

The Gift That Keeps on Giving: Post-Holiday Learnings

1 Analyze the Numbers

What KPIs met or missed goal last season, and why?

- ❑ **Outcome Analysis.** Compare your actual KPIs with your original holiday forecast — from impressions to profit, if possible.
- ❑ **Share of Voice Assessment.** Look at your [impression share \(IS\)](#) to get an idea of how much of the holiday shopping demand you captured.
 - ❑ **Tip:** Calculate total available impressions (divide impressions served by 1 minus Lost IS) and trend this metric over time with your impression count. Focus this analysis with exact match impressions.
 - ❑ **Tip:** Trend Lost IS (rank) throughout the quarter to find times you had to bid down on seasonal head terms because of limited available budget.
- ❑ **Keyword Activation.** Compare when you activated or bid up your seasonal keywords with when search interest actually began by using [Google Trends](#).
- ❑ **Bid Optimization.** Compare your CPA targets with spikes in conversion rates and order values on key shopping days for any profitable bid opportunities.
- ❑ **Competitive Analysis.** Assess your relative position with other advertisers using [auction insights](#) over the holidays since it's such a competitive timeframe.
 - ❑ **Tip:** Trend CTR and conversion rates throughout last season and recall if competitors ran aggressive promotions that could have affected performance.
- ❑ **Cross-channel Analysis.** Compare KPI performance with other digital channels and discuss similar trends and major differences.

2 Gather Ideas

What worked well and what could've been improved last season?

- ❑ **Reporting Needs.** Identify additional metrics for your KPI dashboard that could have alerted you to opportunities, spend inefficiencies, and budget needs last quarter.
 - ❑ **Tip:** Be sure to track your holiday budget's "burn-rate" next year (actual spend to-date divided by budgeted spend to-date) ensuring you have enough budget for peak shopping days.
 - ❑ **Tip:** Add the total available impressions metric mentioned earlier as a good way to track holiday demand captured next year.
- ❑ **Team Communications.** Identify information gaps for your team or from your client during this past holiday season that affected performance.
 - ❑ **Example:** Revenue performance updates that could've affected bids.
 - ❑ **Example:** Mid-season promotional changes that could've changed creative.
- ❑ **Productivity Analysis.** Identify workflow inefficiencies last quarter that slowed campaign updates needed to take full advantage of fleeting holiday traffic.

3 Plan & Prepare

What are your key initiatives this year that will set you up for success come next season?

- **Plan.** Forecast KPIs for the next holiday season using year-on-year trends.
 - **Tip:** Use your account data and [Google Trends](#) to see which products are growing fastest leading into the holidays.
 - **Tip:** Segment out mobile traffic in your forecast to assess how it's affecting overall performance year-on-year.
- **Brainstorm.** Ideate initiatives and suggest resources that target your riskiest KPIs for next Q4.
 - **Example:** If you need to reach more shoppers, make sure your [product listing ads](#) are set up in time for the next holidays. Their contribution to the success of retail accounts will only grow this coming season.
 - **Example:** If you need to improve conversion rates, consider testing new landing pages or different promotional offers.
- **Communicate.** Speak with cross functional colleagues and account teams to stay abreast of their plans.
 - **Example:** Understand how potential new products will affect your keyword expansion and budgets.
 - **Example:** Know when your site goes into year-end "code freeze" for project management.
 - **Example:** Ask your Google account team to whitelist you for beta tests that could grow your account or improve workflow for the next season.
- **Recommend.** Propose a Q4 budget to stakeholders using your forecast and initiatives as a business case.
 - **Tip:** Know which parts to cut if you don't get all the budget you need.
- **Implement.** Start a project plan and assemble a working group for the approved initiatives now.

And don't forget to thank everyone (teammates, managers, agency, account team, and vendors) for a thorough post-holiday analysis and productive planning process.

Here's to an even better holiday season in '14.