

WHITE PAPER

AFTER BLACK FRIDAY: How to turn your holiday shoppers into profitable customers

The guide to making your Q4 customers profitable, on web and app



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INTRODUCTION

The end-of-year paradox



November and December bring you more new customers than any other time of year. They are also the customers you paid the most to acquire. And many of them will only ever buy once.

Most e-commerce brands know this paradox well. Black Friday sends sales soaring, but it also sends advertising costs through the roof. Once the holidays are over, dashboards show strong revenue... and often disappointing profitability.

The good news is that the game isn't over on December 25. **The post-holiday period is one of the best times of the year to bring these customers back**, and to recruit new ones at a lower cost.

-60%

in advertising costs between mid-December and January 1, on campaigns run by Addict Mobile in late 2025

This guide takes you step by step, from December preparation all the way to Valentine's Day. It draws on the experience of our teams, who run web and app campaigns every day on **Meta, Google, TikTok, Snapchat** and any other relevant channel. No unnecessary jargon: just benchmarks, concrete examples and an action plan you can put to work before the end of the year.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS GUIDE

- Why your Q4 customers are a long-term financial opportunity
- How to turn your holiday shoppers into advertising audiences
- How to make the most of "Q5", the post-holiday window many brands miss
- Which paid media levers bring them back, on your website and in your app
- How to measure the true profitability of your customers, beyond the first purchase



CHAPTER 1

Why Q4 customers are expensive... and quick to leave



Customers recruited during Black Friday cost more, simply because every brand wants to reach them at the same time. Over the past three years, our data shows CPMs rising by 50 to 100% between November 1 and Black Friday.

An ad auction at its peak

On Meta, Google or TikTok, ad space works like an auction. When every brand increases its budget in the same week, prices rise for everyone. A study of more than 1,200 Meta e-commerce accounts found **CPMs 41% above the annual average in November 2025 (MHI Growth Engine)**.

Purchase
conversion
rates **x3**

This isn't necessarily a bad deal. **Over the same period, we see purchase conversion rates triple.** Higher media costs remain profitable as long as sales keep up.

One-off purchase motivations

The real issue is what happens next. Many holiday shoppers don't come for your brand, but for an occasion: **a big discount, a gift to find, delivery before Christmas. Once the occasion has passed, nothing naturally prompts them to come back.**



The result: if you measure profitability on that first purchase alone, some of these customers never pay back their acquisition cost.

Yet these customers are an asset

This is where it all happens. These shoppers are no longer strangers: they have visited your site or app, browsed products and placed an order. They have left signals that ad platforms know how to use.

In other words, you have already paid the highest price: the first encounter. Bringing them back costs far less than recruiting new ones, as long as you do it at the right time and with the right message.

Key end-of-year figures

+50 to 100%

Rise in CPMs between November 1 and Black Friday

Addict Mobile, 2023-2025

x3

Purchase conversion rate during Black Friday

Addict Mobile, 2023-2025

70%

Of online orders placed on mobile during Cyber Week 2025

Salesforce

-60%

Drop in CPMs between mid-December and January 1

Addict Mobile, Q5 2025

Key takeaway

Q4 makes you pay a high price for the first encounter. The challenge of the following weeks is to make that investment pay off.



CHAPTER 2

The 3 types of holiday shoppers seen as ad audiences



Not all your Q4 shoppers are alike, and your campaigns shouldn't speak to them the same way. No need for complex segmentation: three profiles are enough to get started, and each one matches an audience you can build on Meta, Google or TikTok.



The bargain hunter

They bought because the discount was big. They compare, wait for deals, and will be back... for the next one. A profile that reacts strongly to key sales moments.

Campaign focus:

Retarget them at the right time, during the winter sales, with a clear, readable offer. Focus pressure on the dates that matter to them.



The gift buyer

They bought for someone else and may not feel connected to your brand. The hardest profile to bring back... except at one specific moment.

Campaign focus:

Talk to them about themselves between December 26 and 31: gift cards, treating yourself. If they don't respond, exclude them rather than paying to target someone who won't buy anyway.



The new brand fan

They discovered your brand in Q4 and liked the product. They may have installed your app, and they have real repeat-purchase potential. Your most valuable profile.

Campaign focus:

Bring them back with products that complement their first purchase, then use them as a model to build lookalike audiences.

