



2014 The Email Marketing Holiday Calendar

While most holiday gift-buying takes place during November and December, the email marketing holiday season lasts from July through January. Use these handy calendars and guides to help you plan, stay on trend, and ensure you're sending the right holiday messaging at the right time.



To explore examples and additional content, look for the Pinterest and Salesforce Marketing Cloud icons throughout this guide.





July

Christmas in July



		1	2	3	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 BLACK FRIDAY IN JULY	26
27	28 CYBER MONDAY IN JULY	29	30	31		



7/18 [Target](#)

7/22 [Target](#)

7/25 [Zulily](#)



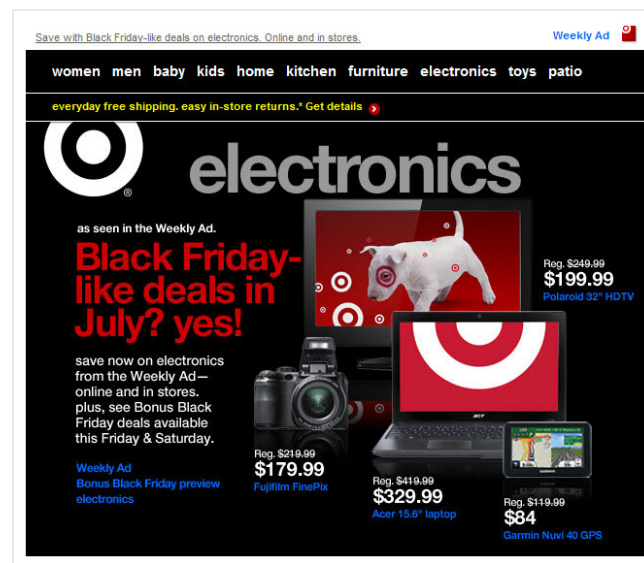
Holiday Messaging

What's being sent

18 The estimated number of *promotional emails* retailers will send each of their active subscribers on average in July

Low proportion of messaging is holiday-related, with most holiday messaging arriving in the second half of July so as not to interfere with Independence Day messaging

10% Percentage of retailers that will send a *promotional email* mentioning the holiday season in July



Black Friday in July campaign sent by Target on July 18, 2012

COMMON MESSAGING THEMES

- **Christmas in July** campaigns, which are increasingly promoting seasonal products like holiday décor
- **Black Friday in July** and **Cyber Monday in July** campaigns, which tend to tout discounts on non-seasonal goods like kitchen appliances and electronics

Holiday Planning

How to get ready for the months ahead



DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Adopt a mobile-friendly email design—whether by using mobile-aware techniques or more complex responsive design. The majority of emails are opened on mobile devices, making mobile-friendliness an imperative this holiday season. August and September are popular months to unveil email redesigns.

- ✕ [The Growing Adoption of Mobile-Friendly Email Design #Infographic](#)

Make mobile-friendly improvements to your website. Much of the benefit of having mobile-friendly emails is squandered if your website isn't equally as friendly. If you can't update your whole site, aim to update major landing pages. An alternative is linking from email to your mobile app.

- ✕ [Mobile-Friendly Disconnects #Infographic](#)

Launch a cart abandonment or browse abandonment email. And if you've already launched these, update them before November arrives, as these highly effective triggered emails are even more valuable during the busy holiday season.

- ✕ [Cart Abandonment Emails: Trends and Opportunities #Infographic](#)
- ✕ [11 Most Common Reasons Customers Abandon Carts](#)
- 📌 [ModCloth cart abandonment email](#)
- 📌 [Crutchfield browse abandonment email](#)
- 📌 [Williams-Sonoma back-in-stock browse abandonment email](#)



INTERNAL REVIEW

Identify opportunities to improve your holiday messaging by reviewing what other brands have done. Get inspired by what others have done and then find your own twist that fits your brand.

- ✕ [Holiday Inspirations from the Email Swipe File](#)

Explore your swipe file, looking for ways to apply your past successes to upcoming campaigns. Repeat this review at the conclusion of the back-to-school season.

