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# Introduction

'Tis the season to be jolly! And that's good news for businesses. The holiday season of 2022 was nothing short of remarkable, with consumers spending a staggering \$211.7 billion online (up 3.5% from 2021, despite financial headwinds), according to [Adobe Analytics](#). As the 2023 holiday season approaches, there's no better time for your business than now to focus on driving sales up.

And when it comes to sales, there is no better channel for returns on investment than email marketing. This channel has stood the test of time as a catalyst to drive sales. By crafting compelling email campaigns, businesses can encourage customers to spend more money with personalized offers. The best part? The businesses themselves own the email list and customer information, allowing them to build loyalty over time. As the list grows, so does the revenue.

However, in a crowded market, proactive planning is the key to success. In this ebook, we've provided practical tips to implement a successful holiday email marketing campaign. And for the fashionably late, we provide the top 10 tips to recover any potential lost sales. It's never too late to dive into the holiday email marketing frenzy!

**Happy Reading!**  
**The editorial team,**  
**Zoho Campaigns.**



# Prepare for the holiday season

Main factors to consider before you launch your holiday email campaigns

## 1. Is your audience engaged?

First things first, pay attention to your audience. Having an engaged audience will help you deliver a successful holiday email marketing campaign. Make deliberate efforts to re-engage your audience before you start your holiday campaign. You see, the holiday season is the worst time to suddenly appear in someone's inbox after a long absence. Recipients might view this as spammy behavior and mark your emails as spam (or swiftly delete them). This behavior damages your brand's reputation and harms your email delivery rate.

## 2. Email list cleanup

The next step, naturally, is to clean up your email list. Success in email marketing is predestined by good deliverability. For instance, look at who has read your emails in the last three, six, nine, and twelve months. You will get a list of your most engaged customers (recipients who have opened almost every email) and the least (those who haven't opened many). Based on these numbers, you can decide who to send out the holiday campaign to.

**Pro Tip:** Try to send out email campaigns only to recipients who are at least 50% engaged. Also, you can send out a 'pre-holiday win-back campaign' to disengaged contacts and try to engage them beforehand, as discussed in Step 1.

### 3. Segmentation

Emails should be written specifically for target recipient groups in mind. Even when your emails are beautifully crafted, unique, clear, and enticing, your email campaign can fail if the content doesn't make sense to the recipient. By organizing your audience into behavioral or demographic segments, you can write relevant email content. As a consequence, your email campaigns will convert better.



For instance, you can segment your buyers into 'one-time buyers', 'last-minute shoppers,' and 'loyal customers' to help focus your campaign content. With loyal customers, you can offer exclusive discounts such as 25% off on categories you are trying to push (loyal customers are more likely to try new product lines), while offering 10% off to last-minute shoppers to incentivize them to buy right away. Finally, you can offer specialized discounts to one-time buyers, such as 15% off above a certain cart value.

**Pro Tip:** For ideas on how to segment your audience, look for patterns in how customers interact with your business. What do they like to buy around the holidays? When do they start buying? Do the orders always reach on time? What value do customers appreciate the most? You can use this information to determine the most obvious customer segments and go from there.

# Enhancing impact with localization



Localization adds unprecedented impact to your email campaigns. Your business likely has a diverse audience, and you can use simple yet practical differences to highlight your emotional connect with them. This delivers customer delight and better audience engagement - something that all marketers should aim to achieve.

**Nikki Elbaz**, email strategist and copywriter, illustrated this emotional connect with an example:



*I once received an email from Nuggs, a brand offering alternative chicken nugget products. The subject line simply said, "Michigan, are you ready?" I happen to be from Michigan, so when I saw that subject line, it immediately piqued my interest. I thought, "What's happening in Michigan?" I felt a connection, and that's the key. You want your subscribers to connect with your emails on a personal level. This email from Nuggs was not only effective but also emotionally engaging. When I opened it, I found out that Nuggs were now available at Plum Market, a store I frequently visit. The specificity of "in plum market" made it vivid, illustrative, and highly relevant. I could picture myself picking up Nuggs on my next trip to the store. This email was not just memorable; it was emotionally charged because of its geotargeting-based relevance.*



[Listen to the full podcast episode on Holiday Email Marketing on Spotify.](#)

**Nikki Elbaz**  
Email strategist & copywriter



**Pro Tip:** If your business is limited by the region it operates in, localization might not be very relevant to you. In such cases, you can still localize based on cities, neighborhoods, or other geographic markers.

