

The Midnight Manual

The ultimate BFCM preparation guide
for brands that never clock out

Expert Insights

8-point checklists

Peak season ready

From Discovery to Delivery

yotpo.

 eComOne

 Order Editing

 Visualsoft

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Ecommerce Never Sleeps, Athos Powers Every Moment

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Welcome to Your Night Shift

Ecommerce never sleeps.

While your customers are browsing, buying and abandoning carts around the clock, the countdown to Black Friday Cyber Monday is already underway. The brands that see the biggest results during BFCM aren't scrambling in November, they're laying the groundwork months in advance.

That's what this Midnight Manual is for.

Inside, you'll find practical checklists from some of the brightest minds in ecommerce, each focused on a critical area of BFCM success. From optimising site speed and delivering a frictionless checkout experience to strengthening site search, unlocking conversational commerce with WhatsApp, and much more, every checklist is packed with actionable steps you can start implementing today.

Whether you're looking for quick wins or building a comprehensive peak-season strategy, these expert guides are designed to help you prepare with confidence, avoid common pitfalls, and maximise every opportunity when the busiest shopping weekend of the year arrives.

So grab a coffee, work your way through each checklist, and get your store ready—because when BFCM arrives, ecommerce won't stop for anyone.

Feed Management Checklist: Optimising for Agentic Commerce, AEO & GEO



This Black Friday, a growing share of shoppers won't be typing into a search bar at all; they'll be AI agents (ChatGPT, Gemini, and the next wave of AI shopping assistants), discovering, comparing, and increasingly transacting on a customer's behalf. This is the shift to agentic commerce, and it's rewriting the rules of product discovery.

Under Google's evolving UCP standard, your feed isn't just an ad input anymore it's the machine-readable data an AI agent relies on to understand, rank, and represent your brand. **In agentic commerce, your product data not your website is what gets you discovered first.**

Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) and Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO) are now as critical to visibility as traditional SEO ever was. If your data is incomplete, an AI agent doesn't rank you lower; it excludes you entirely. Here's a 10-point checklist to get your feed ready for a shopping season where the customer might be an algorithm. **AI agents don't rank your ads. They answer questions with your data or someone else's.**



1. Audit your product data for AI-readiness with our Channel Assistant.

AI agents and LLM-driven shopping experiences need dozens of structured data points to represent a product accurately, not the handful of attributes legacy feeds relied on. Start with a full catalogue audit to find what's missing, inconsistent, or out of date before AEO and GEO signals can even be built on top of it. Solutions like Channel Assistant run continuous, automated feed audits and quality checks in minutes rather

than days, catching errors before they cost you visibility in AI surfaces during peak trading.



2. Fill in every attribute including the newer, agentic-commerce-ready ones.

Feed specifications are expanding fast, with new requirements around delivery timing, order minimums, video, and pickup costs all rolling out ahead of BFCM. In an agentic commerce world, missing fields don't just hurt ranking; they mean exclusion from AI-powered shopping surfaces altogether.



3. Lock pricing and promotional data before it goes live.

A mismatched price is one of the fastest ways to trigger a disapproval, and AI agents have zero tolerance for reconciling inconsistencies on your behalf. Precision matters more, not less, when a machine is the one deciding.



4. Keep stock levels close to real time.

As AI agents complete more purchases autonomously, stale inventory doesn't just frustrate a shopper it breaks trust with the agent doing the buying. Near real-time sync is quickly becoming table stakes for agentic commerce readiness.



5. Optimise product content for AEO and GEO, not just SEO.

AI agents and generative engines parse conversational, descriptive attributes: fit, materials, use case, reviews, product highlights rather than keyword-stuffed titles. Rich, structured, natural-language content is the new foundation for discoverability across search, answer engines, and generative AI platforms alike.



6. Get categorisation right for the AI product graph.

Beyond helping shoppers find the right products, accurate categorisation is what feeds the structured product graphs that Google, ChatGPT, and other AI platforms are building to power recommendations and agentic transactions.

7. Prioritise your hero products with custom labels.



Use powerful tools like Labels Manager to flag your best-sellers, highest-margin lines, and promotional SKUs.



