



40 IDEAS FOR YOUR HOLIDAY SOCIAL MEDIA PLANS

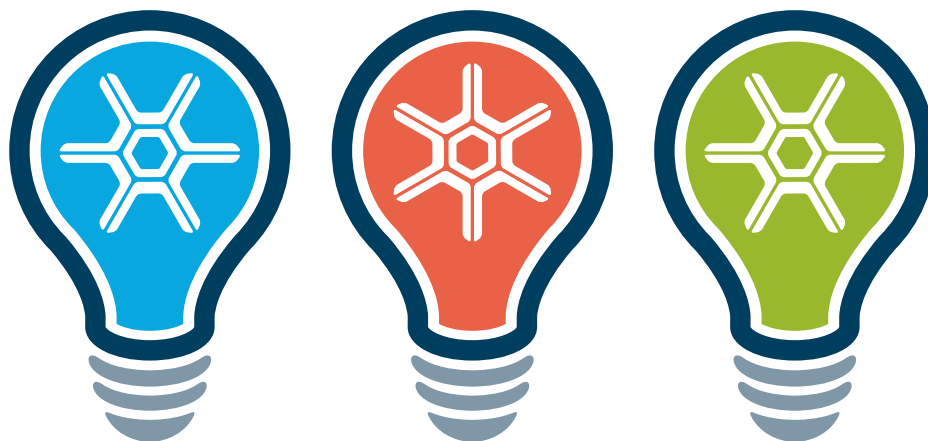
shoutlet®

Enterprise Social Relationship Platform

The holidays mean good times and cheer with family and friends. But for retailers, the holidays are a time to get serious about results, with roughly [a third](#) of their annual sales occurring in November and December. [Nearly 50%](#) of retailers indicated holiday promotions would begin before Halloween.

Social media can support your company's objectives for the season, boost your other marketing efforts, and create memorable experiences that help put your brand in front of customers at the time of year they are focused on shopping. Plus, social connections forged during the holidays can be nurtured throughout the year.

To help socialize your holiday marketing, we've put together 40 ideas designed to boost the impact social has on your goals.



1 INTEGRATE, INTEGRATE, INTEGRATE:

While holiday campaigns exclusive to social media can have an impact, real social media value can be shown when it contributes to the results of overall marketing efforts, and in turn, the bottom line. Many of the ideas to follow include ways to pair social media with other marketing efforts. Thinking “omnichannel” and telling a cohesive story across your marketing channels – including social media – will solidify your holiday message and help you see results.

2 SHOWCASE THAT YOU’RE IN THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT:

Your customers are sprucing up their homes with decorations and getting into the spirit. Don’t forget to update your social media presences. If your company adds holiday imagery on its website, for example, stay consistent and do the same with your Facebook Timeline cover photos, Twitter backgrounds, Google+ images, YouTube channels, and Pinterest accounts, where possible.

3 HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS GET INTO THE SPIRIT, TOO:

Offer downloadable profile pictures, cover photos, and avatars designed for the holidays that include your branding. Or, take it a step further and create a tool to help fans personalize their images. [AMC’s Breaking Bad](#) let Facebook fans login to its app to create personalized cover photos and profile pictures customized to their names.

4 THINK ABOUT HOW YOUR CUSTOMERS’ ROUTINES CHANGE AND ADAPT:

Customers’ lives get crazy around the holidays. Events, shopping, and traveling will disrupt their usual routines. Be on the lookout for shifts in the time and day your posts receive interactions. The Facebook Insights interface and [other third-party systems](#) can illuminate this data. Suspect your fans and followers are logging on later in the evening in December? Test posting schedules to adapt to their habits during this busy time.

5 GET VISUAL:

With 350 million photos uploaded to Facebook every day and visual social networks like Instagram acquiring active users in hoards, beautiful and relevant imagery is now one of the best ways to connect with customers across a variety of social platforms. The holidays allow brands to try new things and put a holiday spin on their image strategies. Build your image content by creating:

1. Original images: Whether it’s a shot your team took themselves or it’s an image with graphics added, posting imagery that is unique to your brand shares your voice and connects back to your marketing goals.

