



The Link

to Supplier Diversity

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Event Calendar

- [Pay Audit Webinar](#) Dec. 9
- Gov. MWBE Commission Dec. 14
- [Certification Webinar](#) Dec. 15

More details can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/idoa/mwbe/2749.htm>

How to Connect



www.in.gov/idoa/mwbe

The Small Business Holiday Season Survival Guide

By Rob Marvin
pcmag.com

The holiday season is a long haul for small to midsize businesses (SMBs), stretching from Black Friday and Cyber Monday through late December. The influx of shoppers both online and in person presents a ton of logistical challenges for which to account—from keeping track of inventory assets to securing and ensuring smooth point of sale (POS) transactions.

Where retail giants like the Walmarts of the world have entire divisions devoted to innovating the retail experience, SMBs leave small teams or even just a sole proprietor grappling with not just how to handle the holiday rush but how to raise enough profit

to float the business through slower winter months. To that end, researchers at small business equipment and loan company Balboa Capital devised an infographic that includes a strategy checklist, a docket of online marketing ideas, and research on sales trends and shopping habits to help SMBs gear up for the most crucial sales period of the year.

Balboa Capital aggregated statistics from the National Retail Federation (NRF), U.S. Commerce Department, RetailNext, eMarketer, Bronto Software's 2015 E-Commerce Survey, and the Conference Board Consumer Index to chart the 2015 holiday shopping trends of which SMBs should take

notice. The NRF reported that 87 million shoppers visited shopping malls, strip malls, and freestanding retail outlets on Black Friday in 2014, with another 45 million shoppers on Thanksgiving Day and a total of \$51 billion in sales over Black Friday weekend. One in five millennial customers shops on Black Friday.

This past September, the Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index was 103, up from 101.3 in August, and its Present Situation Index reached an eight-year high of 121.1 in September. Balboa Capital said increased consumer confidence and a decreased unemployment rate, down to 5.1 percent in September from

5.7 percent in January, will both lead to greater holiday spending. The NRF predicts total holiday sales from Black Friday through Christmas Eve to reach \$630 billion, a 3.7 percent increase over 2014.

The first thing SMBs should do is make a checklist to ensure preparedness for

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SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING IDEAS

More Ways to Engage Your Customers and Drive Holiday Sales

- Run a Social Media Contest
- Promote Holiday Sales Online
- Send Holiday-Themed Emails
- Host a Holiday Kick-Off Event
- Offer a Free Gift With Purchase

The Small Business Holiday Season Survival Guide (Cont.)

the holiday rush on all fronts—from the warehouse and storefront to the website. Balboa Capital recommends some common sense tips like stocking up on inventory, hiring part-time employees for the month, and testing your website to ensure it can handle the traffic spike and prolonged traffic loads throughout the month. Investing in a website monitoring tool is a worthwhile strategy here.

Carla Freberg, Sales Manager at Balboa Capital, also said SMBs should offer free or discounted shipping, and use promotions and incentives to capitalize on shoppers searching for bargains when gift shopping for family members, friends and co-workers. "Stretching the holiday dollar is one goal of most shoppers," said Freberg.

"Extending business hours makes sense because it helps SMBs compete, albeit on a smaller scale, with the large and medium-sized retailers and restaurants. Festive décor creates a fun holiday atmosphere at all types of small businesses and can keep customers happy and in the holiday shopping spirit, which can help make the cash register ring."

Your holiday marketing and sales strategy should also take changing consumer shopping habits into account. According to Balboa Capital's aggregated research, 50

percent of consumers now begin holiday shopping in November, and 65 percent look for coupons on mobile devices. Freberg ran down several marketing ideas for

2. Promote Holiday Sales Online

"An SMB's website and social networks should promote holiday sales throughout November and December to create awareness," said Freberg. "Shoppers will be seeing countless deals online, so SMBs cannot afford not to do this."