8. Check your images against tightening AI and platform specs.

Consumers are shopping visually, so make sure your product imagery is ready. Include at least three additional images, lifestyle images that show the product in use, and high-quality images with a minimum resolution of 1500 × 1500 px. Great visuals don't just improve click-through rates they also help AI agents better understand and evaluate your products, making rich, high-quality imagery an important part of product discovery in the age of agentic commerce.

Feed quality has always mattered for BFCM performance. What's changed is who's doing the shopping. As agentic commerce, AEO, and GEO reshape product discovery, brands that treat their feed as AI-ready infrastructure not an afterthought will be the ones that stay visible when the customer is an AI agent instead of a person.

Your feed is your storefront. Let's build it together.



Maiwenn Cowley-Zam (May)

Head of Customer Success, Feed Management
EMEA at Athos Commerce

Product Discovery & Search Checklist



During Black Friday and Cyber Monday, customers arrive with a clear intent to buy. The retailers that win are those that make it effortless for shoppers to find the right products, quickly and confidently.



1. Audit Your Most Popular Search Terms

Review the search queries customers use most frequently and identify any that produce poor results or low conversion rates. Understanding what shoppers are looking for allows you to optimise the experience before peak traffic arrives.



2. Reduce Zero-Result Searches

A customer who sees no results is often a customer who leaves. Use synonyms, alternative spellings, abbreviations and redirects to ensure every search query has a meaningful outcome.



3. Prioritise Search Relevance

The products customers expect to see should appear at the top of search results. Review ranking rules and product data to ensure your most relevant, best-selling and promotional products are easy to discover.



4. Simplify Site Navigation

Not every shopper uses search; many prefer to browse. Clear navigation, logical categories and prominent seasonal collections help customers reach products faster and reduce friction during the buying journey.



5. Build BFCM-Focused Collections

Peak-season shoppers often browse by deal, budget or gifting occasion. Creating dedicated collections and landing pages helps customers discover relevant products and increases engagement with

promotional ranges.

6. Plan Your Merchandising Strategy



Product merchandising should support both customer needs and commercial objectives. Define in advance which products, categories and campaigns deserve greater visibility throughout the BFCM period.

7. Test Search Performance at Scale



Search becomes even more critical when traffic levels increase. Ensure your search experience remains fast, accurate and responsive under peak demand so customers can continue shopping without interruption.

8. Monitor Discovery Metrics Daily



Customer behaviour can change rapidly during promotional periods. Regularly reviewing search performance, zero-result rates and conversion data allows you to identify opportunities and resolve issues before they impact revenue.

Final Thought

BFCM success isn't just about attracting more visitors, it's about helping those visitors find what they want as quickly as possible. A well-optimised product discovery experience can have a significant impact on conversion, customer satisfaction and overall peak-season performance.

Athos Commerce is the only all-in-one intelligent discovery platform that connects shoppers to the right products across whatever channel they are shopping.



Catherine Foot

Senior Partner Marketing Manager at Athos Commerce

Checkout & Conversion Optimisation Checklist



Order Editing

Black Friday and Cyber Monday deliver something no other period can: a surge of first-time customers who chose you over everyone else. The brands that win long-term aren't just the ones who convert the sale, they're the ones who use the post-purchase experience to make that first-time buyer a loyal one. Here's what to have in place before the rush hits.



1. Set up checkout and post-purchase upsells specifically targeting BFCM buyers

Tens of thousands of customers are placing orders. Why stop their shopping journey at the cart? Personalised upsells at shipping info and right after "pay now" keep items-per-cart climbing.



2. Run your checkout & conversion A/B tests now, not in November

Generic "accessory slop" upsells are everywhere. Low-cost, high-margin add-ons work when mapped to related products, but they're not a catchall. A/B test them against high-intent options like recently viewed items and "complete the look" pairings to see what actually converts.



3. Don't miss out on the "Uber Eats" post-purchase Email/SMS upsell

Text or email customers after checkout to let them know there's room in their package for more BFCM deals. Letting customers add items to an

order within 60 minutes of purchase (shipped in the same package) is a BFCM win.



4. Let customers apply missed discount codes without contacting support

Customers move fast and forget codes. Letting them apply a discount post-purchase kills the anxiety of missing out, cuts cancellation requests, and turns a mistake into a delight moment.