2. Curated images: When you repost or reshare something you’ve found online, you’re curating content for your audience. In fact, [95% of marketers](#) say they curate content from other sources.

3. User-generated images: User-generated content is content your fans or followers have created. When users submit images to your brand, this has the two-fold benefit of engaging the audience and prompting them to share across their channels.

Learn more about using visuals in [“40 Ideas for Visual Social Media that Connects.”](#)



GET VISUAL

6 MEMES ARE STILL FUNNY:

Memes have become a popular way for brands to shake their hair out, tap into the visual content trend, and spark an emotional connection with users. Posts over the holiday break can tap this trend and generate engagement in a fun way. The most successful memes are related to your brand and aligned with the interests of your fans – and have a holiday twist for the season.

This holiday meme from non-profit Heifer International received more than 500 likes and 135 shares.



7 USE SHORT-FORM VIDEO:

Vine and Instagram video continue to be a strong tactic. Tap these 6- or 15-second videos for your holiday social content calendar to showcase how to use products, unveil Black Friday deals, show useful holiday applications of your products, or share general ideas for making the holiday great.

8 CREATE LONGER VIDEOS TO ENGAGE SHOPPERS:

Longer videos are effective, too. With Facebook's video auto-play, there are now [1 billion video views](#) on the network every day. During the holidays, shoppers seek out more videos: a Google study found that [one in four](#) shoppers search YouTube for a video about a product while in-store.

Producing holiday-related videos can fuel discovery of your products and drive sales this season, especially interactive, "shoppable" videos, which at least 39 department stores [have launched](#) in the past year.

9 'TIS THE SEASON FOR SOCIAL CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Customers are turning to Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms to express opinions and interact with companies. [One in three social media users](#) now prefer to contact brands using social media rather than the phone. During the holidays, customers' questions about products, shipping, and deals will inevitably arise. The lack of quick, helpful responses to questions and comments on Facebook and Twitter can mean lost sales online. Treat your social presences at the holidays like your brick-and-mortar stores, which stay open longer and employ more staff. For more on developing a social customer service program, grab a copy of [7 Steps to Service: Tips for Launching a Social Customer Service Program](#).

10 JOIN SHOPPERS ON PINTEREST:

Pinterest is now a powerhouse in the holiday social media mix. Consumers are spending 50% more time on the site, and 75% say they use the site to find holiday gift ideas, according to [data from Lab42](#).

Using Pinterest to feature products and content can be a valuable tactic over the holiday season: 60% say they've purchased an item after discovering it on Pinterest, and 70% who follow brands on the network feel more connected to them.

New this year are [Pinterest Analytics](#), giving your brand insight into who is pinning your pins and which items are most popular.



11 DON'T FORGET LINKEDIN:

Use your [LinkedIn Company Page](#) to reach employees and partners with holiday-related info. Reaching a B2B audience? Add a holiday twist to status updates.

12 TRY EMBEDDED POSTS:

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vine, and Google+ now all offer the option of embedding posts into your website. Embed Facebook and Google+ posts to bring lively conversation about holiday topics to blog posts or holiday web pages. Try embedding tweets to showcase positive customer feedback about products that make great gifts.

13 RUN A SWEEPSTAKES ON FACEBOOK:

If you are going to run a promotion on Facebook and you want to collect email addresses, a sweepstakes provides a low barrier to entry and can help create new fans that engage with you throughout the year. Remember to select a prize that is relevant to your target audience so you will attract the right people.