- 📌 [Ice.com re-skins Halloween campaign for holiday season](#)
- 📌 [Norm Thompson tweaks and reuses email for six consecutive years](#)



DESIGN PREP

Start on the “dream big” email now. Thinking of sending an amazing campaign this holiday season that will take months of work? Start brainstorming now and put a plan in action.



August / September

Pre-Holiday Relationship-Building

	1 LABOR DAY (9/1)	2	3	4	5	6		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
14	15		16	17	18	19	20	
21	22		23 FIRST DAY OF FALL (9/23)	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30						



8/15 [Petco](#)
8/22 [IKEA USA](#)

8/30 [Threadless](#)
9/27 [1-800-FLOWERS.COM](#)

9/27 [Wayfair](#)



Holiday Messaging

What's being sent

18

The estimated number of *promotional emails* retailers will send each of their active subscribers on average in August and in September



Very low proportion of messaging is holiday-related, with most of that in the form of banners and other secondary message blocks, but there are opportunities to lead subscribers to take actions that will make them more loyal holiday shoppers



COMMON MESSAGING THEMES

- “Opt up” to receive additional emails—about new topics, from sister brands, loyalty program emails, etc.
- Update your email preferences
- Learn about our sister brands
- Join our loyalty program
- Apply for our credit card
- Download our mobile app
- Follow us on social media

We "like" you too! Enjoy Free Shipping! No Service Charge! View as webpage | View on mobile

flowers.com Birthday > Same-Day > Best Sellers > Sympathy >

👍 We hit 500K fans! Start the party with a special offer... [Shop Now >](#)

Fields of Europe™ for Fall

👍 Thanks to you, we just hit 500,000 fans on Facebook! Join the celebration with this EXCLUSIVE offer: **Free Shipping/No Service Charge** on flowers and gifts PLUS get a **\$10 Zynga Gift Card***! Use **Promo Code FBOFFER** at checkout.

zynga

[Shop Now >](#)

Facebook milestone campaign sent by 1-800-Flowers.com on Sept. 27, 2012

Holiday Planning

How to get ready for the months ahead



PROGRAM READINESS

Warm up new IP addresses for the holiday season or ramp up existing ones to be prepared for the increases in volume you'll be sending. This is a particularly critical issue for highly seasonal brands that email very little outside of the holiday season.

- ✘ [Deliverability Lessons from the 2012 Holiday Season](#)
- ✘ ['Tis The Season for Sending Emails, Part 1](#)
- ✘ ['Tis the Season for Sending Emails, Part 2](#)
- ✘ ['Tis the Season for Sending Emails, Part 3](#)

Clean up your email list. Engagement has become a key criteria for ISP filtering algorithms and with promotional email volume rising significantly during the holiday season, having chronically inactive subscribers on your list represents an escalating risk. Send win-back emails to subscribers who haven't opened or clicked an email in many months and consider sending a series of re-permission emails to subscribers who haven't engaged with one of your emails in more than 13 months.

Test your online email signup forms. Try different messaging, form lengths and layouts, and positioning on your site to reduce signup friction and maximize opt-ins. Also consider testing a signup lightbox. While you're at it, audit all of your acquisition sources to ensure they're functioning properly.

- ✘ [Email Opt-In Audit Imperative #Infographic](#)

Review your email opt-in calls to action for your stores and call centers. These are great sources of high-value subscribers, but kinks in the signup process can lead to potential problems.

- ✘ [Don't Confuse Bad Processes with Bad Subscribers: 3 Pitfalls of Offline Opt-ins](#)



CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Develop a response plan in case you get blacklisted. Blacklistings are more common during the holiday season (when they're also the most painful), so have a plan in place to respond.

- ✘ [Surviving a Stay on the Naughty List](#)

Create a landing page template. Your web team may not be able to publish content as quickly during the holiday rush, so you'll want to have this in place as a backup.

