



**THE MARKETING  
UMBRELLA**

**HOLIDAY  
PROMOTIONS  
PLANNING; YES,  
IT'S THAT TIME!**

**THE DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN SEO AND  
SEM - AND WHY  
IT MATTERS**

**HOW TO  
CREATE IDEAL  
CUSTOMER  
AVATARS**

ISSUE 11

# CONTENTS

## 03 Holiday Promotions Planning; Yes, It's that Time!



You may feel like the holidays are a world away, but it's past time to start planning your holiday promotions for your retail business. After all, 43% of people start their holiday shopping before Halloween!

It's no secret that holiday shopping can be the difference between a successful year and a failed one for retailers. Holiday shopping can make up to 30% of a retailer's annual sales.

## 09 The Difference Between SEO and SEM – and Why It Matters



What is the difference between SEO and SEM? You will often hear the terms SEO (search engine optimization) and SEM (search engine marketing) used interchangeably. Learn the difference and why it matters.

## 14 How to Create Ideal Customer Avatars



Every business wants their marketing dollars to be spent effectively and successfully. We are all looking for a high ROI (return on investment). If you want to optimize your marketing campaigns for success and make your

marketing dollars count, you need to step back and build a foundation for your marketing. One of the first steps to do that is creating ideal customer avatars.



## Welcome to the Marketing Umbrella Magazine

The best source to generate more sales for your business with online marketing.

Each month we break down the complexities of a few key digital marketing strategies.

We keep it practical, so you can decide if you want to implement them in your business.

It doesn't matter if you're just starting out or an established business owner, you will benefit from harnessing the power of digital marketing.

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# HOLIDAY PROMOTIONS PLANNING; YES, IT'S THAT TIME!



You may feel like the holidays are a world away, but it's past time to start planning your holiday promotions for your retail business. After all, [43% of people](#) start their holiday shopping before Halloween!

It's no secret that holiday shopping can be the difference between a successful year and a failed one for retailers. Holiday shopping can make up [to 30%](#) of a retailer's annual sales.

The good news is, that consumers are feeling more confident this year, and [29% of holiday shoppers](#) plan to spend more than last year.

So, hang some festive decorations around your office and let's get going on your holiday promotions plan! Marketing across all channels such as [Pay Per Click ads](#), blog posts, social media posts, [Facebook ads](#), emails, etc., should reflect the upcoming holidays.

## 1. START EARLY

It's never too early to start planning for holiday promotions. By the beginning of October, you should have your plan fully formed and ready to pull the trigger. The end of summer is not too early to start planning for holiday shopping.

If you don't have your plan in place and you are reading this in October, get started immediately. Pull in outside marketers if necessary. There is a lot at stake.

Sure, some people wait to the last minute to shop, and you should have special promotions for them. But we have already seen that a big percentage of people are already holiday shopping in October. You want to get into their heads as soon as they start thinking about the holidays.



## 2. SET GOALS

The holidays are so important to retail businesses, that there may be a tendency to jump in and start lobbying marketing initiatives at anything that moves. Resist that impulse.

Stop a minute and determine what you really need to accomplish with your marketing.

- Your goals need to be specific not just “increase sales” or similar.
- You need to be realistic. What can you really achieve during this holiday season?
- Make sure your goals are relevant to holiday marketing. Don’t include everything you want to accomplish next year. That’s another plan.
- Specify what target markets you want to hit particularly hard.
- Set time frames for your campaigns and what you want to accomplish within each time frame.
- Finally, make sure you include how to measure your efforts so you know how successful you have been and whether you need to tweak what you are doing.



### 3. PUT FEELING INTO YOUR HOLIDAY MESSAGING

The messages you send your customers during holiday promotions should be consistent with your year-round messaging but not the same. You want to promote the holidays of course. You also want to lean heavier on emotional appeals.

We've seen time and again that consumers buy more with the heart than the head. This is particularly true at the holidays when people are thinking about getting together with loved ones and building memories. The holidays ignite a mixture of emotions that can encourage users to make your company part of their holiday shopping if you frame your appeal well.

People are feeling nostalgic, and that should be reflected in your messages and interactions. Don't be afraid to be transparent and show how your company is celebrating the holidays. Behind the scenes looks that show your company's humanity are increasingly important at any time, but more so at the holidays.

### 4. TIME YOUR MESSAGES FOR ULTIMATE IMPACT

It's not enough just to develop holiday campaigns across your channels. You need to be aware of when specific ads, email, social media posts and other marketing should drop. There are key shopping dates and periods in the holiday season. You must plan for them.

Think about messaging and offers for

- Early shoppers in October
- Black Friday (Nov. 25, 2022)
- Small Business Saturday (Nov. 26, 2022)
- Cyber Monday (Nov. 28, 2022)
- Last minute shoppers

Holiday shopping is usually a process rather an event. Most people are still shopping through the month of December even though they may start earlier. So, you will want to target messaging and campaigns throughout the entire shopping season not just for specific days like Black Friday.