The Swiss Colony®

The screenshot shows a Facebook post for 'The Swiss Colony' with an 'Enter Now!' button. The post features a 'Sweet Santa Sweepstakes' banner with the text 'The Swiss Colony Fans Only'. Below the banner, there is a description of the sweepstakes: 'See if you make Santa's list and enter today to win a sweet treat! Facebook fans are invited to enter our Sweet Santa Sweepstakes for a chance to be one of ten lucky winners of one our popular Winking Santa Tortes. SWEEPSTAKES ENDS ON DECEMBER 3, 2012 AT 11:59AM CST.' To the right of the text are images of the 'Winking Santa Torte'. Below the text is a form with the following fields: First Name, Last Name, Street Address (No P.O. Boxes Accepted), City, State, Zip Code, Phone Number (xxx-xxx-xxxx), and E-mail. There are two checkboxes: one for acknowledging the terms and conditions, and another for opting into future email communication. A 'Submit Entry' button is at the bottom right of the form. At the very bottom of the post, there is a link for 'Official Rules, Terms & Conditions'.

14 RUN A FACEBOOK CONTEST FOR MORE INPUT FROM FANS:

Take a sweepstakes to the next level by turning it into a contest. Asking participants to upload photos, videos, or text-based entries for a chance to win adds a layer of user-generated content. Add a voting phase to allow Facebook users to choose finalists or winners. Be cautious, though: the holidays are busy and people are pressed for time. Ensure the value of the prize matches the level of time it takes users to create content for the contest.

Through the
CountryDoor®
Come Home to Comfortable Living

The screenshot shows a Facebook post for 'Country Door' with a 'Holiday Décor Sweepstakes' banner. The banner features a green wreath with a white bow and the text 'Holiday DECOR SWEEPSTAKES 2013'. To the right of the banner, there is a question: 'How do you make your friends and family feel welcome in your home for the holidays?'. Below the question, there is a 'GRAND PRIZE: Holiday Décor Makeover valued at \$8,000!' and a list of prizes: 'First prize: \$500 Country Door Gift Certificate', 'Second prize: \$250 Country Door Gift Certificate', and 'Third prize (3 available): \$100 Country Door Gift Certificate'. There is an 'ENTER NOW' button. Below the banner, there is a section for the 'Our 2012 Grand Prize Winner' featuring a photo of the winner, Valeria O. Rockland, MA, and a link to 'See her house transformation' with a photo of a house.

Home décor retailer Country Door asked entrants to submit their idea for making guests feel welcome. They also shared images about how last year's winner used her prize of a Country Door gift certificate, further showcasing its products.

15 MAKE SURE HOLIDAY CAMPAIGNS ARE ALIGNED WITH YOUR BRAND:

Creating an engaging experience for social customers is important, but if those campaigns aren't aligned with your message you lose an opportunity to showcase your brand.

Online fashion retailer Monroe and Main has this great example of how a holiday campaign can be engaging and relevant to the brand. They asked customers to choose their go-to holiday outfit (trousers, pencil skirt, etc.) to enter for a chance to win a gift card. The promotion tied in a holiday theme, featured their product line, and addressed a common dilemma for women: finding the perfect holiday party outfit.



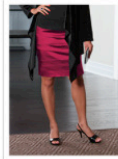

MONROE
AND MAINSM

facebook Search for people, places and things

Monroe and Main Sweepstakes Liked

+++ MERRY, BRIGHT and *Stylish* SWEEPSTAKES +++

Simply share with us which style works best for you this holiday season and you'll be entered to win one of two \$250 gift certificates toward the outfit of your choice. DEC 1-15

			
EMPIRE WAIST A raised horizontal waistline that starts under the bust.	TROUSER Pants with a tab front, wide waistband, fits from the widest part of the hip and goes straight down from there.	PENCIL SKIRT A slim-fitting skirt cut in one straight line from the hips to the knee. It's usually made with a single pleat or slit in front or back to make walking easier.	BLAZER A jacket with a long lapel and button-front closure, often resembling a suit coat, but more casual.

What is your go-to garment style this holiday season? :

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

16 INTEGRATE PINTEREST INTO YOUR FACEBOOK CONTEST:

Savvy brands have tied Pinterest and Facebook together to promote contests and content to both sets of fans and followers. Norwegian Cruise Line launched a promotion that asked users to pin images to a Pinterest board titled "My Dream Cruise on Norwegian." It used Twitter and a Facebook app to gather entries and promote the contest. [Learn more about launching effective Pinterest contests.](#)

NCL NORWEGIAN
CRUISE LINE®

facebook Search for people, places and things

Norwegian Cruise Line Pinterest Liked

NORWEGIANS PIN TO WIN.

