

E-book

# Seasonal Success:

Prep Your Business  
For The Holidays

HELLO  
name is



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A woman with long brown hair, wearing red-rimmed glasses and a red short-sleeved button-down shirt, is sitting at a desk. She is holding a black smartphone to her left ear with her left hand and a black pen over a document with her right hand. The document has some text on it, including the words "Administrative" and "Management". A black keyboard is visible in the lower-left corner. The background shows a window with vertical blinds. The entire image is set against a dark blue background with a white number '1' in the bottom-left corner of the image area.

# Laying the groundwork

1





# Map out key dates

The first thing you need to do to prepare for the holidays is to lay out a timeline with the most important dates of the season. If you have historical sales data, now is a good time to examine it and identify when the holiday rush tends to gear up and trail off. If you don't have that data, you can use online resources for your industry to get a general sense.

Next, mark any noteworthy dates. For example, if you're in education, you'll want to mark when schools go on break for the season and when they return. If you're in retail, highlight key shopping days such as Black Friday and Cyber Monday. If you operate a hotel, use travel trends to predict when the rush of customers will start to check in.

Now it's time to nail down your shipping timelines. When will be your last chance to reorder inventory in time for it to have a chance to sell? What's your shipping cutoff for customers who want their orders in time for the holidays?

Once your calendar is full of critical dates, you can refer to it as a map to stay on top of the season.

## Plan holiday hours

Many businesses shake up their hours to serve as many customers as possible during the holiday season. Retail businesses might consider opening earlier and closing later, as that can give customers more flexibility around when they shop. Hospitality businesses can make a similar move by expanding their windows for check-in. If you make changes like these, be sure to adjust employee schedules accordingly.





# Decorate for the season

Holiday decorations mix the whimsical with the practical. They're much more than a fun activity—they're a chance to get everyone in the room excited about the season. In an office setting, holiday decorations can [improve employee morale](#). In the classroom, they can increase students' excitement and help them have more fun during lessons.

Decorations can also affect store performance. Putting up holiday decorations in your store can [attract additional foot traffic](#). That's especially useful for small businesses working with minimal marketing budgets. If you want customers to linger longer and spend more, holiday decorations can help. If your customers skew older, adding music [can enhance the effect](#), but be careful, as it can do the opposite for Gen Z shoppers.





Managing

inventory

2





# Forecast demand



Inventory management is especially tricky during the holidays. Order too much, and you risk winding up with shelves full of unsold merchandise. Order too little, and you might miss out on revenue. Your best bet for avoiding either pitfall is to examine your sales and usage data from previous years to zero in on how much inventory to order. Use that as a baseline, then consider other factors like trends that might influence sales or insights you may have into your customers' spending habits.

Now that you have a good idea of how much business you can expect, start stocking up on inventory ahead of the rush. If you're in a service industry, you can stockpile must-have supplies. If you're in retail, you can fill your inventory with hot ticket items. The earlier you order, the more likely you'll have everything you need when the holidays shift into high gear.

## Prepare packing supplies for shipping

If your business plans to ship a lot of what it sells this holiday season, you'll also need to estimate your shipping needs. Your sales forecast can come in handy here, as it can tell you how much you're likely to ship. Based on that, you can make an educated guess on how much packing and shipping material you'll need for the season.

Stocking up on shipping supplies isn't as delicate a dance as ordering inventory. In general, it's safe to err on the side of more supplies. Shipping materials don't go bad, so as long as you have somewhere to store them, having extra isn't a problem. As the saying goes, better to have it and not need it, than need it and not have it.







Managing

staff

3



# Pay special attention to staff

Good customer service can set your small business apart from the competition, so you'll want staff to bring their best selves to work during the holidays. That's especially challenging in the thick of the holiday rush, when the extra volume brings extra stress. Your team will need your support to keep both their morale and quality of work high.

As an owner or manager, lead with compassion. Start by convening huddles with your team at regular intervals. You can use this time to share tips on managing the work itself or the stress it creates. You can also encourage anyone who's struggling, congratulate your stars and thank everyone for their hard work. Don't be afraid to reward the team! When employees know you appreciate their efforts, they're [more likely to shine](#) when you need them.





# Look for room for improvement



The holiday season is anything but business as usual, and your typical processes may need some massaging to ride the wave successfully. One example: under normal circumstances, you might update your inventory on a weekly basis. During the holiday rush, stock can move much more quickly than usual. Switching to daily inventory updates can keep you better informed about your sales, but it may mean leaving the register earlier in the day to do back-office calculations. You'll need to put another employee at checkout to keep things running smoothly.

