

# Preparing for Black Friday - 8 lessons learnt from 2017

By  [Graham van der Merwe](#)

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If 2017 is anything to go by, Black Friday is quickly becoming one of the busiest South African shopping days and, like the US, marks the beginning of the Christmas shopping season.



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This year, online retailers are preparing for even more hype, but are we getting ahead of ourselves? Let's take a step back and review what we can learn from previous years:

## 1. Start early to reap rewards

As early as October 2017, the N1 in Gauteng bore the fruit of well-planned marketing campaigns with enticing billboards. Research shows that more than [50% of holiday shoppers](#) start researching gift ideas in October or earlier. This tells us that we need to plan ahead, and by early November, you'll need to kick off your campaign to ensure marketing ROI.

Not only does this give you more time to generate opportunity, but useful, published links will start building page SEO – crucial in the ever-competitive e-commerce sphere. Major retailers are pulling out all the stops from well-segmented email marketing to encouraging customers to add products to their carts ahead of the day. But, Black Friday does not only attract the big players but the smaller retailers too. In 2017, [Nichemarket](#) listed more than 500 participating stores from niche to e-commerce giants.

## 2. Integrate and personalise

Sure Black Friday has a certain, recognisable look, but marketing efforts have become more personalised. Think beyond the homepage and set up custom product landing pages. Integrate these with your social media platforms for wider reach. Remember to include your marketing material throughout for a consistent, familiar message. Entice consumers with a clear USP.

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### 3. Set the clock to create urgency

It's a one-day-only type of thing, so get in with the hype and add a countdown timer to your website. Like Takealot, you can offer exclusive discount newsletter sign-ups with early deal leaks to get your customers on board. If you decide to extend the frenzy to Cyber Monday, communicate this with your customers before-hand. In 2017, Superbalist did this well by gamifying their deals with locks. Not only did they keep their customers informed but engaged throughout the entire weekend.

### 4. Make the most of seasonal shoppers

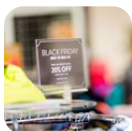
Before Black Friday, you need to have your Christmas specials in place to benefit from the Black Friday hype that still lingers. Allow it to link with Black Friday and continue to drive sales after the big day as people continue to shop over the entire holiday season.

### 5. Involve the entire team for great customer experience

On Black Friday you'll be very busy. Whilst it's important to drive sales, involve the entire team to ensure that you don't neglect your customers. Done right, Black Friday is a great brand awareness tool, but if your customer experience suffers, even the brand loyalists may stray afterwards. You may need to hire extra staff or work longer hours.

### 6. Consider an omnichannel approach

Customer satisfaction extends to shipping, so consider offering free delivery or perhaps an in-store collect option for those yearning immediate gratification on their spend. It is important to understand the interchange between physical and online stores – consumers prefer an omnichannel approach where they can research and shop both online and in-store.



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### 7. Offer generous discounts

Leading up to Black Friday, [Game launched](#) its online store with generous discounts knowing that it would motivate new and on-the-fence consumers to purchase. In the US “[Black Friday bargains were bigger](#), on average, last year“.

Small, negligible discounts just don't match the hype and it certainly won't attract the powerful (and savvy online shopping) millennial consumer market. Before your brand jumps on the BF bandwagon, it may be wise to assess whether it's worth it? Some shops choose deliberately to opt out and so could you.

### 8. Accommodate mobile users

Make it easy for customers to shop online by [optimising your mobile checkout](#) process. Consider adding a one-click checkout option to streamline the process, and offering real-time online support for quality customer support.

## ABOUT GRAHAM VAN DER MERWE

Graham van der Merwe is the Marketing Manager at Outdoorphoto, the largest photographic retailer in South Africa, serving the local market with expert advice and quality service.

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