In summary

Profile	What made them buy	Key moment to re-engage	What your campaigns tell them
Bargain hunter	The discount	Winter sales	"Your deal is back"
Gift buyer	The occasion	December 26 to 31	"What about you?", "Use your gift card"
New fan	The product	From Janaury, then at every key moment	"Complete your purchase", new arrivals

How do you spot them in practice? You don't need sophisticated tools. Average basket, product category, use of a promo code or a gift-wrap option, number of pages viewed before purchase: these signals are enough to draw a first segmentation, which your agency or media team will turn into audiences.

Key takeaway

A Q4 shopper isn't a line in a file, it's an ad audience. Well segmented, it costs you less and converts better.



CHAPTER 3

Before December 26 get your data and audiences ready



The post-holiday window opens on December 26 and only lasts a few weeks. The brands that benefit most are the ones that prepared everything before Christmas. Three workstreams are enough, and they can be handled while your Black Friday campaigns are still running.



Workstream 1: check that your data flows correctly

Your re-engagement campaigns rely on one simple condition: the platforms need to know who bought what. If a purchase on your site or in your app isn't tracked correctly, that buyer will never join your re-engagement audience.

In practice:



Check that the key steps of the journey (product view, add to cart, purchase) are correctly reported to the platforms and to your analytics tools, with the right order value.



Also test the full journey, from the ad to the confirmation page: a link that sends people to the homepage rather than the advertised product is enough to make conversion drop.

AN EXAMPLE FROM OUR CAMPAIGNS

Before every key sales moment, we test the journey in real conditions: we click on the ads, add to cart and place an order, on the site and in the app. It's the only way to make sure no event is missing before increasing budgets.



Workstream 2: build your audiences and exclusions

Based on the profiles above, create the following in your platforms:

- ✓ **A “Q4 buyers” audience**, segmented by the three profiles if possible
- ✓ **A “visitors and cart abandoners” audience**, people who browsed without buying during the peak
- ✓ **One or two lookalike audiences**, built from your best new customers
- ✓ **Exclusions**, so you don't pay to advertise to someone who just bought the same product

Exclusions are often forgotten. Yet they are what stops you from bombarding a happy customer with ads for a product they have already received.

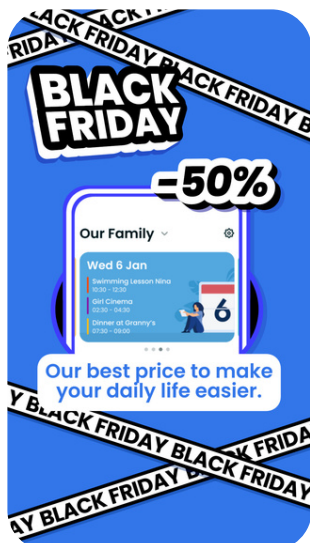


Workstream 3: prepare your Q5 creatives in advance

On December 26, teams are on holiday and ad platforms take longer to approve ads. Your Q5 creatives must therefore be ready and approved before Christmas.

No need to start from scratch. Take your best Black Friday ads and change the tone: move away from black, red and “-50%” towards lighter colours and messages focused on treating yourself and the new year. **We did this for the FamilyWall app: the same visual base, adapted from a Black Friday message to a “new year” message.**

Black Friday



New Year



Your Christmas checklist

- ✓ Product view, add-to-cart and purchase events are tracked on the site and in the app
- ✓ The product catalog is up to date: prices, stock, sold-out items excluded
- ✓ Ad links go straight to the right product, including in the app
- ✓ Q4 buyer, visitor and lookalike audiences are created
- ✓ Recent-buyer exclusions are in place
- ✓ Q5 creatives are produced and approved by the platforms
- ✓ Budgets from December 26 to January 15 are agreed internally

Key takeaway

Q5 is won before Christmas. Anything not ready by December 24 often comes too late.



CHAPTER 4

Q5: the window your competitors miss



Between December 26 and mid-January comes what advertisers call “Q5”, an unofficial fifth quarter. Ad costs are among the lowest of the season, while consumers keep buying. It's the best time of the year to re-engage your Q4 shoppers.

THE FOUR STAGES OF THE SEASON

Black Friday Peak

November 1 to 30

CPMs up 50 to 100%, conversions x3

You recruit lots of new customers, but at a high cost

Christmas

December 1 to 24

Costs still high, purchases focused on gifts

You prepare data, audiences and creatives

Q5

December 26 to January 15

CPMs down around 60% from mid-December to January 1

Self-gifting, gift cards, new year: you re-engage

Sales & Valentine's Day

January 6 to February 14

Ad competition gradually returns

You re-engage and balance acquisition and retargeting

Three reasons not to pause your campaigns after Christmas

Costs drop. On the campaigns we ran in late 2025, CPMs fell by around 60% between mid-December and January 1. They then rise gradually in January, without returning to pre-holiday levels. Meta reports the same trend: according to its data, CPMs hit their lowest level of the season during Q5, and cost per purchase drops back below its pre-Black Friday level.