Enter to win a 7-Day cruise for two in a Balcony Stateroom.

Winner can choose from any of Norwegian's exciting cruise destinations, like Alaska, Bermuda, The Caribbean, Europe, Hawaii and more.*

CRUISE LIKE A NORWEGIAN

NCL NORWEGIAN
CRUISE LINE®

- Join Pinterest.
- Follow Norwegian Cruise Line at pinterest.com/norwegiancruise.
- Create a board and title it "My Dream Cruise on Norwegian".
- Re-pin our contest announcement to your "My Dream Cruise on Norwegian" board.
- Pin five of your favorite pictures from any Norwegian boards, or from NCL.com using the "Pin It" widget on your browser. (To apply the "Pin It" widget to your browser, go to pinterest.com/about/goodies and follow the instructions).
- Pin at least 10 other pictures of your choosing, that illustrate your idea of the perfect Norwegian cruise vacation.
- Once the board is complete, do one of the following:
 - Tweet the link to your board on Twitter to @CruiseNorwegian using #NorwegiansPinToWin.
 - Fill out the entry form and post the link to the comments box on our Pinterest tab on Facebook at facebook.com/NorwegianCruiseLine.

All Boards must be submitted by midnight August 22nd, 2012.
Winner will be announced on August 24th, 2012 via Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest - so make sure to follow us!
Note: Contest is not available on mobile devices. *Cruise prize is based on select sailings and is subject to availability.

CREATE MY BOARD **REGISTER MY BOARD**

SHARE YOUR BOARD WITH OUR COMMUNITY
BY POSTING THE LINK IN THE COMMENT BOX BELOW.

17 GATHER DATA YOU CAN USE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:

Your team will be busy this season keeping up with the uptick in conversations about your products and holiday promotions. But in the midst of the craziness, don't lose sight of the wealth of potential data for you to harness, including:

- New email addresses for your database you can share with your email marketing team. Make sure any contest forms include any opt-in disclaimers that encourage people to agree to receive future updates.
- New email addresses you can share with your ads team to create fresh Custom Audiences and Lookalike Audiences for social ads on Facebook.
- Opportunities to capture insight about your products and services through social listening efforts.
- New brand enthusiasts who would be willing to participate in an advocacy programs throughout the year.

18 WRAP AN EVENT INTO YOUR SWEEPSTAKES OR CONTEST:

Bealls, a Florida-based department store, created some holiday excitement around its 'Pin It To Win It Wish List Sweepstakes.' Fans were asked to create holiday wish lists by pinning their favorite gift items on a Pinterest board and then entering their board URLs via a Facebook app. Bealls added an extra twist by giving away a \$50 gift card to participants every hour for 10 hours on Cyber Monday.

BEALLS

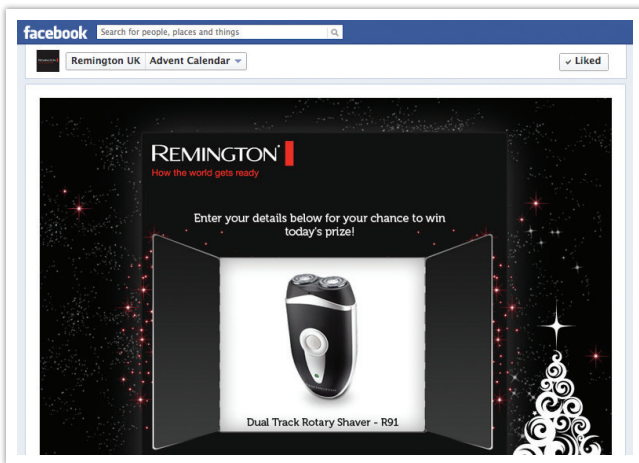
The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook contest entry form. At the top, the Facebook logo and search bar are visible. Below that, the contest title 'Bealls Florida Pin It to Win It Wish List S...' is shown with a 'Liked' button. The main content area features a promotional image of three women in winter attire, the Bealls logo with the tagline 'relax. save. smile.', and the contest title 'PIN IT TO WIN IT wish list SWEEPSTAKES'. Below the image, there is a red section with the heading 'Bealls wants to grant your wish list' and a paragraph of text explaining the contest rules. To the right of this text is a form with fields for 'First Name:', 'Last Name:', 'E-mail:', and 'Pinterest Board URL:'. A 'Share' button is located at the bottom right of the form.