## 5. DEVELOP WARM HOLIDAY DESIGNS

Whether for advertising, social media or relevant blog posts, your marketing leading up to the holidays should reference the holidays in both copy and design. Don't just throw a Christmas tree on an ad (nothing against Christmas trees) and call it a day. Give some real thought on how your ad or social media post design can evoke warm, positive feelings that people will then connect to your company.

## 6. RETARGET CUSTOMERS

The holidays are make or break it for many retailers. Now is the time to use all that data you've been collecting to retarget those who have visited your site.

If they return to your site, you can show them things they viewed or left in a shopping cart and related items. Remember, when people are holiday shopping, they often tend to pick up a little something for themselves.

You can also show them ads of these same items they viewed on your site as they travel around the Internet to other sites. Google is phasing out Chrome's use [of third party cookies in 2024](#), but for now you can still do it.

## 7. INVOKE THE POWER OF EMAIL

Email is a very powerful way to reach out to former customers. Also don't forget those who may have given you an email address but didn't buy anything or abandoned their shopping carts. You will, of course, want to send emails to those who abandon their carts reminding them the item is still waiting for them.



Send personalized emails to your customers and subscribers that tell them about your holiday promotions and any special products you have for the holidays. Segment your customers so you are sending email personalized to them beyond just calling them by name. Keep in mind [The 10 Musts of Email Copywriting](#).

Of course, you will also want to add holiday content to your regularly scheduled newsletter. Start lightly in October, because people are already holiday shopping then. Maybe suggest something great you are getting in for the holidays. But it's too early for heavy holiday design in your newsletter in October. Hit the holiday content heavier in newsletters in November and December.

## 8. BRAINSTORM OFFERS

Think about what special offers you can make at key points during the holiday shopping season that would be a win/win for both you and your customers.

Here are some possibilities:

- Free gift with purchase (The big cosmetics companies really have this one down.)
- Discounts triggered by an event such as buying a certain amount or buying a specific item. Or consider offering a gift card discount.
- Bundling items. You may want to offer a package of a popular item bundled with a related accessory or two, maybe ones that don't move that well. You give the customer a good deal and at the same time move more of your slower merchandise.
- Free shipping, possibly on certain items or if the purchase reaches a certain threshold.



## 9. ENGAGE YOUR CUSTOMERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The holidays are a time for good cheer, so engage your customers with something fun. Whether it's Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or Twitter, the possibilities are endless. Of course, each platform has its own features, but here are some possibilities:

- Holiday surveys can be fun and help you gather valuable information. Perhaps on a certain date there can be a drawing of those who answered for a gift card. You can mix questions unrelated to your products with a few that are about your products and use that data for targeting and segmentation. *What is your favorite Christmas movie? Who is your favorite reindeer? What would you most like to receive as a gift from our store? Where are you spending the holidays this year?*
- Photo contests can add a lot of welcome user-generated content for your company all over social media along with the hash tags you provide. The possibilities are endless, but here are a few ideas:
  - Ugliest Christmas sweater contest (a classic)
  - Best exterior Christmas decorations
  - Best decorated Christmas tree
- Quizzes are fun, and when people get a high score, they might share the results to their feed. It could be anything, such as "Name the Christmas movie each of these celebrities starred in."
- Polls are also fun and engaging. Once again, people often share them. An example might be *Which of these holiday meals would you prefer? Or Fruitcake, yes or no?*

There are many ways you can set up to engage, but more important is that your company answers comments and interacts with customers.

## NEED SOME HELP GETTING READY FOR HOLIDAY PROMOTIONS?

[Contact Results Pathfinder](#) for a free consultation on how we can help you make this holiday shopping season something to remember. Our experts can jump in immediately to help you make this the best year yet.

# THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEO AND SEM - AND WHY IT MATTERS



What is the difference between [SEO](#) and [SEM](#)? You will often hear the terms SEO (search engine optimization) and SEM (search engine marketing) used interchangeably.

There is a difference.

When you are communicating with your internal marketing team, marketing consultants or marketing agencies, if you do not understand the difference, this may result in a miscommunication that can point your team down the wrong path and put hurdles in the way of your success.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEO AND SEM IN A NUTSHELL

Put simply,

- SEO is the strategy and tactics to use organic methods to improve placement in search results.
- SEM uses paid methods to improve placement in search results.

If you do a bit of research, you are probably going to find references to SEM as encompassing both paid and organic search. But the Internet evolves, and today SEM is generally considered to cover search engine advertising while SEO means organic methods to push search results ideally to the first page of search engines.

Let's explore this in more detail.



## THE HALLMARKS OF SEO

SEO endeavors to improve search engine results organically in a variety of ways. These include technical SEO, content, on-page SEO and backlinks.