Draft an apology email and discuss the situations in which you'd send it. Mostly likely you'd send it because of a non-email-related incident like your website crashing, so involve your broader digital team in this discussion.

- ✘ [DEFCON Guide to Responding to Email Mistakes](#)

Holiday Planning

How to get ready for the months ahead



DESIGN PREP

Start planning and designing your holiday email template. Just like stores hang garland and put up red and green signage as a cue that it's time for holiday shopping, your emails should send the same visual signal. Pay particular attention to your holiday header and gift services footer.

- ✕ [Holiday Retail Design Tips 2013: Create Holiday Email Templates #Video](#)
- ✕ [10 Inspiring Holiday Header Email Designs](#)
- 📌 [Bed Bath & Beyond's holiday headers](#)
- 📌 [Williams-Sonoma's Black Friday navigation bar](#)
- ✕ [Holiday Retail Design Tips 2013: Communicate Customer & Gift Services #Video](#)
- 📌 [OfficeMax's evolving gift services footer](#)
- 📌 [JCPenney's touch-friendly gift services footer](#)
- 📌 [Lands' End's huge gift services footer](#)

Optimize your transactional emails, including e-receipts. Add recommended products and accessories to these emails to create upsell opportunities, and plan on adding seasonal messaging to them in November and December.

Use email to grow your social channels so you have a bigger audience during the holiday season.

- 📌 [Home Depot promotes social channels](#)
- 📌 [Uniqlo touts Pinterest content with Pinterest-inspired email design](#)
- 📌 [ModCloth engages with social and educational content](#)



DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Launch or improve your wish list functionality or plan a Pinterest wish list contest.

- ✕ [Encourage Subscribers to Share Holiday Wishes](#)
- 📌 [ShopNBC Pinterest wish list campaign](#)

Plan on wrapping up all website and other infrastructure improvements and relaunches by the end of October.



INTERNAL REVIEW

Meet with your web and data teams to ensure everyone's ready for the holiday traffic spike. Make sure you're aware of infrastructure changes and improvements.

Perfect cross-channel insight sharing. Are you able to quickly gain insights from your website, SEM, and Twitter colleagues to inform email copy? If not, practice now.



October

Early Holiday Messaging

			1 BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH BEGINS	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13 COLUMBUS DAY	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 HALLOWEEN	



10/5 [Neiman Marcus](#)

10/9 [Neiman Marcus](#)

10/14 [Overstock.com](#)

10/24 [Petco](#)



Holiday Messaging

What's being sent

19

The estimated number of **promotional emails** retailers will send each of their active subscribers on average in October



Moderate proportion of messaging is holiday-related, with the majority of retailers mentioning the holiday season in at least one promotional email by the end of the month

40%

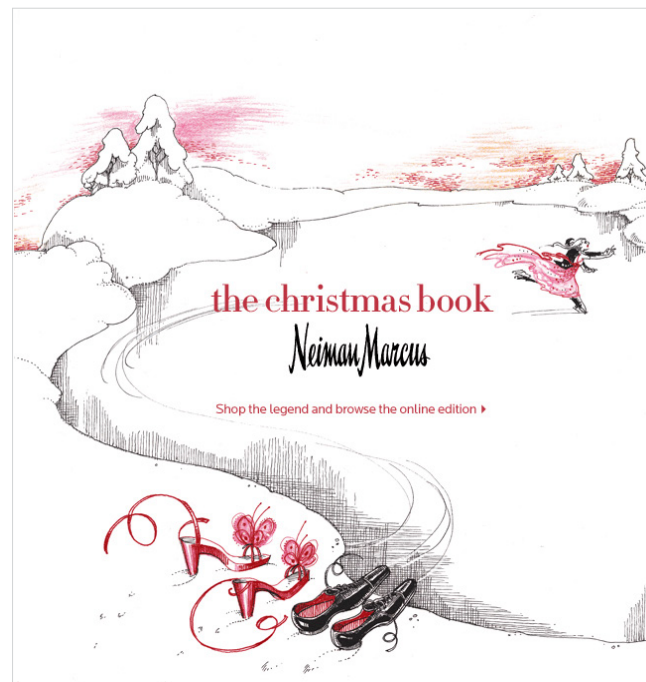
Percentage of consumers who **start** their holiday shopping before Halloween

