

Home Depot: Give Holiday Shoppers 'Maximum Flexibility'

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Danielle Drolet



An interview with:
Dawn Erksa

senior director of marketing
Home Depot

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year, holiday shoppers have 32 days to complete their gift-giving checklists. This is the most time retailers will ever have, and it only happens every seven years. Dawn Erksa, senior director of marketing for The Home Depot spoke with eMarketer's Danielle Drolet about the home improvement giant's upcoming seasonal plans.

eMarketer:

What is Home Depot's outlook this holiday shopping season?

Dawn Erksa:

Holiday shopping is going to be more interconnected than ever this year. Consumers tend to expect a seamless shopping experience—between the physical and virtual world—and we're putting in a concerted effort toward that. We're always looking for ways to make it as easy as possible for customers to shop for, buy and receive the products or gifts that they need.

In addition to letting shoppers check store product availability via our site or mobile app, we're also incorporating voice and visual search into our efforts.

eMarketer:

As a retailer that has been especially successful in delivering an omnichannel experience, what, if anything, changes or gets magnified during the holiday season?

Dawn Erksa:

The holidays are a very busy time of year, so we want to reduce friction. We want to reduce stress by making the shopping experience as easy as we can for customers. To do that, we try to ensure that our store website and mobile experiences are synergistic to deliver that true interconnected shopping experience.

It's not just about click-and-collect anymore. Customers are expecting more today. We want to give customers maximum flexibility. If a

customer wants to buy in-store or online and have it delivered next-day or same-day—well, we can do that for them. If they want to buy online and they want to pick up in-store, we should be able to do that for them too. We need to allow the customer to lead us.

eMarketer:

Let's talk mobile. We released our first holiday mcommerce sales forecast this year, and are predicting strong growth of 32.6%, taking a 43.9% share of holiday ecommerce sales. What are your expectations for mobile this holiday season?

Dawn Erksa:

Mobile is very important for us during the holidays. There's no question that shoppers love their mobile devices, and are increasingly more comfortable shopping and buying on them. Mobile equals convenience for our customers.

It's interesting because we're seeing that people are using their mobile and in-app functionality even when they're within our stores. So, even if they're in our physical environment, they're still using our mobile app. This demonstrates the multichannel shopping experience that we're living in today.

eMarketer:

Is there greater use of your mobile app during the holiday rush? Are there any specific features within the app that resonate well with consumers?

Consumers are using their apps in more ways than before. They're using it to be inspired. They're using their mobile phone to comparison shop. They're also leveraging both their mobile devices, as well as our app for how-to content, to check inventory and to decide how they want those products delivered to them. From a feature standpoint, voice and visual search are generating the greatest adoption right now.

And specifically for holiday, during the holiday rush, there's so many people who want to avoid the crowded stores, so people are using their

phones to check prices and inventory. They're also trying to save themselves a trip to that physical store. They want to be able to shop and buy with ease, and then have it delivered to them by whatever means they choose.

When we get close to that Black Friday time period, we see that mobile app traffic can exceed some of the desktop traffic.

eMarketer:

In addition to Black Friday, this year we have an extended holiday shopping season (32 days between Thanksgiving and Christmas!). What is The Home Depot's mind-set on the longer time frame?

Obviously, it's great for customers to have more time to shop and for us to have more time to provide them with the products that they need. But there's a fundamental thing to remember here: People are always looking for value. They're starting to shop earlier, looking for gift ideas and comparing prices.

At Home Depot, we're what we call an "EDLP," an every-day-low-price provider for our customers. And when it comes to Black Friday and Cyber Monday, these are times where we feel we can delight customers, even more. Customers are still really attracted to the Black Friday time period. It's a day that creates a sense of excitement, immediacy and urgency for customers. Now, think purely as a consumer. I'm not even speaking as a marketer or retailer. How many people do you know actually still get up and want get out at 5am because it's tradition?

We're also seeing people are shopping for the holidays even earlier than you'd expect. Even before Halloween. Could you believe it? I think some people absolutely love the holiday time period, and they want to get ahead of it. We see all of this as an opportunity.

Dawn Erksa:

And don't forget after Christmas. There's definitely a continuation. People are still looking for great savings and to use their gifts cards.

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