# Perfect timing: Launching your holiday campaign

A thought exercise on campaign timing



The success of your holiday campaign is heavily dependent on its timing. American companies often start on Veterans Day, which falls on November 11. However, this can be confusing for the European audience. It's best to consider your subscribers' locations and your capacity to handle the influx of sales when launching your holiday campaigns. Your business might be better served by a staggered launch.



“

*“Last year, we came across a unique approach employed by a company. They launched their campaign towards the end of October, just before the holiday season frenzy in November hit. Instead of promoting their Black Friday sale, they adopted a different strategy. They sent an email encouraging customers to make a purchase immediately, highlighting that they were offering a more attractive deal in October—a generous 20% discount compared to the upcoming 15% discount on Black Friday. This move aimed to manage potential shipping delays for their customers,” says Nikki Elbaz, email strategist and copywriter.*



autumn

END OF SEASON  
**SALE**  
UP TO 40% OFF

The numbers proved this was a smart strategy. Few other companies were promoting their sales in October, and this meant lesser price competition and fewer distractions for their customers. This strategy allowed the company to offer a fantastic sale exclusively to their dedicated email audience. They did still run a Black Friday sale, but the lower volumes reduced the stress brought on by the shipping rush in the market.

Another option, if more brands follow suit, could be to move your Black Friday sale earlier. However, the choice ultimately depends on your operational capacity and customer expectations. Starting your email campaign on the 1st of November presents a challenge: how would you keep your audience engaged throughout the season? One strategy involves using the early days of November for teasers, presales, and building anticipation. Alternatively, you could opt for flash sales limited to Thanksgiving, Black Friday, and Cyber Monday.



# Drafts & deadlines: Crafting the perfect holiday email



The holiday season is a time of heightened email activity, with inboxes overflowing with promotional content. To ensure your holiday email campaigns not only stand out but also resonate with your recipients, you need a game plan. Here are 3 tips which will help you create that 'holiday buzz':

## 1. Create intriguing subject lines

One of the most effective tactics is to leave a question unanswered in the subject line. This approach piques the recipient's interest, compelling them to click and learn more. Consider using words or phrases that leave room for interpretation. Oftentimes, curiosity-driven subject lines can increase open rates significantly.

## 2. Optimize sender name

Don't underestimate your email's 'sender name' - it holds more weight than you might think. If your sender name resonates with your subscribers, they'll open your emails regardless of the subject line. So, invest time in nurturing that sender-recipient connection before the holiday season arrives.

# BLACK FRIDAY

SUPER SALE

SALE 70% - 80%

You also see numerous holiday sender names like Coal-Black Friday or HP Black Friday where it is straightforward for recipients to spot a Black Friday email. Particularly during holidays, making it obvious that it's a Black Friday email can be a brilliant tactic. When recipients skim their inbox, you can almost imagine them going "Oh, it's the Black Friday sale. Okay, cool, I am clicking here."

### 3. Utilize festive GIFs, images, videos

Capture your recipient's attention with vibrant and festive email templates. Get creative with your branding and incorporate holiday visuals to add that special touch. Adding GIFs, images, and video elements to your email content elevates engagement. Direct recipients to a landing page where they can find more information and additional content, which gives your business more opportunity to convert. Avoid sending traffic over to external sources (such as YouTube) which don't have a clear path to conversion.

**Pro Tip:** Successful holiday email marketing is not just about standing out; it's about delivering value and understanding your audience's needs. Craft your subject lines and email content such that your audience can stay focused during the holiday rush.