Customers stay active. Many have gift cards to spend, others treat themselves to what they didn't get for Christmas. The start of the year is also the time for resolutions and “fresh starts”.

Competition eases off. After a saturated Q4, many brands have used up their budgets or paused their campaigns. Ad space frees up, and every euro invested goes further.

Two moments, two messages

Period	Goal	Messages that work
December 26 to 31	Capture self-gifting and gift card spending	“Treat yourself”, “Use your gift card”
January 1 to 15	Ride the new year	“Start the year right”, “Fresh start”

Acquire and re-engage at the same time

Q5 isn't just for re-engagement. Low costs also make it a good time to recruit new customers, especially through lookalike audiences built from your best Q4 buyers.

Our recommendation: do both. Re-engaging your Q4 buyers secures profitability, while acquisition benefits from prices you won't see again for months.



WHAT IF I DO NOTHING?

Pausing your campaigns on December 24 means missing the period when reaching people costs the least. It also means letting your Q4 buyers forget your brand right before the sales. **If your budget is tight, it's often more profitable to spread it across late December and January than to put everything into Black Friday.**



Key takeaway

Low costs, an active audience, less competition. Q5 is the ideal time to make your Q4 customers profitable.

CHAPTER 5

Win back with paid media

Retargeting and beyond



Retargeting remains the most direct lever to bring a customer back. But to make your Q4 customers profitable, showing them the product they already bought isn't enough. Here are the five levers we activate.

+118 %

on iOS

+177 %

on Android

in install-to-purchase conversion rate thanks to remarketing campaigns (AppsFlyer)

1. Seamless web and app retargeting

Your customer may have discovered your brand on your website, then installed the app. Or the other way round. Retargeting should follow them wherever they feel most comfortable buying.

In practice, an ad seen on Instagram should open the right product directly: in the app if it's installed, on the website otherwise. **These smart links (deep links) stop a motivated customer from landing on a homepage and giving up.** Dynamic product ads do the rest: they automatically show each person the items they viewed or products that complement their purchase.

2. Lookalike audiences to recruit “good” customers

Your best new Q4 customers are an excellent starting point for finding more. Platforms analyse their characteristics and look for people who resemble them. **During Q5, when costs are low, it's one of the most effective ways to recruit high-potential customers rather than mere deal hunters.**



3. The right platform mix

Each platform plays a different role. Combining them lets you reach your customers at several points in their journey.

Platform	Its role in re_engagement
Meta (Facebook, Instagram)	The backbone of retargeting and conversion, with dynamic product ads
Google (Search, Shopping, Performance Max)	Capture customers when they're actively searching for your brand or products
TikTok	Discovery and creative testing; more and more users search for products there
Snapchat	A complement to TikTok, particularly effective with 18-34 year-olds

You can also go beyond these major platforms. With **Lalalab**, we extended campaigns to other media sources such as **Moloco**, a partner DSP.

CASE STUDY: LALALAB

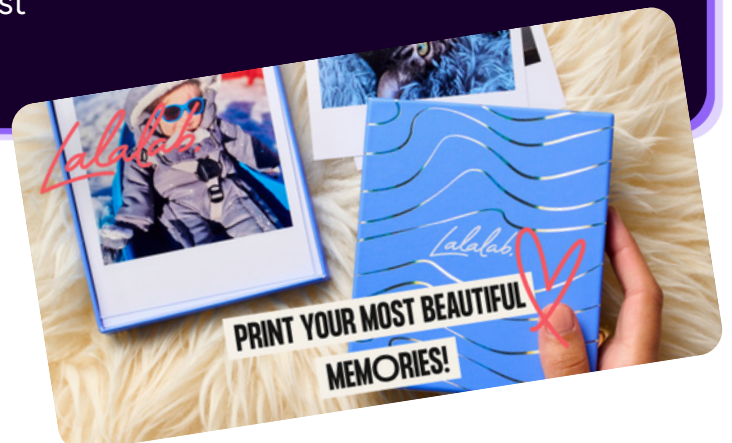
+12 %

ROAS

-9%

Customer
acquisition cost
vs average

And the highest average basket
of all acquisition campaigns.



4. Fresh creatives

A customer who has seen your Black Friday ads for three weeks no longer notices them. To get a reaction in January, you need to show them something new.