5. Shift address validation post-purchase to cut checkout friction and fees

Don't let a typo cost you a sale. Validate addresses after "pay," with a one-click fix on the confirmation page. Zero validation fees on abandoned carts, no conversion risk, less warehouse chaos.



6. Audit your tracking stack now (if you can't measure it, you can't optimise it)

No dashboards on post-purchase conversion, upsell attach rates, or CS ticket sources before November means flying blind. Get clean data now so you can actually iterate.



7. Let customers edit their order at checkout, without losing them to the back button

Wrong size, credit card in hand: nothing kills momentum faster. Let customers fix item options in-flow instead of bouncing to the product page, and watch conversion thank you for it.



8. Build an ironclad CS triage protocol before the change-request avalanche

BFCM spikes bring a flood of "wrong size" and "change my address" tickets. Put self-service and clear escalation paths in place, and brief your team in October, not November.



Ben Panther

APAC Client Lead at Order Editing

WhatsApp Readiness Checklist



1. Defeat the Peak Inbox Noise:

With BFCM email open rates plummeting to just 4–5% due to inbox clutter, route your highest-intent marketing messages to WhatsApp, which maintains a 92% open rate in the UK (with 84% opened in the first 5 minutes).



2. Recover Abandoned Carts Instantly:

Over 70% of shoppers drop off at the payment stage. Trigger hyper-personalised WhatsApp reminders within 30–60 minutes of abandonment for a proven +20% recovery lift.



3. Reactivate Your Inactive Database:

Over 45% of average ecommerce databases sit entirely dormant. Run data-driven win-back campaigns to reclaim high-margin revenue from these already-acquired audiences before peak season starts.



4. Capture Verified Opt-Ins Early:

Secure explicit WhatsApp marketing and update consent at checkout or via high-converting website pop-ups to build your primary communication channel ahead of Black Friday, offer incentives that are available to customers in the BFCM window and then send the incentives as the window opens.



5. Provide Real-Time Logistics Clarity:

Peak season delivery delays trigger customer anxiety. Automate real-time shipping and delivery updates directly to chat to keep customers informed and protect your support team.



6. Deliver Pure Post-Purchase Value:

Retention revenue compounds when you stop hard-selling immediately after a purchase. Use the post-purchase window to share digital guides or short-form video tutorials on how to use the product.



7. Deploy One-Tap Troubleshooting:

If a customer is unhappy with a product variant or flavor, don't make them log in to a portal. Allow them to swap items or troubleshoot via interactive, one-tap chat menus.



8. Prioritize Two-Way Communication:

77% of consumers actively want to communicate with brands on a two-way basis. Use conversational templates with interactive buttons rather than sending flat, static broadcasts.



Connor Blakey

Partnerships & CS Director at GoKwik

Paid Traffic & Acquisition Checklist



Black Friday and Cyber Monday put your Google Ads account under pressure like no other time of year. Getting the fundamentals right beforehand can be the difference between capturing demand and losing budget to inefficiency. Here are eight practical steps to get your account ready.



1. Audit your account structure

Review campaign structure, ad groups and keyword themes to ensure they reflect your current product priorities. Remove or pause underperforming keywords and campaigns that could drain budget during peak periods.



2. Update budgets ahead of time

Increase daily budgets in line with expected demand well before BFCM hits. Sudden last minute increases can limit the Smart Bidding algorithm's ability to adjust efficiently.



3. Refresh ad copy and assets

Ensure ad copy reflects seasonal offers, discounts and urgency messaging. Update sitelinks, callouts and promotion extensions so they are live and accurate before the peak window begins.



4. Check Merchant Center feed health

For Shopping and Performance Max campaigns, confirm your product feed is fully optimised, with accurate pricing, stock levels and approved product statuses to avoid disapprovals during peak trading.



5. Review bidding strategies

Assess whether current bidding strategies suit expected changes in conversion rate and average order value. Consider adjusting target ROAS or CPA to reflect seasonal buying behaviour.



6. Prepare for increased competition

Expect higher CPCs as competitors increase spend. Build this into forecasts and budgets so performance expectations remain realistic.



