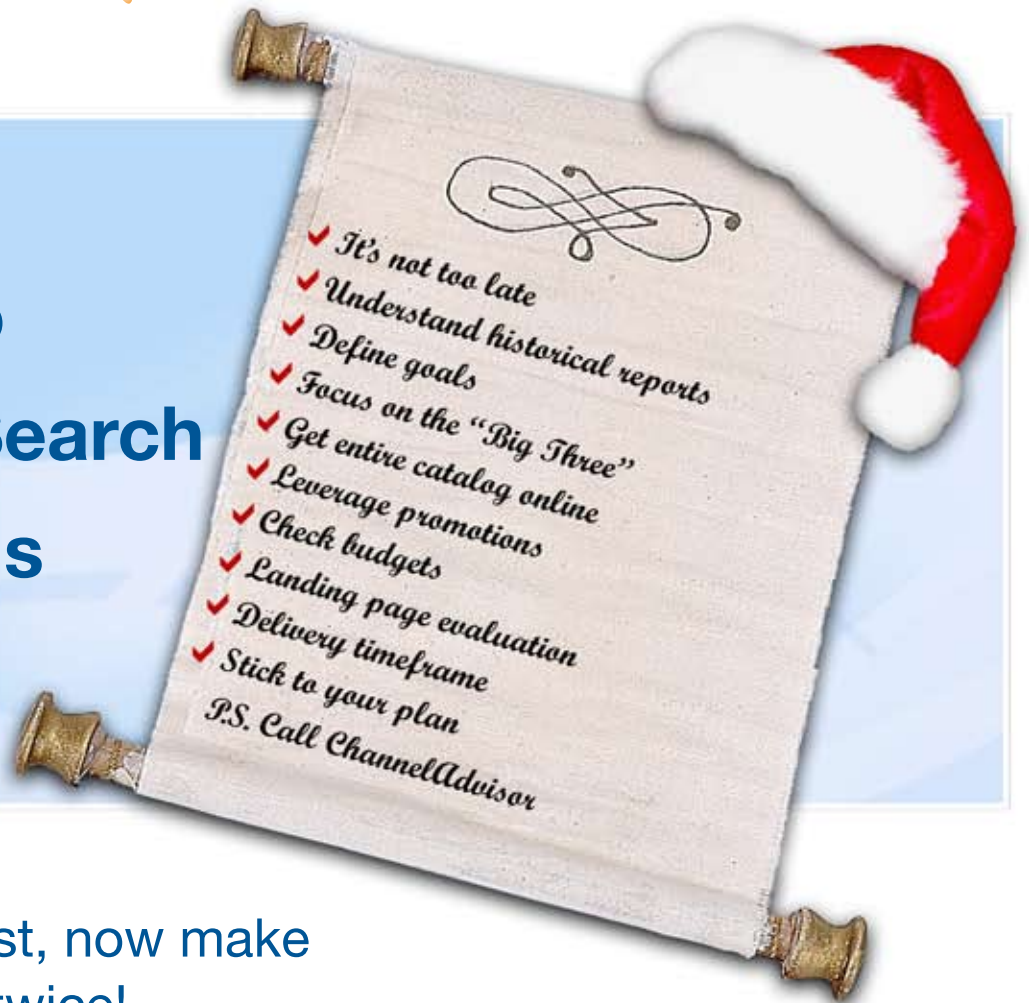




Holiday Checklist

10 Tactics to Avoid Paid Search Disasters this Christmas



We've made the list, now make sure you check it twice!

A checklist brought to you by the ChannelAdvisor Elves.

1 >>> It's not too late

It's less than 70 shopping days until Christmas and counting. If you haven't been under a rock somewhere, you should already have a Christmas paid search plan in place. If you are reading this, then you probably know you need to get moving fast. Don't worry, it's not too late. The following steps will get you on the fast track and focusing on the most important areas.

2 >>> Understand historical reports

Track data from Christmases past to predict exactly when holiday traffic will increase. First, combine your historical data from October 2006 through January 2007 with industry data. Then, plot your biggest days from 2006 to estimate your busiest days of 2007. Most importantly, identify your most profitable keywords from this year and previous years and make sure these keywords are active and not getting "flighted" or not appearing 100 percent of the time.

3 >>> Define goals

Establish an overall ROI (Return on Investment) goal for your paid search efforts. Then break this goal into goal areas based on margins. For example, you may sell a product that has a 10-percent margin. Avoid combining the goals for this specific product or product areas with another product or product area that has higher margins. Look for a solution with reporting that includes both the product and marketing costs for each keyword that was searched on and converted for these products.

4 >>> Focus on the 'Big Three'

Set up your accounts for efficiency. Since the "Big Three" search engines—Google, Yahoo! and MSN—essentially have the same structure, architect your accounts identically—including campaigns, ad groups, keywords and ads—so you can cut and paste changes. This makes life easier for you, improves your quality scores and allows for better budget control.

5 >>> Get entire catalog online

Add your entire product catalog online and then some. To do this, perform proper keyword research and consider adding:

- Category-level keywords that may be missing or have been bid down over the past year.
- Product-specific keywords that are relevant based on in-stock inventory.
- Product category names plus "gift" or "gift cards".
- Frequent misspellings and variations of your brand words.
- Vendor-brand keywords corresponding to the types of products you carry.

6 >>> Leverage promotions

Test creative messages, landing pages and promotions early. Once the season starts, it's risky to make major creative changes because it resets the click-through rate and gives affiliates and competitors a chance to enter and gain position.

Write ad copy ahead of time for all phases of the holiday season. Some engines allow you to create copy, pause it, and launch it when needed. If you offer free shipping and express shipping closer to peak holidays, integrate these offers into your ad copy.

Adjust messages as the season progresses. Consider a timetable for ad copy techniques:

- “Are you ready for the holidays?” theme in late September/October.
- More direct “Order now for free holiday shipping” theme in November/December.
- “Last day to ship” in Dec. 17-23 timeframe.

7 >>> Check budgets

During the year, you may open up your budgets or set targets higher than normal, but may not be hitting them. As November and December approach, you will likely come closer. Make sure these budgets correspond to what you are willing to spend. Have an open budget based on a specific ROI metric, meaning you are willing to spend whatever it takes to maintain a desired ROI. This is where automated bid managers come in handy.

The more campaigns you launch, the more control you have over whether keywords are getting “flighted” and also over your spend per day. Keep in mind that with Google, settings like ad scheduling, geo-targeting, conversion optimiser are all set at the campaign level.

8 >>> Landing page evaluation

Create Christmas-specific landing pages including promo pages and gift guides and measure their conversion performance. Perform ongoing landing page audits to ensure consumers are directed to the most relevant pages.

Check that promotions included in advertising creative are apparent on your website. Monitor landing pages with out-of-stock products and either bid the keywords down that point to that page, pause the keywords, or change the landing page to point to another relevant page.

9 >>> Delivery timeframe

Delivery is usually a factor in a customer's buying decision. If you include free delivery for all or part of the festive season, it will boost your revenue and conversion rates. Make sure you include compelling “Free Delivery” language in your ad copy. Also, include “remaining days to post” or other countdown verbiage.

Delivery methods like “Next Day Service” can entice searchers to click and buy, especially if they are last minute shoppers.

10 >>> Stick to your plan

Putting a Christmas paid search plan in place should get you well on your way to launching new account content. Then, stick to your plan. If you need help, refer to ChannelAdvisor's Holiday Search Success Blueprint in the [Seven Steps to Holiday Search Success](#) white paper. And as always, if you get behind, call us any time.

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