

# The past, present and future in holiday marketing

In the Charles Dickens classic, *A Christmas Carol*, a curmudgeonly old man wastes his life using others to get ahead while chasing the almighty dollar—only to realize after being visited by three ghosts—that he missed the real meaning of it all. He meets Tiny Tim, his clerk, Bob Cratchit's, son and sees that this child's bravery, courage and kindness are life's true currency. It's only then that his journey of transformation takes place.

And while we can't exactly call upon three spirits to take you on a guided tour of the shifts in performance marketing or its past, present and future states of strategy, we can provide you some of our resident experts' highlights of yesteryear, now and tomorrow (which many consider to be just as valuable!). Plus, the holidays are officially underway, so this is just plain fun.

## Search engine optimization (SEO)

### Past strategy:

Improve organic search rankings by buying keyword rich anchor text links.

### Present strategy:

Create useful content that provides extreme value to your targeted audience. Valuable content naturally earns links and improves your visibility online.

### Future strategy:

Create useful content that incorporates multiple media types i.e. video, text, images and audio.

### Past strategy:

Include your targeted keyword as often as possible in your copy and meta data.

### Present strategy:

Include your targeted keyword in the title tag, make your title click friendly and keep its character count less than 60 characters.

### Future strategy:

Optimize at the topical level and write naturally as if you were writing to a friend. Use synonyms whenever possible and monitor your CTR and on-page engagement metrics.

### Past strategy:

Use Google Analytics to monitor the KPIs you need to improve your landing pages.

### Present strategy:

Combine the Google Analytics API and Data studio to build automated dashboards for monitoring optics.

### Future strategy (that you can do now for free):

Google Analytics now incorporates machine learning for free! You can leverage it under the "intelligence" section in the upper right corner on most screens. This machine learning will alert you about optimization opportunities as well as alert you about any blind spots in your strategy that you might never have considered.

## Affiliate marketing

### Past strategy:

Police your publishers' sites to ensure they are using the correct promotional codes and not promoting a vanity code or an exclusive code that belongs to another publisher.

### Present strategy:

Use Pepperjam's Exclusive Code technology to automatically credit a publisher when their vanity code is used, thus dis-incentivizing other publishers from promoting!

### Future strategy:

Create special landing pages that dynamically populate offers and promotions in-cart based on the referring URL from the publisher to prevent codes from appearing on the wrong sites.

### Past strategy:

All placements were on site and tracked using last-click.

### Present strategy:

Clickless Tracking powers affiliate placement opportunities in non-traditional placements like radio spots, television, podcasts, print advertising or anywhere! Clickless Tracking allows advertisers to get a deeper insight into the micro-moments that impact their sales.

### Future strategy:

Placements are not limited to websites. To gain a holistic view of their digital marketing strategy, advertisers need the ability to track app to app, cross device and site to store.

### Past strategy:

Recapping holiday success revolved around archaic reporting that displayed the last-click publisher that referred sales.

### Present strategy:

Dynamic Reporting tracks each click in the buyer journey that leads to a sale. Additionally, a clearer picture emerges that details new customers vs. returning customers and coupon redemption. Clients are also able to track to their specific holiday business goals using KPI Tracking in the interface.

### Future strategy:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is taking the industry by storm to provide advertisers and publishers what they want, when they want it. Dynamic Reporting is quickly becoming a table stake to craft valuable insights for your program to best optimize.

### Past strategy:

Advertisers pay for placements and then paid publishers for referring all sales that included an affiliate click, draining their budget and driving a low ROAS.

### Present strategy:

Advertisers can utilize Dynamic Commissioning to customize payouts on sales that matter most to them. Additionally, Code Suppression allows for them to blacklist codes within the affiliate channel—as to not skew data across channels—and pay out on orders that are not intended for the affiliate channel.

### Future strategy:

Pepperjam supplies our partners with Dynamic Commissioning, Dynamic Tracking, Dynamic Reporting and Dynamic Attribution—a toolset that prepares them for the future of the industry. Advertisers can choose which publishers they want to work with, how they want to work with them, how they want to commission products or order metrics that align with their internal goals and report back on these initiatives with full visibility into the click stream that lead to a particular purchase.

