

# 5 ways e-commerce startups can take advantage of Black Friday

According to Google Trends, last year South Africa registered the largest Black Friday search interest of any country, even ahead of the US where the retail mega-event was conceived.



“South African retailers first began promoting the Thanksgiving weekend double bill of Black Friday and Cyber Monday in 2014. Just three years later Facebook data shows that Black Friday 2017 was South Africa’s busiest online shopping day of the year. The biggest mistake that start-up e-commerce companies make is to think they are too small to benefit from this opportunity. Working with a solid plan will allow even new online stores a piece of the commercial pie come 23 November,” says DPO PayGate CSO, Brendon Williamson.

By investing in these five actions local companies can ensure a successful Black Friday:

## 1. If they can’t find you, they can’t buy from you

Using Pay Per Click (PPC) campaigns early on as well as making use of SEO and social media campaigns all help establish your legitimacy and help customers find and engage with you ahead of time.

“Over this promotional period, merchants have an opportunity to capture and increase their marketing reach. Don’t be

afraid to request that users sign up to your newsletter or like and favourite your social media pages so they can be the first to know about your Black Friday promotions. Black Friday campaigns are not about a once-off communication post but rather a series of posts and mentions to increase the hype and activity around this period,” explains Michael Richards, founder of SiteMeUp Online Marketing.

Richards also says many store owners make rookie mistakes when directing the traffic from these campaigns back to their sites.

“An important aspect of your campaigns should be the landing page users are directed to when your Black Friday campaign kicks off. Don’t take your users to a page where they must still hunt for the deals on your website. Take them directly to the page with your Black Friday promotions clearly visible.”

## 2. Have you got enough to sell?

Owner of three successful online e-commerce sites, Anneli van Rooyen, says many online merchants don’t realise either the opportunity or the risk of Black Friday.

“Last year we sold out of stock, which was great for the business, but merchants must remember that shortly after Black Friday and Cyber Monday, comes the festive season. This is especially important for those stores which are importing products to sell locally. Customs and international shipping can be unpredictable and even the slightest delay could see you on the backfoot when it comes to the busy Christmas selling period,” she warns.



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## 3. Make sure your site can handle it

Ensuring your website hosting is capable of handling the extra traffic is important. So too is testing checkout flows and eliminating bottlenecks in the purchasing process. Van Rooyen also points out that complex checkout processes can put shoppers off. No-one wants to fill out long and repetitive forms. Asking for fewer details is a conversion optimisation technique that moves users past the sign-up form to make their payment - keeping the process simple and minimising cart abandonment.

## 4. Make it easy to pay

Given the amount of work required to get shoppers to your site as well as building a user journey that is simple and fast, forcing customers to checkout with a payment method which doesn’t suit them is commercial suicide.

“Working with a payment gateway that can scale and that has the infrastructure in place to handle the high volumes of Black Friday is essential. Moreover, finding a payment partner that can support as many payment methods as possible is critical,” says Williamson.

“While the big online stores may be able to negotiate better transaction rates from their banks, smaller sites need not take a back seat when it comes to payment options. Debit and credit cards, payment apps like Zapper, PayPal, SnapScan and MasterPass as well as Instant EFT are all offered on our PayCollect package which is designed for start-ups. This ensures easy payment from desktop or mobile devices with one easy integration.”

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## 5. Don't drop the ball on the last mile

Good logistics must be in place. This is the last mile in the customer journey and inevitably will be the lasting impression in the minds of the shopper.

“A late delivery or a bad returns policy can mean the difference of securing a repeat customer and someone who will take to social media and give you a bad review. From the outset, e-commerce companies need to find the right partners to help design the most elegant customer journey possible,” Williamson concludes.

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