# Holiday tip: Timing across time-zones



Sending bulk emails to recipients in different time zones can be a complex task. Here are some tips to navigate this challenge effectively:

## 1. Optimize send times:

Most email marketing software offer options to optimize email send times. Utilize these features to let the email service provider (ESP) handle the email delivery time. [Learn more about send time optimization here.](#)

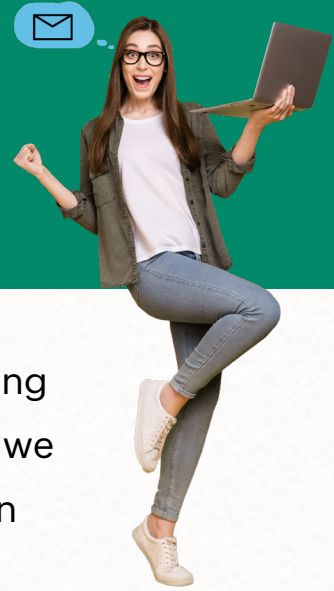
## 2. Leave a margin for error:

Time zone optimization will not always be foolproof. Leave yourself a margin of error to account for potential inaccuracies in time zone detection. Some recipients might have changed location, while others might not have ever indicated their preference in the first place.

## 3. Consider sending after-hours:

Many recipients are busy working even on holidays like Black Friday. They may prefer to shop and browse products after they have finished their workday. Sending emails after traditional working hours can align with this behavior and lead to better engagement.

**Pro Tip:** While using smart send features is valuable, don't limit your strategy solely to time zone optimization. The holiday season is a unique time, and recipients may have different routines and preferences. Experiment with options for send times and be open to using the most impactful tactic for your business.



# Last-Minute Holiday Email Marketing Tips

If you've found yourself in the unfortunate position of racing against the clock to launch your holiday email marketing, we understand your pain. At Zoho, we see many businesses in the same predicament. In order to help you through this hectic time, we've put together 10 tips for you to make the most of the time at hand:



## Prioritize

Focus on your most engaged and active subscribers. Target those who have interacted with your emails in the past and are more likely to respond to your last-minute holiday promotions. This audience possibly brings in the bulk of your revenue during this season anyway, so it's best to start there.



## Quick content

Create concise and attention-grabbing email content. Highlight key offers, discounts, or exclusive deals clearly. Keep the message straightforward and visually appealing. There is no reason to be clever with your content - it's better to get a decent offer out in time than to get a great offer out when your recipients have already spent their money.



## Optimize for mobile

Perhaps the most overlooked tip. Please make your emails mobile-friendly, if not mobile-first. Many recipients access their emails only on mobile devices, especially during the holiday madness. Your content should display seamlessly on screens of different sizes.



## Personalization

Use personalization to 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.



## Embrace urgency

Create a sense of urgency in your subject line and email copy. Let recipients know that time is running out for them to take advantage of your holiday offer.



## Test thrice

Perform thorough testing to avoid (often costly) embarrassments when sending out emails to your entire customer base. 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.



## Call to action

Your call to action (CTA) should be prominent and straightforward. Whether it's 'Shop Now' or 'Grab the Deal,' make it easy for recipients to take action on.



## Eye-catching design

A visually appealing email is better than the alternative. Use holiday-themed templates, graphics, colors, and images that convey the festive spirit. A shortcut you can use is to start with the holiday templates your email software includes in your subscription. [Here are a few templates we have added this year.](#)



## Deliverability

Verify that your emails are reaching the recipient's inbox and not the spam box. Maintain a good sender reputation by sending relevant and engaging content throughout the year. [Follow the general guidelines which make your emails avoid looking like spam.](#)



## Analyze and adjust

Keep an eye on the performance of your last-minute holiday emails. Monitor open rates, click-through rates, and conversions. Be ready to make quick adjustments based on real-time results to maximize your campaign's success.



# Here's your takeaway!



Whether your customers prefer shopping on the bustling Black Friday, the scintillating Cyber Monday, or even during the frenzy of last-minute Christmas gift hunting, holiday email marketing can prove to be an impactful tool for driving sales before the new year. We hope that with some of these tips, you can make the most of the holiday season for your business.

So, grab your metaphorical tinsel, and let's conquer this holiday email marketing adventure together!




**Start your email marketing journey with Zoho Campaigns**



[SIGN UP TODAY](#)



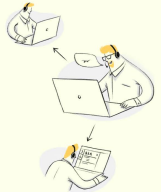
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