### Technical SEO

You should both build and maintain your website with an eye toward SEO. Important search engine ranking factors in the structure and function of your site include

- How useable the site is on all devices including mobile devices
- Loading speed of your site's pages
- Website architecture and navigation that enable search engines to easily crawl your site and find data
- Errors on your site such as broken links that affect crawlability
- Your site's indexing
- Your site's security

### Valuable Content

It's not enough to just throw any kind of content on your website and add some keywords. Google favors content that offers real value to the reader. Use your content such as blog posts to help support important pages on your website and push your audience to them.



## On-Page SEO

On-page SEO includes all the extra things you do every time you post content. That includes adding metadata such as title tags, meta descriptions to pages and images, and alt text to images that describes what is in the image. It also includes adding not only headings but also subheadings that are correctly indicated with header tags.

## Backlinks

If high authority domains link to your site, their credibility with search engines help to raise your site's credibility – and your site's search engine rankings. You can build backlinks in many ways. See [this article](#) and [this article](#).

## THE HALLMARKS OF SEM

SEM is essentially paid digital advertising including PPC (Pay Per Click) in order to get more eyeballs in search engine results. [Google Ads](#) is one very effective way of doing this. You can buy ads that appear at the top of search engine results. These can be virtually any kind of Internet ads including text search engine ads, display ads, YouTube ads and more.

## THE BENEFITS OF SEO

With SEO you are playing the long game, and you are not going to see results overnight. It can take months before you see much in the way of SEO results. But neither are you paying advertising costs with SEO. Your SEO efforts build on one another, and you see increasing returns over time.



## THE BENEFITS OF SEM

If you need to make a splash quickly such as when you are launching your company or a new product, you will want to supplement your SEO efforts with SEM. Paid advertising will give you much faster results than SEO.

The downside of this is that when you stop advertising, you will immediately lose the search engine visibility that advertising gave you. As we have already pointed out, this is not true with SEO.

## USE BOTH SEO AND SEM

With very few exceptions, businesses should use both SEO and SEM in their marketing. Use SEM to get immediate clicks and conversions. Use SEO to build a lasting Internet presence over time.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEO AND SEM SUMMARIZED

Both SEO and SEM are going to help your website's visibility in search engines and drive traffic to your site. For each of these, you need to do keyword research and target your audience.

### SERP Appearance and Placement

Although SEM can get you at the top of search engines almost immediately, users are going to see that you have placed a paid ad, because it will be marked as such. That means that most users will not consider these results as credible as organic results. On the other hands, paid ads appear at the top above organic results.



## Budget

Every time someone clicks on your paid SEM ad, it's going to cost you if you are using a PPC model.

If you gained search engine placement through organic SEO, on the other hand, it's not going to cost you a dime (beyond paying your SEO manager).

## Time

SEO is a slog. It takes months before you see results.

SEM can produce immediate results.

## Longevity

Your cumulative SEO efforts keep on giving for quite awhile. If you hit a slow time and need to reduce or even stop your SEO efforts, you are not going to see an immediate decrease in your search engine visibility.

But if you are running SEM campaigns and stop, all traffic and visibility from those campaigns end when you stop the campaigns.

## NOT SURE ABOUT YOUR MIX OF SEO AND SEM? RESULTS PATHFINDER CAN HELP

Results Pathfinder experts can analyze your business and recommend a mix of SEO and SEM that will be most effective for your business goals. They can then test, analyze results and refine your campaigns for optimum results.

[Contact Results Pathfinder](#) now and get started!

# HOW TO CREATE IDEAL CUSTOMER AVATARS



Every business wants their marketing dollars to be spent effectively and successfully. We are all looking for a high ROI (return on investment). If you want to [optimize your marketing campaigns](#) for success and make your marketing dollars count, you need to step back and build a foundation for your marketing. One of the first steps to doing that is to create ideal customer avatars.

Customer avatars are fictional representations of your ideal customers complete with personal details, desires, ambitions and challenges. Picturing ideal customer personas helps you to hone your marketing messages to the customers you really want and build relationships with them. It's just a lot easier marketing to someone you can picture rather than a vague demographic.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA

Typically, you don't sit down one day and just decide on the traits of your ideal customer avatars. Assuming your business isn't brand new, you can use customer data you have collected to help you determine some of the traits of your ideal customer avatars.

In addition to analyzing your data, you may want to interview or survey your best customers to get more refined input while fashioning your customer avatars.



## DEMOGRAPHICS AND KEY DRIVERS

When developing customer avatars, some of the traits you want to consider are those that are most advantageous for your business. These might include a person who gives you big orders, who returns consistently to order again, who gives you referrals and who gives you good reviews and testimonials.