Source: National Retail Federation



COMMON MESSAGING THEMES

- Shop holiday décor and entertaining goods
- Shop our pre-holiday clearance sale
- Order Christmas cards
- Pre-order these hot holiday products
- Preview our holiday collection
- Sign up for our Christmas catalog
- Create a wish list
- Learn about layaway and other financial services



Animated .gif in email sent by Neiman Marcus on Oct. 5, 2010

Holiday Planning

How to get ready for the months ahead



DESIGN PREP

Plan a progressive profiling campaign for mid-November. Arm yourself with current data on what your subscribers are most interested in so you can send targeted messaging during the weeks of Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

- [Zulily progressive profiling campaign](#)
- [Petco progressive profiling campaign](#)
- [Newegg Black Friday progressive profiling campaign](#)

Prepare your gift guides. Think about the most useful ways to organize gift options for your subscribers—whether by price, gift recipient's age, gift recipient personas, or some other method.

- [J&R gift guide-centric campaign](#)

Re-skin your welcome emails for the holiday season.

Welcome your new subscribers—some of whom will unsubscribe when they're done with their holiday shopping—with some seasonal messaging.

- [Walmart's holiday-skinned welcome email](#)

Craft your loyalty program messaging. These reach your most valuable subscribers. How can you make these messages special and exclusive to help your loyalty program members feel spoiled and appreciated?

Use exclusive holiday promotions to grow your mobile channels.

Use your established email channel to promote exclusive deals and early access to sales via less established channels like your mobile app or mobile push notifications.

To ensure delivery to your inbox, please add newsletters@walmart.com to your address book. [Here's how](#)
Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#) to view it in a browser.

Walmart Save money. Live better. **Gift of the Day** shop now >

Electronics Movies Home Apparel Baby Toys Video Games Photo Beauty Health Gift Cards

Welcome! Thanks for joining us.
Get ready for low prices all year long.

More Christmas for your money.
Shop all Specials

Gift of the Day Shop Now > **Value Bundles** Shop Now > **Special Buys** Shop Now >

Save on great gifts in every department

Electronics Home Toys Video Games Apparel

Tell your friends

Get CONNECTED For early access

Sign up for email Like us on Facebook Download our App **Get a sneak peek at our holiday specials.**

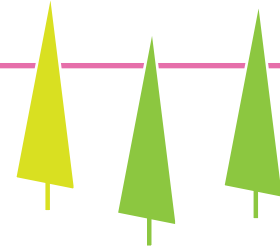
Store Finder Local Ad Returns & Exchanges Privacy & Security Help

Holiday-skinned welcome email sent by Walmart in November 2012



November

Black November and the Thanksgiving Holiday Weekend



						1 HOLIDAY MESSAGING TAKES OFF
2 DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ENDS	3	4 ELECTION DAY	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 VETERANS DAY	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26 THANKSGIVING EVE	27 THANKSGIVING	28 BLACK FRIDAY	29 SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY
30 CYBER SUNDAY						



11/1 [Lowe's](#)

11/2 [Newegg](#)

11/6 [Lego](#)

11/8 [Harry & David](#)

11/11 [Zappos](#)

11/12 [ShopNBC](#)

11/13 [Zulily](#)

11/13 [Newegg](#)

11/14 [QVC](#)

11/16 [Coach](#)

11/18 [OfficeMax](#)

11/20 [Apple](#)

11/22 [Walmart](#)

11/26 [Warby Parker](#)

11/28 [J&R](#)

11/29 [Foursquare](#)

Holiday Messaging

What's being sent

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The estimated number of **promotional emails** retailers will send each of their active subscribers on average in November