Review your day-to-day operations to find any spots where the increased volume of the holidays might cause stress. Try to remove bottlenecks and plan around time-intensive tasks to keep the gears turning smoothly. The rush means some of your employees may have to chip in and do tasks they're normally not responsible for, so train them thoroughly and provide any support you can.



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# Encourage early PTO requests



## Employees have lives outside of work, too.

They're likely to want some time away from the job during the holidays. Whenever possible, try to accommodate them: the more flexible you are, the more supported they'll feel.

To make things easier for both you and your team, encourage workers to get their time off requests in as early as possible. You can use that extra lead time to work around any potential staffing issues. As you field requests, keep an eye out for any gaps that might open in the schedule. If you have the option, consider hiring seasonal employees to plug those holes. That way, you won't lose out on operating hours even as your full-time workers enjoy their time off.



Marketing

& promotions



4





## Prepare seasonal deals & offers



Offering customers something special can help you make the most of the holiday season. Promotional tactics like discounts, bundles and freebies can help you stand out among your competitors and give your customers a great deal on the items they want. Finding a clever way to work the holiday into your promotions can make them even more memorable and successful.

Some businesses pull in customers by offering discounts on big-ticket items. Others bundle several smaller items together or run membership programs. Only you can determine which strategy makes the most sense for your business. Make sure that whatever you land on is clear to your customers and easy to understand.

Once you've decided on your approach, it's time to start promoting your offerings. Let's run through your marketing options.