### Past strategy:

Upload your holiday-specific campaigns into Pepperjam for publishers to promote.

### Present strategy:

Leverage Pepperjam's Dynamic Commissioning to maximize your holiday collection and product revenue.

Consider giving an increase on commission for revenue referred by specific creative, leveraging Preferred Publisher in exchange for a content post or give an Exclusive Coupon to a partner to promote the brand offline.

### Future strategy:

Enhance your holiday strategy even further and track holiday performance for PR efforts by launching an Exclusive Code with Clickless Tracking.

### Past strategy:

Recruit new partners to reach a new audience.

### Present strategy:

Strategically work with your existing partnership base by securing a placement that specifically targets shoppers who have not purchased, or shoppers who have lapsed. Identify partners who can support a value to these customers to optimize conversion like an increased cash back or an exclusive new customer offer.

### Future strategy:

Dynamically populate an offer based on historical customer performance to increase new-to-file rates through affiliate.

## Paid search (SEM)

### Past strategy:

Acquire new customers via text ads targeted to relevant non-brand searches, using last-click attribution to measure ROI/CPA.

### Present strategy:

Acquire new customers via text ads and PLAs (for retailers) targeted to relevant nonbrand searches.

Leverage similar audiences to effectively allocate to spend towards high-intent, in-market searchers and negate prospecting ads from showing to users in remarketing and CRM audiences, ensuring that prospecting investments are exclusively targeted to net new customers. Utilize data-driven/algorithmic attribution to understand the incrementality of SEM prospecting investments, as well as those investments' influence on other channels' purchase paths.

### Future strategy:

Acquire new customers using all the aforementioned tactics, but determine customer lifetime value (CLV) to determine optimal target CPA/ROAS for key new customer segments. (For more information on how to leverage your CLV data to attain new customers, read our recent blog post on the topic!)

### Past strategy:

Manually adjust budgets/bids of campaigns, ad groups, keywords and products on a recurring basis to ensure that advertising funds are effectively allocated towards elements of your SEM portfolio.

### Present strategy:

Utilize automated SEM third-party bidding solutions provided by Google AdWords (i.e. enhanced CPC, target ROAS, target CPA) and/or third-party bid management tools (e.g. Kenshoo, Adobe, DoubleClick, Marin).

### Future strategy:

Leverage third-party bid management solution that factors in all customer touchpoints (both online & offline) and customer data (e.g. CLV, demographics, category affinities, etc.) to apply real-time, auction-by-auction bids with the goal of incremental traffic and sales from each individual customer – note that no-such bidding solution that meets all these criteria exists currently!

### Past strategy:

Siloed management and measurement of paid search (SEM) and organic search (SEO).

### Present strategy:

Consolidation of SEO and SEM management and a measurement model focused on net search performance (i.e. SEO + SEM). In doing so, advertisers can begin to understand how their efforts/investment in paid search are improving or cannibalizing their efforts in organic search (and vice versa), enabling the development of search marketing tactics focused on incremental search traffic and conversions.

### Future strategy:

Consolidated SEO + SEM measurement and management, enabling the development of search marketing tactics focused on incremental search traffic and conversions.

## Social media

### Past: Boost to broad audiences

When social media marketing first launched companies were scrambling to reach as many people as possible in any way possible in search of earning that coveted Like. Those were the years when organic reigned supreme and budgets were small. The mantra was: if you post it, they will come.

### Present: Personalize for Direct Targeting

Fast forward to today and organic is dead (or mostly) and budgets are high. The Like isn't as important as the Click, and a Click? Well that requires creating a number of highly refined messages that speak directly to a number of highly specific audience segments.

Targeting, Targeting, Targeting. Optimization, Optimization, Optimization. Beetlejuiice, Beetlejuiice, Beetle...

### Future: Validate with Influencer Marketing

Sure we can be friends of fans, they might like our product too, but when your IRL friend raves about that incredible restaurant they recently visited or the new beauty product they just bought, their opinion will have a much bigger influence on you. And if the fashion blogger you're obsessed with raves about the new sequin bomber jacket she bought at a steal on Instagram (complete with a pic of her out on the town), well you get the picture. Social influencer marketing is the "word of mouth" strategy your business will need to validate your brand and take your sales from \*sigh\* to flying high.