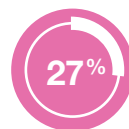


High proportion of messaging is holiday-related, with the majority of promotional emails containing a reference to the holiday season by the start of Thanksgiving Week



Percentage of retailers that offered **free shipping** and extended the offer until Dec. 23 last year

Source: *Shop.org*



Percentage of holiday shoppers who said they **shopped online on Thanksgiving Day** last year

Source: *National Retail Federation*



Percentage of major online retailers sending at least **one promotional message** on Cyber Monday, which has been the most popular email marketing day of the year for seven years running

[✕ Email Insights & Trends from Thanksgiving, Black Friday, & Cyber Monday #Infographic](#)



COMMON MESSAGING THEMES

- Shop pre-Black Friday deals
- Shop our holiday collection or catalog
- Shop gift ideas, gift guides, top-rated gifts, gifts by price, by recipient, by age, by personality type, by interest, and so on
- Shop for holiday entertaining goods or try these holiday decorating tips
- Free shipping, free gift wrap, and free gift with purchase offers
- Personalize or monogram these gifts
- Download our holiday mobile app
- Visit our holiday Facebook page or microsite
- Cause-marketing tie-in to support a charity

Holiday Messaging

What's being sent



IMPORTANT EMAIL MARKETING DAYS

Thanksgiving Eve (Nov. 26): Just like Thanksgiving stole Black Friday's thunder, now Thanksgiving Eve is stealing it from Thanksgiving. With many consumers off from work and mobile making it easier to shop while traveling, Thanksgiving Eve is becoming the new kickoff of the holiday season.

Thanksgiving (Nov. 27): With more stores open on Thursday and mobile devices making it possible for consumers to shop while visiting family or kicking back on the couch, Black Friday sales continue to bleed over into Thanksgiving.

Black Friday (Nov. 28): Black Friday is now as much about online sales as it is about store sales. Plus, the rise of mobile has made it important to message subscribers when they're out shopping or waiting in line for stores to open.

Holiday Planning



DESIGN PREP

Fine tune your order-by deadline messaging. It's critical to deliver clear messaging about shipping cutoffs to customers.

[Cabela's order-by calendar messaging](#)

Create your season's greeting email or, if you prefer, "Happy New Year" email. Think of how you can do this in a way that best fits your brand.

[Boden UK's tongue-in-cheek season's greeting](#)

[Lands' End's crowdsourced season's greeting](#)

[J. Jill's animated season's greeting](#)

[Lands' End's crafty season's greeting](#)

The image shows a screenshot of an email from Lands' End. At the top, it says "Free Shipping on \$50 order" with links for desktop and mobile versions, and a note to add an email address to a list. The main header is "LANDS' END" with a logo. Below that is a navigation menu: "Women Men Kids Swim Outerwear Gifts School For the Home Sale Cabela's". The main content is a large, colorful, stylized Christmas tree made of swirling lines and dots. Text around the tree includes "A HUG.", "A KIND WORD.", "A HAND TO HOLD.", and "THE GREATEST GIFTS OF ALL.". In the center of the tree, it says "Merry Christmas". Below the tree, it says "May you give them freely, and receive them abundantly." followed by "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. - From all of us at Lands' End". At the bottom left, it says "TAKE TIME TO SHARE. Do have a favorite holiday tradition or Christmas memory? Share it with us on" with a Facebook icon. At the bottom right, there is a small photo of a family. At the very bottom, it says "FREE SHIPPING on \$50 orders. DETAILS BELOW."

