

Peak Season Playbook: Q4 2026

How to use this playbook

Use it to prepare every client for Q4 and Black Friday, working through the phases in order.

- **What to look at and prepare:** sections 1 and 3
- **What to bring to clients:** section 2
- **What to focus on before, during and after peak:** sections 4, 5 and 6

Key dates and timeline

Reminder of the key dates and timelines for Q4

Date (2026)	Moment	Note
Wed 11 Nov	Singles Day (11.11)	Considered a full sales event
Fri 27 Nov	Black Friday / White Friday	Main sales peak
Mon 30 Nov	Cyber Monday	Tail of the peak
December	UAE national day / End of year	Usually under-invested (see section 6)

Suggested working timeline for each client:

Phase	Window	Note
1. Assess	Sep 24 to Oct 2	Learnings and insights
2. Align	By Oct 9	Dates, offers, budget and creative briefs
3. Readiness	By Oct 30	Website, payment methods, stock, CRM, tracking and feeds
4. Pre-peak	Oct to Nov 25	Audiences built, 1P data collected, campaigns ramping up
5. Peak	Singles Day, then Nov 26 to 30	Essential daily monitoring

1. What to look at

Pull these before the client conversation, then share the learnings with the client.

The client's own history (last Black Friday, Singles Day and end of year)

- Each activation: mechanism, dates, offer, content, products, channel and budget split
- The daily curve: traffic, sales, conversion rate, AOV, and CPM/CPC by week. When did it ramp, and when did it drop? **Important note: This can differ heavily from one market to another**
- New vs returning customers, and which products or offers drove each
- What worked, what didn't, and what we would change

Competitors

- Their activations: mechanism, dates, offer, content and products (Meta Ad Library, Auction Insights, their website and CRM)
- Who came up during last peak and stayed afterwards. Those are the new competitors to look out for.
- Marketplaces: if the client also sells on noon or Amazon, what are they promoting and when?
- E-retailers: if the client also distributes across e-retailers, what are they promoting and when? **It is important for the [brand.com](#) to have exclusivity on dates, offers and products.**

Market demand

- Search demand by market (Google Trends, Keyword Planner): when interest starts, and how big Singles Day looks next to Black/White Friday. This differs by market.
- Platform peak-season workshops can give useful macro data, you can check with your account managers.

2. What to bring to the client

Agree dates, offer, creative and budget with each client by the first week of October, using the history from step 1 to justify every choice.

Dates and offer

- Activation dates for each moment (Singles Day, Black/White Friday, Cyber Monday, UAE national day, end of year sale) and the date we start warming up.
- The offer mechanic: keep one offer, stack offers, raise the % discount, or start with a gift with purchase and move to discount?
- Test the offer with the PCR framework. The client should lead its category on at least two of the three levers below.

Lever	Tactics
Price	Discount % signals value, and shoppers expect it. Go crescendo: buyers postpone if they expect deeper discounts, so grow the discount or widen the discounted range over the season and give them several reasons to buy. For earlier events, be more tactical with gifts with purchase and value bundles.
Convenience	Lower the free-delivery threshold or go free, with same-day delivery where possible.
Rarity	Keep some products exclusive to the client's own site if they also sell through e-retailers. Offer exclusive services such as customization. Boost the loyalty program. Open private sales to existing customers via email, SMS and WhatsApp.

Creative

- Brief now so the client's design team can plan. UGC needs the most lead time because it requires real production with creators.
- Ask for variety, phased over the season, in both static and video. Show the sale, gift with purchase, delivery and other USPs together in the creative.

Budget

- Agree on the peak budget, and set the expectation that October spend builds audiences rather than direct revenue.
- Forecast with last year's CPM, CPC and conversion rate, as well as this year's overall trends you're seeing.
- Split: maximize brand search first, aiming for close to 100% impression share, then prioritize platforms by what works best for the client all year.

3. Readiness checklist

Sign off every item by October 30. Anything that needs the client's team should have been already raised earlier on.

