

Medallion Fulfillment & Logistics

20675 Nordhoff Street
Chatsworth, CA 91311
Phone: (800) 260-8250

How to Sell More and Make More Money This Holiday Season

The holiday selling season is rapidly approaching and it is time to get aggressive in order to beat your 2010 sales results. With consumers being slow to open their wallets this past year, what is the potential for a profitable end to the year of 2011? Shoppertrak, the self-avowed world's leader of retail intelligence, is projecting a 3% increase in sales in both November and December for brick and mortar stores. eMarketer is predicting a 12% increase in online sales for this holiday season. These projected increases in sales however, may come at a price; with greater competition for online and in-store spending through discounting and free shipping offers.

Several online retail sales projection firms are stating that they expect spending to be up across the board this 2011 holiday season. In a recent news article, seven traffic analysis firms agreed that consumers will spend more this holiday season but of those interviewed, more will be shopping for the very best price. For ecommerce merchants the sales and profit picture looks even brighter. With \$33 billion sold online in 2010, eMarketer is projecting a whopping 12% increase in sales for the upcoming 2011 holiday season.

So how can you get a piece of this retail action and be profitable in the 2011 holiday selling season? Here are eight tips that you can implement now to get a piece of the action, but don't wait to plan ahead as the holiday selling season is projected to start before Halloween this year.

1. Make sure you have enough stock at your [fulfillment house](#) now or due to arrive by mid-October to handle the influx of expected early holiday orders.
2. Forecast your stock positions and then buy now to open with a strong inventory. Have your backup orders already placed with staggered shipping dates to feed your holiday business, keep stock replenished at your fulfillment warehouse, and keep your sales online rolling.
3. If you see a slow-down in sales, cut your future shipping order quantities down or push your shipping dates back to remain profitable. Don't under stock your [fulfillment house](#) early in the season, as this can lead to lost sales, customer service headaches, and lost profitability (if you have to hustle to get items shipped to cover holiday sales at the last minute).
4. Make sure you are offering free shipping this holiday season! In a recent article, we talked about how [online shoppers expect free shipping](#) deals especially in the holiday season. According to comScore, a leading Internet marketing research company, during the first three weeks of the holiday season in 2010, 45% of all online transactions included free shipping, the percentage rose to 50% by the 21st of November, increased to 55% in the week ending November 28, and was still as high as 51% in the week ending December 5, 2010. Don't lose sales by trying to buck this important trend by squeezing a few more profit dollars out of a sale with consumer paid shipping and handling. Plan on getting increased volume to offset the drop in shipping revenue.
5. Start your online advertising programs early. Sales analysis firms are predicting that holiday promotions will start as early as Halloween this year. It appears that creative advertising combined with attractive pricing will be an important consideration. Steelhouse Marketing Consultants polled 1,000 consumers and reported that 31% of the women questioned stated that they will spend more time online than shopping at a mall. Be ready for this increase, by planning your Google AdWords or Microsoft adCenter online advertising promotions early.

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Have the programs set up, ready, and pre-approved so they can start immediately on your desired advertising start date.

6. Make sure you check your competition's pricing. There is nothing worse than having a great stock position with great marketing plans in place and then finding out that your competitors have undercut your prices. Sharpen your pencil and make your profit and sales from volume increases this season. If things slow down, get quick inventory turnover by offering a coupon code or three day sale event to clear over stocks out before you are sitting on unsellable inventory.
7. Harness the power of the Mobile Web this holiday season. [Use QR codes](#), mobile advertising programs, and low price guarantees to keep your sales flowing. With more consumers stating that they will use coupons for the first time this holiday season and price shop before buying, you need to get your business listed on mobile sites like FourSquare and Google HotPot now. Understand that more shoppers may even be searching online using their mobile phone even while standing in a mall store looking for a lower price. Make sure you can take advantage of this trend by having a mobile-friendly landing page for your advertising and featured items.
8. Get involved with social media. When Steelhouse Marketing Consultants interviewed 1,000 consumers, 12% of those surveyed mentioned that they would use social media to find and share the deals that they had found. Tap into that market by considering advertising your products using Facebook ads or Facebook Sponsored Stories this holiday season. You don't need to have deep pockets to get involved with Facebook advertising. You can set a Facebook Business Page up for free and post your specials and coupon codes there Additionally; you can advertise your products on Facebook for typically less than on Google AdWords and sometimes for under \$.75 per click.

With the holiday season accounting for about 30% of some businesses yearly sales, it's time to get planning! Remember plan early, carry enough stock to feed your sales, monitor and adjust orders as needed, offer free shipping, and think Mobile Web friendly! These are just a few important considerations to keep in mind to sell more and make more profit this 2011 holiday season.

About the Writer Jan Stewart

Jan Stewart is a professional writer for [Medallion Fulfillment & Logistics](#), a family owned [Los Angeles based fulfillment](#) firm. She writes exclusively for Strategies for Success on topics of business tips, how to promote your business online, and establishing your brand in the marketplace.