Season's greeting sent by Lands' End on Dec. 25, 2012



December

Countdown to Christmas

	1 CYBER MONDAY	2 CYBER TUESDAY & GIVING TUES.	3	4	5	6
7	8 GREEN MONDAY	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 HANUKKAH BEGINS	17	18 FREE SHIPPING DAY	19	20 SUPER SATURDAY
21 FIRST DAY OF WINTER	22 LAST SLEIGH DAY	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE, HANUKKAH ENDS	25 CHRISTMAS	26	27
28	29	30	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE			



12/1 [Uncommon Goods](#)
 12/1 [OfficeMax](#)
 12/1 [CB2](#)
 12/5 [The Limited](#)
 12/6 [Moosejaw](#)
 12/7 [Uncommon Goods](#)

12/11 [Ice.com](#)
 12/13 [Lowe's](#)
 12/13 [Saks Fifth Avenue](#)
 12/18 [Tiffany & Co.](#)
 12/18 [J&R](#)
 12/18 [Best Buy](#)

12/20 [Restaurant.com](#)
 12/20 [Boden USA](#)
 12/20 [Netflix](#)
 12/20 [Barnes & Noble](#)
 12/23 [Style Campaign](#)
 12/24 [Sephora](#)

12/24 [Staples](#)
 12/24 [Sur La Table](#)
 12/25 [Style Campaign](#)
 12/25 [Boden UK](#)
 12/25 [Lands' End](#)
 12/25 [J.Jill](#)

12/26 [Etsy](#)
 12/27 [Warby Parker](#)



Holiday Messaging

What's being sent

28

The estimated number of ***promotional emails*** retailers will send each of their active subscribers on average in December



Very high proportion of messaging is holiday-related

19%

Percentage of Cyber Monday shoppers who planned to shop using their ***mobile device***

Source: National Retail Federation



COMMON MESSAGING THEMES

- Shop gift ideas, gift guides, top-rated gifts, gifts by price, by recipient, by age, by personality type, by interest, and so on
- Free shipping, free gift wrap, and free gift with purchase offers
- Trending products and other customer- or social-curated lists
- Shop for holiday outfits, holiday parties, and hostess gifts
- “12 Days of Christmas” campaigns
- Order-by deadlines for guaranteed Christmas delivery via standard, express, and overnight shipping
- Shop for last-minute gifts in stores
- Buy gift cards
- Send e-gift cards and e-gifts
- Season's greetings messages
- After-Christmas sales
- Redeem gift cards



TOP 10 ONLINE SHOPPING DAYS

These were the top shopping days in December 2013 by total dollars spent that day:

- Dec. 2, Cyber Monday: \$1.735 billion
- Dec. 3, Cyber Tuesday: \$1.410 billion
- Dec. 9, Green Monday: \$1.401 billion
- Dec. 12: \$1.317 billion
- Nov. 29, Black Friday: \$1.199 billion
- Dec. 4: \$1.172 billion
- Dec. 11: \$1.161 billion
- Dec. 10: \$1.138 billion
- Dec. 13: \$1.021 billion
- Dec. 5: \$1.014 billion

Source: comScore, dates from 2013 holiday shopping season

Holiday Messaging

What's being sent



IMPORTANT EMAIL MARKETING DAYS

Cyber Monday (Dec. 1): Around 90% of retailers will send at least one promotional email on Cyber Monday, which will be the busiest email marketing day of the year for the 8th consecutive year. A growing number of retailers will run “Cyber Week” promotions that run through Thursday.

Green Monday (Dec. 8): Although the “Green Monday” designation is still finding its feet, there’s no doubt that this Monday has become a huge sales driver, with some calling it a second Cyber Monday.

Free Shipping Day (Dec. 18): While “Free Shipping Day” as a brand appears to already be in decline, the trend toward offering free shipping with no minimum purchase on this email-heavy day is undeniable.

✕ [Free Shipping Day Email Marketing Trends](#)

Last Sleigh Day (Dec. 22): The last opportunity for most shoppers to get orders by Christmas with express shipping, this day has seen a rise in offers of discounted express shipping.

Christmas Eve (Dec. 24): This is the most popular day to send messaging about e-gift cards and e-gifts, although some of this last-minute gift messaging is migrating to Christmas Day as well.

✕ [“Last Minute” Being Redefined for E-Gift Cards](#)

Christmas Day (Dec. 25): This has become the most popular day to send season’s greetings emails.