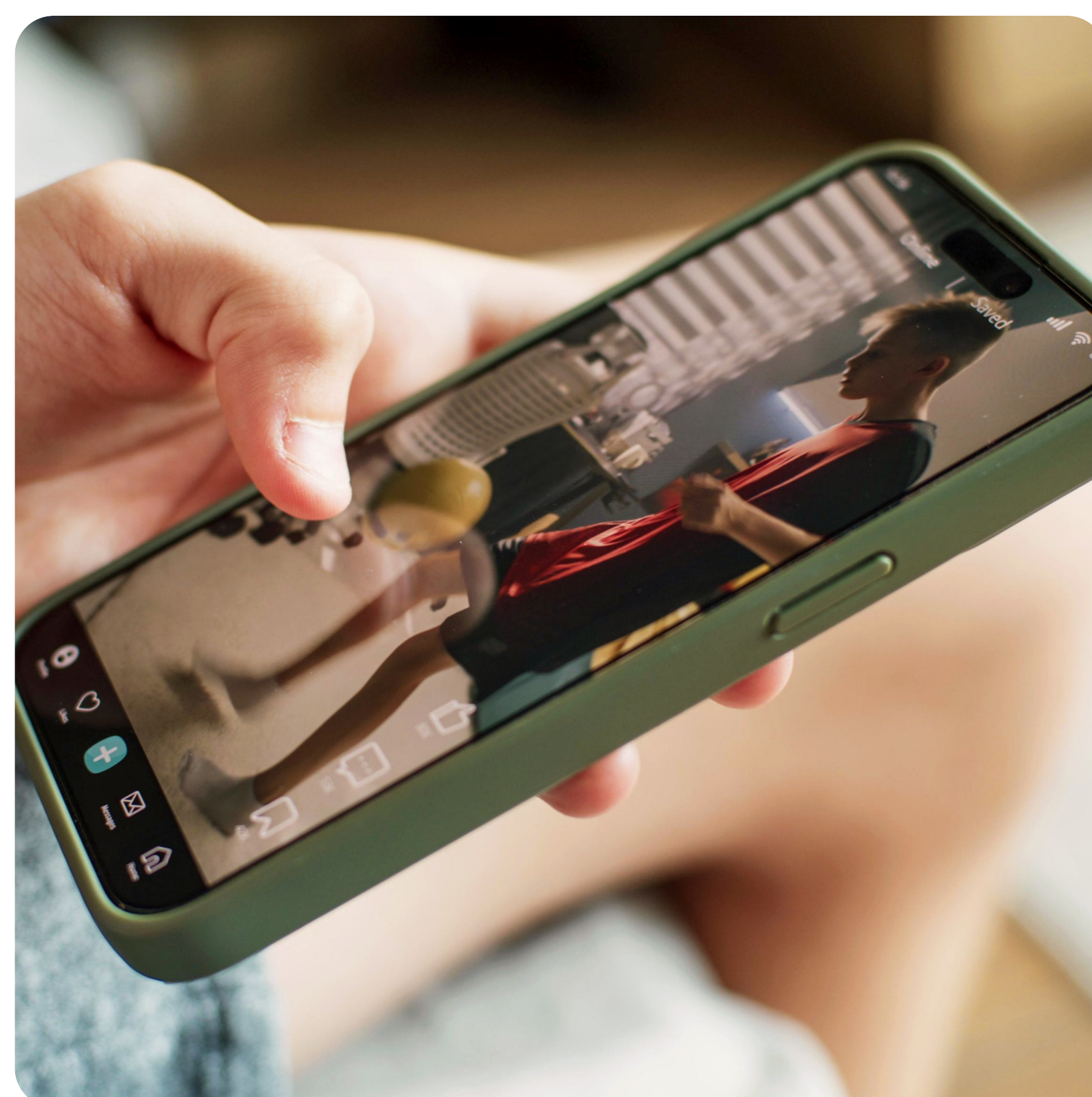


# Social media

The lead-up to the holidays is a great time to refresh your social media presence. Start by making sure your address, hours and other important information is up to date. Next, beef up your profile by uploading new photos and videos that show your business in action. If you've set up holiday decorations, now is a great time to show them off. At the same time, try to emphasize what makes your business unique. Your revitalized profile will serve as the foundation for the rest of your social media efforts.

One of the most meaningful factors in building a following online is to post frequently and regularly. Before you're awash in holiday business, take the time to build out a content publishing calendar. What do your customers want to learn? What promotions do they need to know about, and when? Planning your posts ahead of time can break posting into more manageable chunks.

Once users start to interact with your page, you can show them you care by responding to their questions and comments. The human touch is what makes small businesses special, so don't be afraid to show a little personality!







# Your website

Whether they're looking for your hours or hoping to book a haircut, there's a good chance your customers will visit your website. The information they find there needs to be up to date, especially if the holiday season is causing temporary changes. It should also be impossible to miss, whether they're on desktop or mobile. Try visiting your website from your phone to make sure everything looks good.

While you're there, try clicking through all the links on the site. Do they take you where they're supposed to? Do any of them lead to error pages? If you sell items or services online, can you check out smoothly? Answer these questions now, and you'll avoid having to repair your site during the rush.



## Email

Email marketing is among the most effective ways to reach an audience. You can use it to promote new arrivals and sales, inform customers about your holiday hours or share insights on your business. Because emails fly straight to customers' inboxes—customers who must have already demonstrated interest in your business, or else you wouldn't have their email address—they benefit from pinpoint accuracy and an excellent return on investment.

To make your email marketing even more effective, try breaking your audience down into groups. What patterns can you find? What demographic traits and hobbies do they share? Separate your customers into groups based

on these characteristics to create segments. From there, you can design marketing campaigns specifically tailored to each one. When you do, your campaigns will grow that much more effective.

You can get even more granular by personalizing marketing emails. Marketing software can look at a customer's purchase history and use an algorithm to recommend other items they might like. It can then include those recommendations in your email marketing, giving your customers personalized attention without additional input. If they're looking for holiday gift ideas, those recommendations can be especially helpful.



# Partner with other local businesses



As powerful as online marketing can be, in-person efforts are still just as important for small businesses. Collaborating with other businesses in your area is one great way to draw in customers. That starts with owners recommending one another's services, whether that's through word of mouth or with posters and cards distributed at their businesses.

By partnering with other businesses, each of you can encourage your customers to patronize the others. For instance, your art gallery might serve coffee from a local roaster, giving your patrons some refreshment and the roaster some shine. Alternatively, you could use referrals to nudge customers more directly. A veterinarian might refer dog owners to a groomer in the area, offering a special discounted rate to its customers. Finally, a service business like a hotel might work with another service, such as a local spa, to expand its offerings. Customers might have the option to buy a package from the hotel that includes a day at the spa at a reduced rate.

Whatever form they take, these partnerships can build a culture of mutual support in your local community that pays dividends over the long term.

## About Walmart Business

The more you prepare, the more smoothly you'll handle the holiday season—but there's always more to learn. For more expert insight on making the most of the holidays, choosing inventory management software or sourcing teaching supplies, visit the [Walmart Business content hub](#).

Here's another tip: Make a free [Walmart Business](#) account today, and you can save on holiday must-haves. From [packing tape](#) to [festive lights](#), shop Walmart Business for budget-friendly prices. Want to save even more? Start your [Walmart Business+](#) membership and you'll get free shipping,<sup>1</sup> plus free delivery from a local store on orders over \$35.<sup>2</sup> [Click here to learn more](#).

<sup>1</sup>Excludes most Marketplace items, freight and certain location surcharges.

<sup>2</sup>Restrictions apply.





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