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Cyber Monday: what you need to know

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Today is Cyber Monday, the busiest online shopping day of the year. CBR looks at what the experts suggest when it comes to making sure your systems can withstand the extra traffic

You may have read our guest blog on the best way to prepare your systems for today's [onslaught of Christmas shoppers](#) from Compuware, but what do other experts in the field suggest?

Eric Abensur, CEO at Venda, says don't let the economic uncertainty lull you into a false sense of security. Shoppers will be out in force: The Eurozone crisis and economic outlook has had a negative effect on consumer confidence and retail spending in recent months. However, the period between an early Cyber Monday and Mega Monday will kick-start Christmas with retailers seeing millions of UK shoppers seeking the best bargains from the comfort of their broadband-connected homes.

After last year, customers are wary of retailers' ability to deliver. Retailers need to stick to delivery promises and ensure deadlines and alternative collection methods are prominent onsite.

With the growth of mobile shopping, these consumers will also be researching and buying during odd moments throughout the day from their smartphones and tablets. That means retailers will see activity on web, mobile and social channels and they must ensure these are optimised to cope with and take advantage of heavy traffic during this period.

Those mastering scalability, search and linking to additional products will cope well with this peak traffic. Scalable sites are a must to ensure the site runs smoothly and crashes don't cause the retailer to lose customers at the last hurdle.

SEO, PPC and on-site search must also be optimised during this busy time to capitalise on new customers searching for specific gifts as well as those looking for inspiration for those hard-to-buy-for friends and relatives.

Retailers may not always have the inventory volumes or flexibility to manage a rush demand on products, so whilst they work to restock a particular item, they'll need to ensure they have the capability to redirect consumers to similar products or suggested alternatives. Carousels, graphics and promotions will also need to be updated in line with stock or retailers will risk frustrating shoppers by marketing the unobtainable."

Annette lafrate, UK managing director at Constant Contact, says good systems are not just for Christmas: For many small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs), the biggest challenge during the festive season is to convert Christmas shoppers into repeat buyers that will remain loyal to the business and sustain revenues throughout the rest of the year. This means thinking beyond festive offers and incentives and delivering an engaging experience that will prompt people to return to your business year after year.

Delivering an unrivalled customer experience through good service, relevant recommendations and incentives make a measurable difference on customer engagement, so can boost revenues well beyond the Christmas period.

Before and after Cyber Monday, it is important for businesses to stay connected with these seasonal customers. SMBs need to ensure they are collecting contact details wherever possible, whether through an 'add to mailing list' tab online, 'Liking' on Facebook, or asking them to fill out details on forms in store. Going the extra mile and providing customers with relevant, concise and personalised emails will strengthen relationships.

Customer satisfaction is the best way to acquire new shoppers, as existing ones leave positive feedback which converts would-be customers, so it's important to dedicate time to perfecting their experience during such a busy shopping period.

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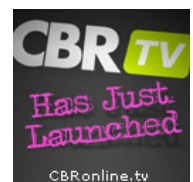
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time of year when cybercriminals are at their worst.

If a security threat arises or an IT mishap gets in the way of a customer making a payment online, it can damage an organisation's reputation and the last thing retailers want is for the customer to go elsewhere. Our research shows that 84% of organisations surveyed in the UK, France and Germany have fallen victim to cyber attacks in the past 12 months, and over 76% of respondents claim that such attacks have become more severe and difficult to contain. In times of austerity, security can sometimes be one of the first things that gets overlooked.

It is important for companies to think beyond the conventional network security methods. Juniper Networks recommends that a more aggressive approach to security is needed which not only protects the network, but also applications, devices and ultimately the end-user, in order to mitigate risk and avoid being vulnerable. Security is simply not something that can be ignored.

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GeorgeW3 2 hours ago

Regarding the retailer's ability to deliver, if the website doesn't state something like "ships within X days," don't buy there. Otherwise, you may end up with a Christmas present delivered to you in January.

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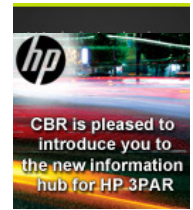
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