19 COUNTDOWN TO THE HOLIDAYS WITH DAILY PRIZES:

Excitement builds as customers count down to the holidays. Grooming appliance manufacturer Remington used its Facebook page to launch a 12-day advent calendar. Each day, users visited the page to reveal the day's giveaway and enter to win.

REMINGTON



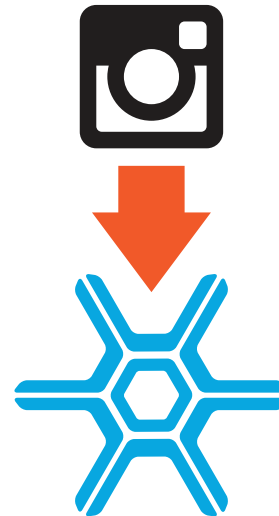
20 GIVE EVERY CONTEST PARTICIPANT A HOLIDAY SURPRISE:

Why limit giveaways to only winners? Retailers who have offered all contest participants an incentive have seen impressive results. HSN brand Ballard Designs offered a 20% discount code to everyone who entered its sweepstakes once it reached 80,000 Facebook fans, in addition to larger prizes for selected winners. The promotion resulted in more than \$400,000 in sales in five days.

21 BUILD INSTAGRAM TACTICS INTO YOUR HOLIDAY STRATEGY:

Instagram has continued its upward trajectory in 2014, attracting even more attention from top brands. It's paying off, too: [Forrester Research](#) found that brands are seeing 58 times more engagement per follower there than Facebook and 120 times more than Twitter.

Posting holiday-related images to current followers can keep you top of mind. Launching an Instagram hashtag contest can also rally customers around your brand during the holidays. Choose an appropriate hashtag and promote your contest via other marketing and social media channels.



22 RUN A TWITTER CONTEST:

Take the promotion to Twitter by diving into one of these creative Twitter contest types:

1. Creative answer format: Kentucky Fried Chicken [held a contest](#) asking fans to tweet why they deserved a college scholarship in 140 characters or less. In a promotion of this type, entrants answer a question in the allotted characters – perfect for soliciting personal anecdotes or answers that get people to describe how they use or feel about your products, which becomes valuable for extracting user feedback.

2. Photo tweet: Participants tweet a photo.

3. Reach a certain number of followers: Reward your “Nth” follower.

4. Trivia question or game: [Wonderful Pistachios](#) held a Twitter promotion that asked Twitter users to unscramble letters and tweet their answer that “cracked” the code.

23 OFFER AN INCENTIVE FOR SHARING:

[63% say](#) that they would be most likely to share to holiday sweepstakes or giveaways to Facebook. Reward customers who share your contest or sweepstakes with extra entries to help spread the word.

24 HOST A TWITTER CHAT:

A Twitter chat can extend the reach of conversations about holiday topics related to your brand. Selecting a topic that can help customers make their holiday better or enlisting an influencer or blogger who can add to the conversation generates word-of-mouth. Throw in the opportunity to win a few prizes for extra incentive.

