

Tackling Black Friday in 2020

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The 2020 version of Black Friday is less than six weeks away. Set for the 27 November this year's edition could be quite arguably one of the more important retail days of the past few years. Given the context of the year so far and the devastating impact the pandemic has had across the retail landscape.



Image by [Linus Schütz](#) from [Pixabay](#).

A day traditionally one for e-commerce in the years gone by, Black Friday has very much been adopted by the brick and mortars with great enthusiasm. This year, the playing field has shifted dramatically with rapid adoption and investment in online shopping by the bricks, a day that used to be clearly the domain of the fashion, and tech online pure players are now seeing challengers from all angles.

If a brand has not started planning for Black Friday, it goes without saying that you maybe consider starting. Stat!

But where to even start?



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Get your organic listing sorted asap! (also known as SEO)

A quick Google search for 'Black Friday 2020' already sees two of the largest brands rank in pole position in the search results from an organic perspective and will be unlikely to be dislodged.

An ex-colleague of mine, one of the better SEO types I have come across, instilled the importance of ranking in Google for your pages early.

- It's considered a 'free' channel
- Organic visitors tend to convert at a higher percentage
- Organic play directly into the top funnel
- Strong contextual opportunity to grow your database opt-ins
- Time to Build up your PageRank score by linking back to your Black Friday page from within your key pages, social properties, and external partners such as publishers, etc)
- Lastly, make sure it read well on mobile

(*PageRank, in a nutshell, is a score Google gives a page by looking at the quantity and quality of other pages that link to it)

Utilise your prized asset – 1st party data

The main question to ask here is, 'What is your audience strategy for Black Friday?'.

Budgets are seriously under strain, constantly questioned, interrogated, or even cut to the bare minimum thanks to 2020. The archaic approach to targeting everyone just simply cannot work without significant wasted.

In using 1P correctly, with some planning behind it can only impact a paid strategy positively. But there is the groundwork to do.

Across the major Google ad platforms and Facebook, there are features known as, Customer Match, Lookalike, and Similar audience. All really the same thing just with different setups in platforms.

The concept remains the same, by using your 1P data and uploading into the platforms (seed list), they will in turn return a 'mirror-like audience' to your seed list for you to then 'target' the most like users that match your own audience.

The types of audience lists that can be created are only limited to your data on hand. Some suggested list for illustration could be:

- Users that have checked out with a credit card
- Users that have greater than R1000 basket size on last purchase
- Users that purchase only on discount
- Users that have purchased children's product
- Users that have purchase tech
- Users that have the highest life-time-value

These lists can concurrently be negatively matched to ensure you not spending paid media on 'discount' shoppers and rather on the more 'profitable' segment.

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Determine what your paid strategy mix will be

It keys to not get overzealous and try to be everywhere at once. This makes it difficult to optimise towards and maintain cost metrics for the campaigns. A pragmatic approach is usually best looking at what skills are on hand to execute, what platforms or channels offer from a differentiation point of view, historical performance, and are there any opportunities to build on.

Black Friday is an extremely cluttered event, most ads look the same, save x off, biggest deal, be selection, and so forth. Nothing really shooting the light out. What has to be considered is the user is shopping around, looking for the best option, and trying to get there fast.

One critical consideration is your cost KPI's and how you approach these. As expected from heavy sale periods these would look lower, and at face value great compared to the rest of the year. However, performance does not work in isolation to the business. With the nature of the event and the objective to drive prices down but still make a margin, both the retailer and brand are taking large chunks of their margins so cost management is imperative.

1. Ramp up the upper funnel activations before the fact – media across the publishers, including Google, Facebook, with an increase in price so getting that brand awareness now with help with costs. A few benefit here:

- Build audience lists with those users showing interest by clicking to site for remarketing on Black Friday
- Allows for a larger 'share of voice' in the market, reach is the objective
- Build lead-based lists i.e. such as subscriptions or app installs.

2. Ensure the paid search is optimised to catch more brand search terms. This is key due to:

- Organic won't be able to catch all brand terms as competitor ads will push this listing mid-page
- Expect brand search to account for a higher spend and allocate budget from top-funnel the closer we approach Black Friday.

3. Consider performance model partners. Affiliates models are less sexy from a digital marketing view, however, their place in the mix cannot be discounted with the cost model based on a successful conversion and thus the 'risk' passes to the publisher rather than the brand and you only pay for that sale.

The best-laid plan one thing, the message, content, or more rudimentary put the 'hook' is what can bring the plan together. Drive that excitement with a real loss leading the deal, determine what users are really looking for in past search results and onsite browsing behaviour, what converted over black Friday more than previous sale events. Then give the relevant offers to your customers as there is a huge chance you will be able to cross-sell once they landed on your site.

Lastly, the consumer's attention is a premium commodity during Black Friday getting the message as clear as possible is crucially important.

ABOUT GRAHAM DU PLESSIS

Experienced digital and marketing professional, with an interest in ecommerce, product development and customer experience. Started in the march environment before moving into the retail environment at Zando, rising quickly into the management space first as the head of mobile and then heading up the groups marketing initiatives. Currently at one of South Africa's leading performance agencies, Incubeta, managing a client portfolio within the financial and retail space.

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