7. Set up robust tracking

Confirm conversion tracking, enhanced conversions and any offline conversion imports are working correctly. Inaccurate data during peak season can lead to poor automated bidding decisions.



8. Plan for stock and fulfilment alignment

Align paid traffic plans with stock availability and fulfilment capacity. Avoid driving traffic to products at risk of selling out, which can waste spend and harm customer experience.

Taking time to address these areas in advance helps ensure your Google Ads account is positioned to perform efficiently when it matters most.



Alexandra Stephens

Head of Performance at EcomOne

CRO Checklist

shero

Most brands go into BFCM thinking they have a traffic problem. They don't. They have a conversion problem. These are the eight things to fix before the season starts.



1. Design experiences for different customer segments, not just one ICP

BFCM brings a unique mix of shoppers to your site—from first-time visitors discovering your brand to loyal customers waiting for your biggest sale of the year. Instead of building one generic experience, map the journey for each audience. New customers need trust and education, returning shoppers need reassurance and value, while loyal customers should feel rewarded with exclusive offers, early access, or personalized messaging. The more relevant the experience, the higher your chances of converting every type of shopper.



2. Audit your analytics before you trust them

Optimising against broken data produces broken results. Verify your GA4 events, confirm your funnel is tracked end-to-end, and check that revenue attribution ties back to actual sales before BFCM starts.



3. Audit your full funnel, not just checkout

Most brands panic-fix checkout when conversion drops, but the leak is usually further up. Check that your homepage, collection pages, and product pages are doing their job for your ICP first.



4. Run heat mapping on your highest-traffic pages now

You need to see where attention drops before traffic multiplies. Run heat mapping on your top five pages now and fix the friction before you spend another dollar sending traffic to them.



5. Test your mobile experience on real devices

Most BFCM traffic arrives on mobile. Walk the full purchase journey on at least three real devices, not a resized browser. Banners, cart drawers, and payment modals all need to work.



6. Track revenue per session, not just conversion rate

Conversion rate is misleading during BFCM because the traffic mix shifts dramatically. Track revenue per session and cart completion rate instead: they tell you what is actually happening to your business.



7. Build your post-BFCM retention plan before the sale starts

The brands that win BFCM treat it as an acquisition moment, not just a revenue spike. Have your January loyalty reminders and re-engagement sequences ready before the sale begins.



8. Optimize for customer lifetime value, not just conversion rate

A conversion is only the first win. During BFCM, you'll likely acquire a large number of new customers. Have a post-purchase strategy ready to keep them engaged. Strong onboarding, personalized lifecycle marketing, loyalty programs, and thoughtful follow-ups can turn one-time holiday shoppers into long-term customers.



Cande Rybecky

Head of Marketing & Growth at Shero Commerce

Site Speed & Performance Checklist



BFCM doesn't forgive a slow, fragile storefront. Shoppers arrive in their thousands within minutes of a campaign going live, and the platform underneath has to hold, convert and keep working under pressure. Here's what UK retailers should be checking now, not in November.



1. Treat Mobile as the Primary Build.

Over half of UK ecommerce transactions now happen on mobile. Audit navigation, tap targets, variant selectors and image weight on phones first, desktop second, not the other way round.



2. Optimise Media and Promotional Assets:

Compress high resolution hero banners and product video formats. Implement native lazy loading execution for all below the fold media assets and strictly leverage next generation image encoding like WebP or AVIF to reduce total payload size.



3. Build Dedicated Campaign Landing Pages.

Don't send paid traffic to your homepage. Build fast, focused landing pages for each offer and audience segment, with the same performance discipline as your core templates.



4. Stress Test Personalisation and Search.

AI-driven recommendations and on site search increasingly decide what gets bought. Confirm your merchandising logic returns products, bestsellers and promotions accurately under live BFCM pricing rules.



5. Prioritise Native Shopify Functionality:

Replace heavy, app driven frontend features with native platform capabilities. Utilise Metafields and Metaobjects for complex product badging, messaging, and visual merchandising to streamline server runtime execution and lower transaction friction.