Website and checkout

- ☐ Review the flow and UX/UI on mobile and desktop; list fixes if any
- ☐ Decide on a dedicated landing page, especially if we activate early to collect 1P data
- ☐ Payment methods live: Apple Pay and BNPL (Tabby, Tamara), plus other options available
- ☐ Guest checkout available and checkout process seamless
- ☐ Customer service in place

Stock

- ☐ Enough stock to sustain the full month, or a plan to anticipate and reorder

CRM and 1P data

- ☐ CRM setup reviewed; all customer lists refreshed on every platform
- ☐ Last Black Friday's customer lists requested and loaded as audiences
- ☐ CRM calendar (email, SMS, WhatsApp) aligned with the paid calendar

Measurement

- ☐ Every key event tracked and validated
- ☐ Peak reporting view live, with daily visibility for the client (AI copilot or dashboard)

Product feeds and Google Merchant Center

- ☐ Feeds healthy with no disapprovals; price and sale price correct
- ☐ Peak keywords added to titles and descriptions where relevant
- ☐ Merchant Center promotions created early enough to be approved before launch

4. Pre-peak focus (October to November 25)

Activate early and use October to build what we harvest in November. You are competing for users' wallets, early-month CPMs are cheaper, and 1P data collected now can be used for targeting at peak.

1. **Build and warm audiences.** Run awareness and traffic campaigns, which are cheaper on CPM and CPC, to fill remarketing audiences on every platform at once. October may not yield revenue directly, so judge it on audience size and 1P data collected.
2. **Collect 1P data.** Run a lead-gen campaign with an incentive, for example sign up for early access and open the sale to sign-ups only for 2 to 3 days. It gives data and a sense of exclusivity.

3. **Cover search early:** Bid on seasonal keywords and every local name for the sale (ex. Black Friday vs White Friday), especially if you have a dedicated landing page with a countdown or lead generation.
4. **Phase the creative:** Rotate varied static and video creatives to avoid ad fatigue.
5. **Protect learning:** Have always-on conversion campaigns running and stable before peak. Ramp budgets over the preceding weeks instead of one jump on launch day, because large budget changes will send campaigns back into learning. If necessary, ignore the 20% rule and increase budgets more aggressively: with the expected increased volumes, the algorithm should go out of learning faster than usual.
6. **Countdown:** In the last 3 days before activation, run a countdown to lift CTR and conversion rate through urgency. Don't announce the end date, so we can extend or cut short if needed.

5. During peak

Keep campaigns stable and change only what is absolutely needed, because peak is the worst time to send an algorithm back into learning.

1. **Don't rework the structure:** On always-on conversion campaigns, update assets, increase budgets and adjust targets. Don't change audiences or placements. Tip: you can schedule budget increases if needed.
2. **Use Google seasonality adjustments sparingly:** [Google's guidance](#) is to use them only when you expect major conversion-rate changes, for short events of 1 to 7 days (less effective beyond 14). They apply to Search, Shopping and Display on Target ROAS or Target CPA, and to Performance Max. Size them from last year's conversion-rate uplift and start conservatively.
3. **Review ROAS and CPA targets before launch:** Conversion rates rise at peak, so targets set for a normal week can impact delivery. Adjust where needed.
4. **Rotate creatives:** Add fresh assets to avoid fatigue, with refreshes as planned with the client.
5. **Monitor prospecting and existing customers separately:** If needed, add a spend cap on the retargeting pool so it doesn't absorb the budget. However, keep in mind that it's still relevant to target both new and existing clients during such a season.
6. **Check daily:** budget pacing and impression share, stock levels, feed disapprovals, site speed and checkout. Update the client daily.
7. **Have backup tactics ready:** Prepare fallback offers and creatives, and be ready to extend or cut the sale based on stock and performance. Be proactive, not reactive.

6. After peak

The peak's value carries into Q1 and Q2, so finish the season deliberately rather than switching off.

- **Cover end of year:** December is usually under-invested because budgets are spent by then. Reserve budget for it at the alignment stage. We usually see sustained momentum during that period. In UAE, National Day is a relevant moment, followed by gifting and DSF. In KSA, end of year sale is gaining momentum.
- **Read the new competitors:** Check Auction Insights for advertisers who rose during Black Friday and stayed higher afterwards.

- **Reuse the data:** Peak buyers, sign-ups and platform learnings feed acquisition and retention campaigns in Q1 and Q2. Refresh customer lists on every platform.
- **Write the debrief:** Record each activation with the same fields as step 1 (mechanism, dates, offer, content, products, performance) so next year's diagnosis starts ready.