The Day after Christmas (Dec. 26): Most after-Christmas sales kick off on Dec. 26, although a growing number of retailers are starting these sales online on Christmas Day and promoting them via email.

Holiday Planning

How to get ready for the months ahead



INTERNAL REVIEW

Evaluate your email performance during the weeks of Black Friday and Cyber Monday and look for opportunities to adjust messaging to improve results.



DESIGN PREP


Develop post-Christmas messaging that encourages subscribers to redeem gift cards they’ve received, purchase accessories for gifts, and to take other actions that extend the holiday season.

Plan to take down your holiday email template and revert back to your non-holiday design for both your promotional emails and your triggered emails.



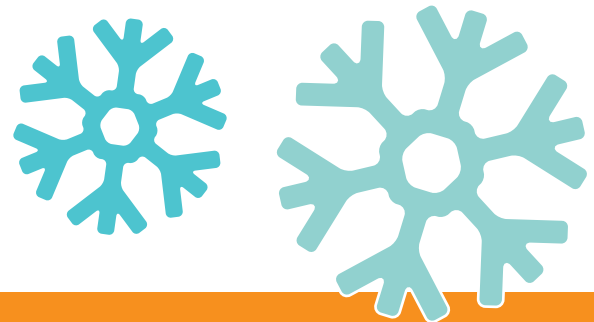
January

Post-Christmas Messaging

				1 NEW YEAR'S DAY 	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY	20	20	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



1/1 [Anthropologie](#)



Holiday Messaging

What's being sent

19

The estimated number of *promotional emails* retailers will send each of their active subscribers on average in January



Low proportion of messaging is holiday-related, with holiday messaging curtailing quickly after the first week of January



COMMON MESSAGING THEMES

- Happy New Year emails
- Redeem your gift cards
- Buy accessories for the gifts you received
- Trade in your old electronics
- Buy holiday storage and organization products

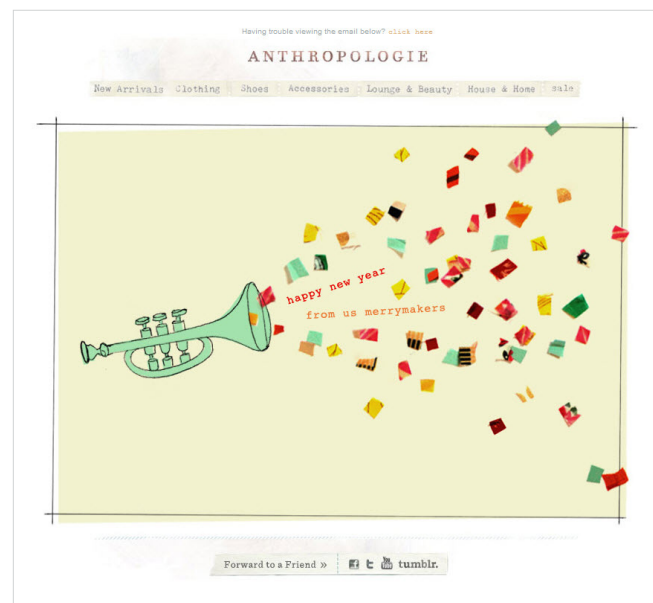
Holiday Planning



INTERNAL REVIEW

Do a post-mortem on the 2014 holiday season. Review which campaigns, offers, subject lines, and tactics worked and note them for the 2015 season. Also, note processes that didn't work smoothly so they can be fixed.

Update your swipe file of your most successful campaigns so you can draw inspiration from them during the 2015 holiday season.



New Year's email sent by Anthropologie on Jan. 1, 2012



For more holiday insights, download *Holiday Inspirations from the Email Swipe File*

★
2013

Holiday Inspirations

from the Email Swipe File

ExactTarget.
a salesforce.com company



Sources: Unless otherwise noted, all data is via Salesforce Marketing Cloud. Promotional email volume predictions are based on observational research involving more than 100 US online retailers.

