on previous purchases. When these options are offered up on a silver platter, conversions will surely go up.

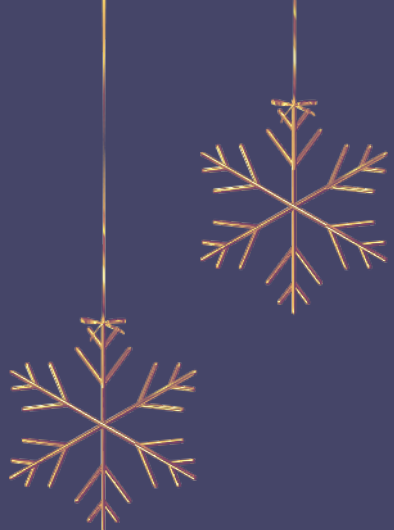
6.3 Run a Christmas campaign

If you do it right, 12 Days of Christmas can be much more than a carol! Run a 12 Days of Christmas email series in which you offer promotions or showcase unique products each day leading up to Christmas. This can help build anticipation and have them coming back to your website for more. Globally, brands like Amazon let their sales run for days to give customers multiple opportunities to make their purchases.

6.4 Hold a year-end clearance sale

Don't let the heat run out yet! Run a post-holiday clearance sale to get rid of your remaining stock. Send follow-up emails with increased discounts or free shipping to encourage customers to make one final purchase before the year is over and make their New Year's even better.

Check out our [comprehensive 2024 holiday marketing guide](#) for more tips.



Chapter 7: Common mistakes to avoid

Even if you are a seasoned marketer, you might make a mistake or two during your campaign. Having noticed certain mistakes made by marketers over the years, we've compiled a cheat sheet so you can tread on this road with greater care.



7.1 Don't overload your audience with emails

Too many emails can overwhelm your subscribers, and your unsubscribe rate could increase. While holidays are a time to have fun, the days leading up to them can be busy—not just for you, but for your customers, too. So be mindful of your emailing frequency, particularly during the holiday season.

7.2 Don't ignore data privacy regulations

Make sure all of your seasonal email campaigns comply with data privacy regulations, including the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Make your opt-in policy clear and provide an easy way for subscribers to unsubscribe. The best way to do so is to use an email solution like [Zoho Campaigns](#), which comes with the most essential functionalities that help you address the GDPR requirements.

7.3 Don't forget to optimize for mobile devices

Ignoring [mobile optimization](#) means missing out on valuable opportunities to connect with your audience. Your design, content, and CTA buttons should be optimized for mobile devices.

You can also check out our [webinar](#) with email marketing expert John Nash on common mistakes in email marketing.





Chapter 8: Don't miss these last-minute holiday email hacks

If you're reading this ebook in the middle of a holiday season and are yet to get started with your work, we get you! At Zoho, we see many businesses in the same predicament. Just so you don't have to rack your brains figuring out the plan, we've put together six tips to help you make the most of the time at hand.



8.1 Prioritize

Pick the low-hanging fruit; focus on your most-engaged and active subscribers. These are people who have had good experiences with your brand in the past and are likely to respond to your last-minute holiday promotions. It's possible this audience brings in the bulk of your revenue during this season anyway, so it's best to start there.

8.2 Create quick content

Creating content quickly might be easier said than done, but here are some ways to do it. Repurpose your holiday emailers from the previous year and add some new tweaks. Decide what you want to highlight most, like key offers, discounts, or exclusive deals. If you're publishing regular social media content, especially on Instagram or Facebook, repurpose them into emails. Keep the message straightforward and visually appealing.

8.3 Pick a template

We've already covered this aspect, but last-minute campaigns call for ready-made templates [designed by experts](#). Use holiday-themed templates, graphics, colors, and images that capture the festive spirit. A shortcut you can use is to start with the holiday templates your email software includes in your subscription. Check out Zoho Campaigns's [template gallery](#) for this festive season!

8.4 Personalize

It's always hard to stand out in the market, but personalization helps make the experience better for the consumer and make your emails more relevant. At the very least, include the recipient's name and, if possible, tailor the content to their preferences and past behaviors.

8.5 Embrace urgency

When you're doing things last minute, a sense of urgency isn't just something you experience, but also something you can create for your customers! Let your recipients know that time is running out for them to take advantage of your holiday offer.

8.6 Test it out

Doing things at the last minute isn't an excuse to get things wrong with your email campaigns. Make sure your emails appear correctly on different devices and email clients. Check for broken links, typos, and any other issues that might deter recipients from buying from you.



Wrapping up for holiday success





Holiday email campaigns are effective at driving engagement and conversions. With careful planning, creativity, and execution, you can make the most of the holiday season. Starting early, creating engaging and personalized content, and using automation are ways to maximize the effectiveness of your holiday campaigns. Going forward, remember to analyze your performance and make the necessary adjustments to refine your strategy and achieve even better results.




Start your email marketing journey with Zoho Campaigns



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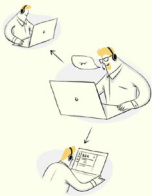
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