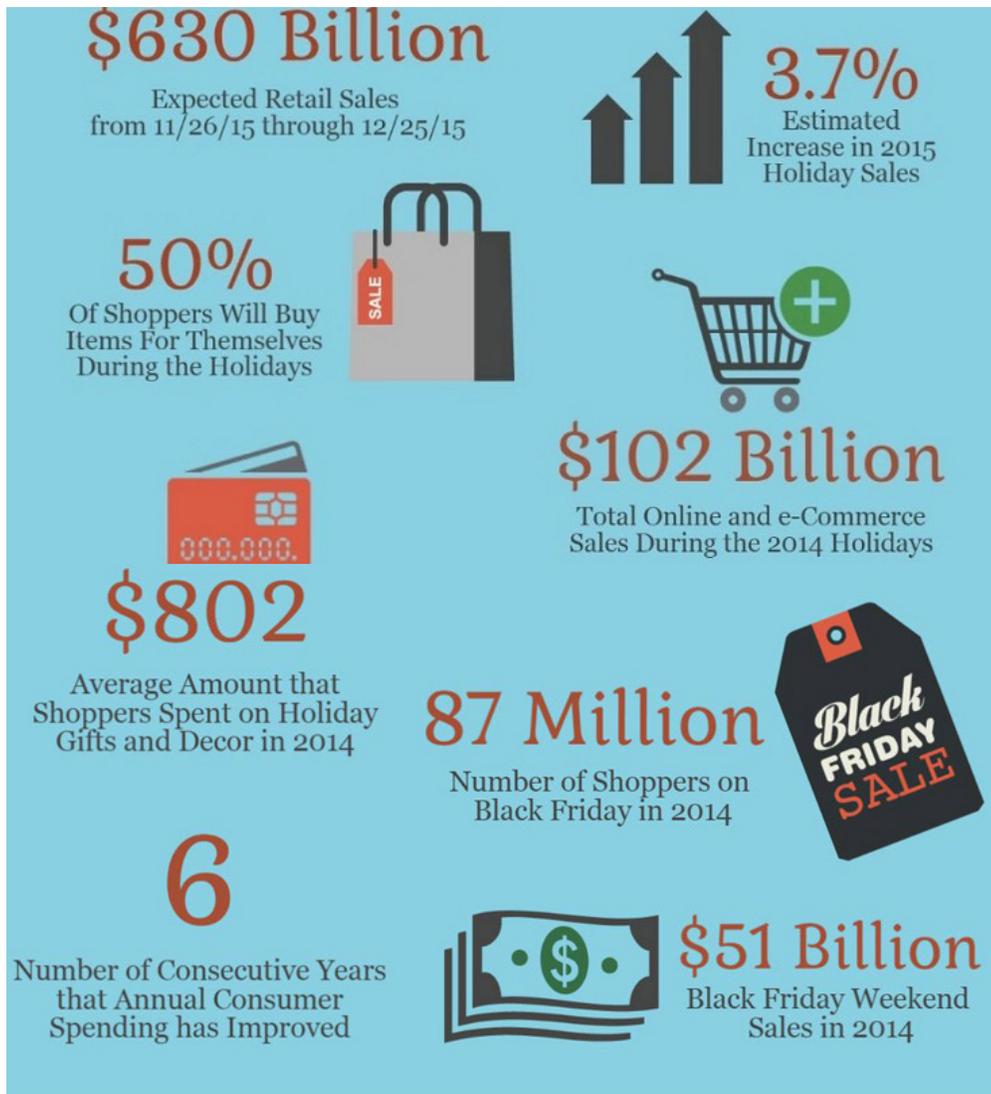
3. Pay-Per Click (PPC) Advertising

Create small ads that promote your holiday specials and place them on search engines. Each time the ads are clicked, you are charged a set price. When users click your PPC advertisement, they're directed to the relevant page on your website. Balboa Capital recommends your business outsource PPC advertising to an independent Web specialist or

search engine optimization company.

4. Send Holiday-Themed Emails

"Follow CAN-SPAM rules for commercial email messaging, and send holiday-themed emails that invite customers and prospects to take advantage of special holiday sales and offers," said Freberg. "SMBs that use email marketing must give recipients the option to stop receiving emails, so they should consult with an email marketing company or small advertising agency to ensure that best practices are used."



small businesses to drive holiday sales by leveraging the online (and sometimes analog) technology at their disposal.

1. Run a Social Media Contest

"This is a cost-efficient way to engage with customers and prospects during the holidays," said Freberg. "For example, an SMB might decide to give away gift certificates to lucky followers who post the best holiday-themed images via social media that feature something relative to the SMB's product/service."

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The Small Business Holiday Season Survival Guide (Cont.)

5. Host a Holiday Kick-Off Event

"SMBs of all types can start the holidays in style with an event that attracts shoppers from their local community," said Freberg. "It can involve holiday décor and signage, live music, a local press release, and holiday promotion or discount for attendees."

drive sales for specific items while providing a nice incentive to customers. A good strategy is to offer a free gift with purchase that works with the product that is being purchased. For example, a drill bit set might be a free gift with the purchase of a high-end drill."

6. Free Gift With Purchase

"Most big-box retailers offer aggressive promotions during the holidays to entice shoppers, and SMBs can do the same without breaking the bank," said Freberg. "Offering a free gift with purchase can help



Welcome New Director of Certification



Amy Wolf
Division of Supplier Diversity
Director of Certification

The Division of Supplier Diversity would like to welcome its newest team member, Amy Wolf. Amy has joined our division as the Director of Certification.

Amy comes to the division with a strong background in administrative law, compliance and management. Amy received her bachelor's degree from Purdue University and her law degree from Indiana University – Robert H. McKinney School of Law.

Except for a brief stint owning her own law practice, she has worked for state government for most of her career and enjoys knowing she is helping the citizens of her home state. "My goal in this position is to assist business entities with the certification process and to enable the division to increase the efficiency with which applications are analyzed while still maintaining the integrity of the review process."

Connect with
Amy on LinkedIn

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Sudoku

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive.

7		9						
								4
		6	2	8				
3	5						7	
		1						6
	8	2	4					3
				7				
9		6	2					
						9	8	

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Sudoku Solution:

2	7	3	5	9	4	6	1	8
8	6	9	7	1	3	5	2	4
1	4	5	6	2	8	7	3	9
3	5	1	8	6	9	4	7	2
7	9	4	1	3	2	8	5	6
6	8	2	4	5	7	1	9	3
4	3	8	9	7	1	2	6	5
9	1	6	2	8	5	3	4	7
5	2	7	3	4	6	9	8	1