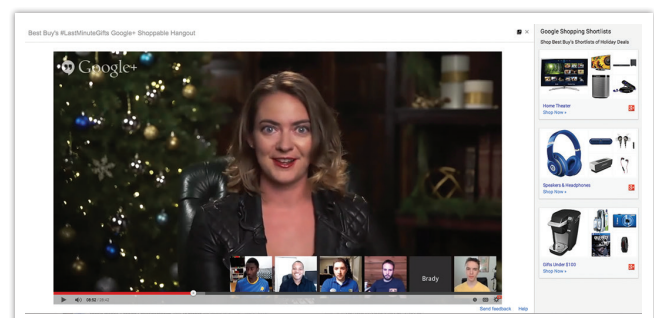
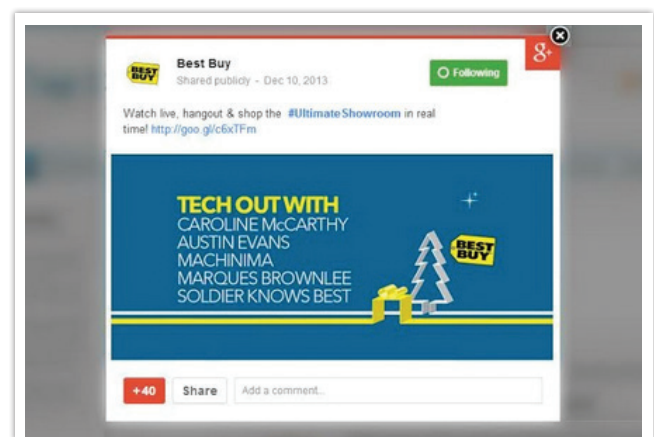
25 TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GOOGLE HANGOUTS ON AIR:

Even though most brands are spending their time and resources on Facebook and Twitter, Google+’s unique Hangouts on Air feature allows your brand to host live video that can be promoted across your social channels. Enlist in-house experts or influencer partners to share tips for the holidays or do live Q&A, and repurpose the tips shared throughout the holiday season.

26 EXTEND GOOGLE+ CONVERSATIONS WITH +POST ADS:

Google announced in spring 2014 that +Post ads are available to all companies. They allow brands to syndicate Google+ Page posts to third-party websites through the Google Display network.

Shoutlet customer Best Buy experimented with these new +Post ads during a cutting-edge campaign it ran over the 2013 holiday season. Best Buy’s #UltimateShowroom Hangout on Air invited well-known tech experts with large YouTube followings to discuss popular tech gifts. The Hangout helped shoppers find holiday gifts through a shoppable Hangout, where the products discussed are displayed within the Hangout on Air. To promote the Hangout, Best Buy tapped +Post ads to advertise through the Google Display Network.



27 ADD VARIETY TO YOUR PAID FACEBOOK ADS STRATEGY:

Make the most of the Facebook ad targeting options available to your brand. Organic reach has declined, and many companies are paying to boost their Facebook posts to more of their existing fans. Taking advantage of additional targeting options can maximize your Facebook ad spend:

- Upload Custom Audiences to reach people on Facebook who are connected with your brand in other digital channels.
- Build Lookalike Audiences to reach people similar to your best customers.
- Try retargeting through Website Custom Audiences, which deliver promoted posts to people who have recently visited your website.
- Work with your CRM and email marketing teams to learn which segments of contacts they are targeting and mirror that strategy in social ads to support your efforts.

28 SUPPORT PAID MEDIA ON TWITTER:

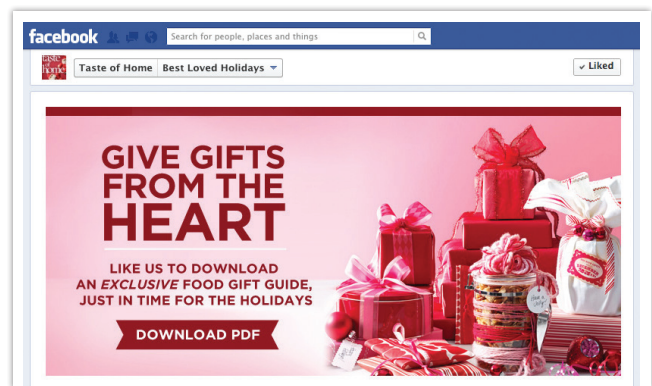
Run Promoted Tweets to support your holiday efforts, or experiment with the new tools such as Twitter Cards that allow users to sign up for an email list or promotion right within the Twitter stream.