6. Audit Every App on Your Storefront.

Most BFCM slowdowns trace back to app bloat rather than Shopify itself. Review every installed app, deactivate apps that provide the same or similar function, remove anything inactive, and gate the rest so they only load on the templates they actually need, such as reviews, popups, loyalty widgets.



7. Stress Test Integration Middleware:

While Shopify's core infrastructure scales effortlessly, backoffice middleware layers (ERP, PIM, WMS) frequently bottleneck. Stress test your integrations against extreme high frequency webhook thresholds to prevent debilitating synchronisation drops or order backlogs.



8. Put an Escalation Plan in Writing.

Know who's on call, what the rollback plan is, and how fast your team can respond if checkout, search or tracking breaks at 9am on Black Friday itself.

Final Thought

A fast, stable storefront is the foundation everything else during BFCM sits on: your paid media, your CRM flows, your conversion rate. Get the platform right first, and every other investment performs better because of it.



Carl Swann

Director of Shopify at Visualsoft

Loyalty & Customer Retention Checklist

yotpo.

- ✓ **1. Audit your loyalty programme before peak hits**
Review your tier thresholds, point values, and redemption options now. If top-tier customers are sitting on thousands of unspendable points or thresholds are set too high, fix it before BFCM drives a surge in sign-ups and activity.
- ✓ **2. Activate your existing members first**
Your loyalty members will outspend guests by 2-3x during peak. Build a dedicated pre-BFCM communication sequence for members — early access, exclusive drops, or bonus points events — before you spend a penny on acquisition.
- ✓ **3. Gate your best deals behind membership**
Rather than site-wide discounting, restrict your strongest BFCM offers to loyalty members. This protects margin, rewards your best customers, and drives programme sign-ups in the weeks before peak.
- ✓ **4. Set up a double points event**
A time-limited bonus points period in the run-up to BFCM drives pre-peak purchases and gives customers a reason to return and redeem during Cyber Week itself. Plan the mechanic and the comms now.
- ✓ **5. Make sure your loyalty programme is visible on key pages**
During BFCM, new visitors will land on PDPs, category pages, and your homepage. If they can't see a reason to create an account — points on first purchase, member pricing, early access — you're leaving retention value on the table.



6. Prepare a post-BFCM re-engagement sequence

BFCM brings a wave of first-time buyers who will go cold in January. Build your win-back and loyalty onboarding flows now so they trigger automatically after peak. The brands that win BFCM are the ones who retain those customers into Q1.



7. Check your reviews are working for you at peak

Shoppers making decisions during BFCM move fast. Make sure your reviews are displaying correctly on PDPs, loading quickly, and that your most relevant UGC is surfaced on your highest-traffic pages. Reviews are your highest-converting asset during peak — don't neglect them.



8. Test your loyalty integrations before traffic spikes

If your loyalty programme connects to your email platform, POS, or app, QA those integrations now. A points sync failure or broken redemption flow during Black Friday week is a customer experience disaster that's entirely avoidable.



Alex Wright

Partnership Manager at Yotpo

The Night Shift Doesn't End Here

If you've made it this far, you're already ahead of the curve.

Preparing for Black Friday Cyber Monday isn't about making last-minute changes, it's about building a store that's ready to perform when every click, every second and every customer counts.

We hope these checklists have helped you identify new opportunities, refine your strategy and give your team a clear action plan for the months ahead. Whether you're optimising your site's performance, refining your checkout, improving search, strengthening your customer communications or exploring new channels, every improvement you make today can have a meaningful impact when peak season arrives.

A huge thank you to our expert partners for sharing their knowledge and helping bring this guide to life. Their insights reflect the collective experience of supporting thousands of ecommerce brands through their biggest trading moments.

Now it's over to you. Work through the checklists, tick off the actions, collaborate with your teams and don't be afraid to lean on the experts featured throughout this guide. They're here to help you make this your strongest BFCM yet. Because while this magazine has reached its final page...

Ecommerce never sleeps. See you this Black Friday.

Unlock hidden opportunities to grow your ecommerce performance with a complimentary Athos Commerce Site Audit. Book your free audit today and receive expert recommendations to improve conversions, customer experience, and revenue.

[REQUEST YOUR SITE AUDIT](#)



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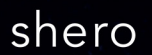
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