

Holiday Retail Checklist

Develop a strategy

To begin with, you should make sure that you have a comprehensive strategy to help you deal with the Christmas rush. Consider the resource demands that this period might cause. Do you have everything you need to help you cope? If you have been in business more than a year, look back over previous Christmas figures and use these to help you determine what to expect.

Stock Up

Make sure the store has plenty of bags, gift wrap, cash register tape, ribbons/ink, gift certificates and all the necessary office supplies. Examine inventory levels. Check the currency in the cash registers and determine how much petty cash you should keep on hand.



If you are expecting high numbers of customers, the chances are you will need to order in extra stock. As well as taking on seasonal items (for example Christmas-themed wrapping paper to offer a gift wrap service), you should consider bolstering your stock of perennial favorites. The items that sell well during the rest of the year are likely to sell even better over the Christmas period. In addition, high-ticket items may be popular amongst those looking for gifts. Finally, you should consider this year's 'buzz' items. What are the 'must-have' products in your industry this season?

Clean Up

If you expect to receive a lot of merchandise for your peak sales period, reorganize and clean up the stock receiving area. If frequently used items are accessible, it will reduce stress during the retail rush. A messy workroom only creates chaos and confusion.

Before it gets busy, conduct any needed maintenance to get the store looking its best. Schedule the floors to be polished or have the carpets cleaned. A fresh coat of paint will also go a long way to sprucing up walls.



Always important but now is the time to make certain that all of your light fixtures are working; your exit signs are lit, your fire extinguishers have been checked, your flooring and carpets have no turned up edges that can trip people, your POS and printers are working properly, your doors or door grills are in good repair, ceiling ducts are clean and dust free, fitting rooms are clean and welcoming, shelves are firmly in place to avoid accidents, no chipped glass anywhere, no rough edges on sign holders, the back room is well organized, the plumbing (if any) and any illuminated store signage is working properly. You won't want to be spending valuable on floor and customer time taking care of pesky maintenance issues that could be taken care of in advance.

☑ Make your shop festive

This applies whether you sell on or off line. Plan your Christmas decorations and make sure they are executed proficiently – a bad job will probably do more damage than good!

Think about window displays. Competition for customers is particularly fierce over the Christmas period. If you want to increase your footfall and really fulfill your potential, you need to make your premises as attractive and inviting as possible. Window displays are amongst the most important means by which you can achieve this.



Make sure that your window display is seasonally themed, and that your most desirable products and deals are prominently displayed. You should also try to develop displays that highlight the unique aspects of your company. Why should people visit your shop and not the one next-door?

It is important, though, that you do not feel confined by your premises. Rather than waiting for customers to come to you, why not go to them? Head out into the street and offer samples or vouchers to passers-by. This is a great way to entice people into your shop and generate a buzz on the street.

☑ Staff Up

Train the new staff well before the season begins. Be sure to schedule enough employees during peak periods. As the number of people who walk in goes up, it is important these new customers don't take all of your attention away from the regular customers.

Shoplifting may be a bigger threat at this time so consider hiring or increasing the store's security.

Many businesses find that they need to take on extra staff to help them deal with the Christmas rush. If you anticipate that this will be the case, you should be thinking about finding those workers now. Temporary workers from agencies are generally in high demand over Christmas and, while it might well be that fewer businesses are hiring this year, it is still worth arranging your temps sooner rather than later.

☑ Think about your website

You also need to think about the impact of the Christmas season on your website. If you are expecting higher customer numbers in your shop, it is likely that this increase will be reflected online. You may need to consider contacting your hosting company to make arrangements for potential spikes in traffic.

You should also think about SEO. The search terms users enter are likely to change over the Christmas period, and your SEO practices should take this into account. Consider developing Christmas-themed landing pages, or paying for festive PPC ads to increase your click-through rates.





☑ Rest Up

Remind your employees (and yourself) that in order to have a positive atmosphere for customers, they must be well-rested, pleasant and prepared to deal with any difficult situation. The best way to beat stress is by getting plenty of rest.

Remember to maintain break schedules during the retail rush. Just ten minutes away from the sales floor can renew a salesperson. Plan a party to celebrate with staff after the hectic period is over. They should be rewarded for their hard work too.

☑ Returns after the Holiday

Expect to see a number of returns immediately following your store's retail rush. Naturally, the more you sell--the more returns you may receive. Depending on the size of your retail store, consider allocating a specific area or one or more employees solely for returns. This will free up remaining staff members to deal with other customers, turn returns into sales and help prevent return fraud.

☑ Prepare for the after Holiday sales

Finally, you should also remember that the Christmas period is closely followed by the January sales. The sales are starting earlier and earlier; indeed, in many cases they now start on December 26th. Think about what your competitors are doing, and consider ways that you can take advantage of this vitally important period. For example, should you run a direct mail campaign to help drive customers? Should you send out an e-mail newsletter? Christmas is not the end of it – there are still lots of opportunities for sales in January.

Make sure you have similar plans in place (i.e. loyalty offers, sufficient stocks of products and packaging, etc.) for the post-Christmas period too.