Then you want to think about typical personal traits of this person. These will include demographics such as business role, age, gender, location and so forth. But you must go much deeper than mere demographics. You must consider what drives that person to make a buying decision. Are they a middle manager who wants to look good to upper management? Are they a CFO who wants to cut costs?

It's important that you get as detailed as possible when listing the traits of your customer avatar. It's marketing gospel that the more specific you can be in marketing to someone, the more effective you will be. You will grab their attention.

If you don't really know what drives them, your marketing campaigns are going to be bland and unworthy of their notice. Try to get under the skin of your customers, whether they are B2B or B2C. What triggers their emotions? What pushes them to buy?



When you create a customer avatar, go beyond the obvious. Heck, even name your customer avatars. In addition to demographics, here are some possible factors to consider:

- Your customer's goals both for the company and for themselves
- Their values. For example, if it's a corporate customer, are they all about the money or are they very socially responsible?
- What do they do in their spare time? What movies do they watch? Do they follow social media trends?
- How do they keep informed about both world events and industry news?
- What are the challenges they are facing that your product could solve? This is not going to be the same for all people. More on that in a moment.
- What objections is this avatar likely to have to your product? A CEO may have different objections than a middle manager for example.
- What is going to make your product just light up in the eyes of this particular avatar?

There are a lot of factors that can go into fashioning a customer avatar. You might have 15 factors, you might have 25, you might have some other number depending what is important to your business. Once again, the more detailed the avatar is, the more effective it will be.

Once you have a clear picture in your mind of that customer, it becomes far easier to market to them than just "women who are in their 30's" or "CFOs of businesses generating between \$5 million and \$25 million."

## THE WISDOM OF USING CUSTOMER AVATARS

Some businesses without strong marketing background question whether it is wise to focus on ideal customers rather than taking a shotgun approach and marketing to everyone. They are afraid of limiting themselves. They talk about the variety of types of customers they have.



But here's the thing. The broader your marketing approach, the less likely you are to attract the attention of customers. In other words, if you try to appeal to everyone, you will markedly decrease your appeal to anyone.

If you give this some thought, it only makes sense. Remember, people do not particularly care about your company. Whether B2C or B2B, they care about their desires and solutions to their problems and challenges.

If you can offer them something that fits neatly with their desires or challenges, you have their attention. If you are just talking about some generic product without showing how it can help them, or if you are just spouting off about how great your company is, you will never break through the clutter of the [4,000 to 10,000 commercial messages](#) people are exposed to each day. No, that's not a typo. That's what you're up against. So, your messages better interest your audience.

## MULTIPLE AVATARS

A customer avatar is not a description of a group of customers. It's a personification of an ideal customer, a person. If you analyze your very best customers, some commonalities for the largest percentage of them will become apparent.

You may have different ideal customer avatars for different products and services. Or, if you are selling B2B, you may need to run a gauntlet of sales meetings and get approval from multiple people. You will need a customer avatar for each of those.

In other words, you may need to develop multiple avatars. If you are selling B2B and need to sell to various departments, you can create an avatar for the final decision maker and each of the influencers.

However, if you have multiple avatars, you should be limiting your messaging to just one of them for a particular marketing campaign. If you are selling enterprise software for example, maybe the CMO, the CFO and the CTO have to sign off on the purchase. But their concerns are not the same. Here is an overly simplistic example:

- The CMO wants the new software to make it easier to market and make sales.
- The CFO wants to keep costs down.
- The CTO is concerned with rolling the software out across the company without causing chaos.

One ad is not going to address the concerns of all three effectively. Sure, you can stuff a lot of messages into one ad, but if you want to optimize sales, you will market separately to your various customer avatars



## EXAMPLE OF A CUSTOMER AVATAR

The level of detail of customer avatars may vary quite a bit, but here is one example:

Sarah is the 42-year-old CMO of a niche B2B Silicon Valley software company that is a few years old and has profits of \$25 million per year and growing. She wants her company to lead the market within the next two years.

She is concerned with ROI but is willing to spend money on technology to increase sales and support marketing at her company.

Sarah is ambitious and works a lot of hours. She would like the company to grow and go public, and she has stock dividends.

Though Sarah is concerned with profits, she feels it is important that corporations give back to their communities, and she is particularly concerned with the environment.

Sarah is loyal to both friends and colleagues, and when she finds a vendor she likes, she sticks with them.

Sarah has two children and enjoys French cooking and rock climbing in her limited time off.

Now this customer avatar represents a B2B customer, an executive at a tech company. A company that sells marketing technology might use such an avatar. But a dry cleaning business can just as easily form a customer avatar for their use.

## NEED HELP WITH MARKETING STRATEGY? CONTACT RESULTS PATHFINDER

Before you begin marketing, you need a solid strategy. While you work on your business, bring in experts to put you on the right marketing path. [Contact Results Pathfinder](#) for a free consultation.

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