29 TRACK THE IMPACT OF YOUR HOLIDAY INITIATIVES:

Embarking on any initiative requires that your team choose metrics that can tell you if you've met your goals. Whether your objectives are increased brand awareness, engagement, or sales, ensure you can track your holiday efforts before they kick off. Use link tracking to track the direct sales and other customer actions from social posts. Enlisting a third-party [social relationship platform](#) can help you do this automatically and monitor your performance.

30 BE HELPFUL WITH USEFUL CONTENT:

The holidays can be high-stress, frantic times. Use content to make your customers' lives simpler. Taste of Home offered its Facebook fans an exclusive downloadable how-to recipe guide to creating food gifts, perfectly timed to the baking and cooking happening during the holidays. Gift guides can be helpful for those searching for ideas. Officefurniture.com did this to highlight gift ideas for "The Crafter," "The Garage Guru," and others.



31 DO SOME #SOCIALGOOD - AND HELP OTHERS DO THAT, TOO:

Add a charitable element to your holiday campaign. In 2012 #GivingTuesday took off as a way to give back after a weekend of Black Friday and Cyber Monday spending.

32 OFFER EXCLUSIVE DEALS TO YOUR SOCIAL COMMUNITY:

67% said in a [2013 holiday survey](#) that they'd be willing to share digital coupons to Facebook during the season. Providing exclusive coupon codes or early alerts of sales to your fans and followers builds trust and encourages social sharing.

33 OFFER SNEAK PEEK ACCESS:

Tap social media as the channel for announcing your Black Friday and Cyber Monday deals and give current fans a sneak peek.

34 WRAP SOCIAL INTO EMAIL:

Email marketing during the holidays is one of the main drivers of e-commerce purchases. Try including tweets or snippets of reviews to showcase real customer feedback on products within emails. Online card retailer Minted linked an email about holiday foil-pressed cards to one of their Pinterest boards showcasing all things metallic.

35 FACILITATE SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN-STORE:

More than half of consumers use social media while in brick-and-mortar stores. Of these, 66% are posting to tell friends about purchases and 42% are uploading photos of holiday purchase to Facebook ([Source: CrowdTap](#)). Encouraging shoppers to share their offline interactions with your store can help spur conversations online and impact shoppers' friends and family.

36 HOLIDAY HASHTAGS:

Hashtags have become a primary way to reach people who aren't currently part of your social community and extend your reach. Be on the lookout for holiday hashtags that gain traction - but be wary of newsjacking in an inappropriate way.

37 PREPARE FOR YOUR SOCIAL TEAM'S HOLIDAY VACATION:

Customers aren't the only ones who are busy this time of year. Social media teams are juggling tasks, too. Use social media management tools with scheduling and workflow features to help free up time you can devote to other social media efforts, including real-time response to social conversations and customer questions.

38 TRACK WHAT USERS ARE SAYING ABOUT YOUR BRAND OVER THE HOLIDAY SEASON:

Paying close attention to your social listening program to see what people are saying about your products and how frequently they are talking not only benchmarks progress for the 2015 holidays, but it also provides insight that can help shape your strategy in the New Year.

39 THINK MOBILE:

From your website to Facebook custom apps, ensure the customer experience on mobile devices is seamless. With two-thirds of people in the United States currently owning a smartphone, mobilizing your social media will prevent frustration and delight your customers.

40 USE THIS TIME TO PREPARE FOR AN AMAZING 2015:

The holiday might be hectic, but there is usually some down time to reflect on the year. Use this time reviewing your analytics from 2014 and brainstorm what's next for your social program in 2015. Then, ring in the New Year ready to engage with your customers!



About Shoutlet

Shoutlet is an enterprise-class, cloud-based social relationship platform that empowers brands to build meaningful customer relationships by harnessing the power of social marketing. More than 600 brands and agencies in 50 countries use Shoutlet to publish, engage, and measure social marketing campaigns that gather consumer data to drive measurable business impact. Headquartered in Madison, WI, Shoutlet has additional offices in New York, San Francisco, and London. Current customers include 3M, Best Buy, Fox Sports, Hot Topic, 24 Hour Fitness, Canon, and Norwegian Cruise Line.

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