Change the tone: from “-50%” to “new year”, from gifts for others to treating yourself.



Favour short videos: under 15 seconds, with the offer clear from the very first seconds.



Bet on UGC: creator content showing the product in real life, in the style of TikTok, Reels or Snapchat. It builds trust and is quick to test.



Keep retargeting visuals simple: a customer who already knows the brand mainly needs a clear message and a reason to act.

5. The right ad pressure

Re-engaging doesn't mean harassing. A customer who sees the same ad ten times a day ends up ignoring it, or even getting tired of the brand.

Three simple rules:



Cap the number of impressions per person, exclude customers who have just bought again, and avoid escalating discounts.



Offering 30% off to a customer who would have bought anyway is margin lost for nothing.



Save strong offers for the profiles that need them, such as bargain hunters, and lean on new arrivals or complementary products for the rest.



AN EXAMPLE FROM OUR CAMPAIGNS

For a player in the photo sector, combining awareness and performance campaigns made it possible, despite rising CPMs at year end, to diversify audiences, hit acquisition targets and grow the number of monthly active users.



Key takeaway

Retargeting is the starting point, not the whole strategy. Audiences, creatives and the right dosage are what make the difference.

CHAPTER 6

Winter sales and Valentine's Day: keeping the momentum



Q5 isn't an end in itself: **it's a springboard to the key sales moments of early year.** In France, the 2027 winter sales start on Wednesday, January 6 and run for four weeks, until Tuesday, February 2. Valentine's Day follows right after, on Sunday, February 14. Your Q4 shoppers therefore have two new reasons to come back in less than six weeks.

Early-year key moments

Key moment	2027 dates	Priority profile	Message angle
End of Q5	January 1 to 15	New fans, gift buyers	New year, gift cards, new arrivals
Winter sales	January 6 to February 2	Bargain hunters	Low prices are back, products viewed in Q4
Valentine's Day	Late January to February 14	New fans, Q4 gift buyers	Gift ideas, buying "for someone else" again

The sales overlap with the end of Q5. That's not a problem, quite the opposite: you can run "sales" messages for bargain hunters and "new year" messages for other profiles in parallel, without one cannibalising the other.

Adjust your budget week by week

The right split between acquisition and re-engagement isn't fixed. It evolves with costs and with the maturity of your audiences.



Late December: costs are at their lowest. It's the time to give more weight to acquisition, especially through lookalike audiences, while re-engaging gift buyers.



During the sales: competition returns and costs rise again. Re-engaging your Q4 buyers becomes more profitable than pure acquisition, because these customers already know the brand.



Before Valentine's Day: purchases become gift purchases again. Your December gift buyers are a relevant target once more, as are new fans.

Build on what Q5 taught you

The relative calm of the post-holiday period has an often underestimated advantage: results are easier to read. **Less competition and fewer promotions everywhere means less noise in your data.**

Use it to identify what really worked:

Which audiences
bought again?

Which creatives caught
attention?

Which platform brought
the most profitable
customers?

These insights will help you for the sales, then for the following key moments, such as the French Days in spring.



AN EXAMPLE FROM OUR CAMPAIGNS

For **Molotov**, we worked to boost subscriptions both in the app and on the web during the World Cup, a short and intense key moment. The logic is the same as in early year: prepare in advance, then adjust campaigns to the pace of the event.



Key takeaway

Every early-year key moment is a new opportunity to bring your Q4 customers back. The target profile and the message change, the logic stays the same.



CHAPTER 7

Measuring what **really** matters



A Q4 customer judged only on their first purchase often looks unprofitable. Judged over six months, they can become one of your best investments. **How you measure therefore directly shapes the decisions you make.**

From immediate ROAS to customer value

ROAS (revenue generated per €1 of advertising) is the most closely watched metric in e-commerce. It's useful for managing campaigns day to day, but it has one limit: it only looks at the immediate sale.

EXAMPLE:

First purchase, Black Friday

-€22

Acquisition cost: €40

Revenue: €18

Margin generated (30 %): €18

6 months later, 2 more sales

+€4

Total cost: €40 + €10 retargeting

Revenue: €180

Margin generated (30 %): €54

On the first purchase alone, this customer loses money. Six months later, thanks to two extra purchases obtained at a low re-engagement cost, they have become profitable. Without this long-term view, the temptation would be to cut the campaigns that recruited them.

Track your customers by “cohort”

A cohort is simply a group of customers acquired during the same period. Tracking the “Black Friday 2026” cohort month after month answers one essential question: **how much did these customers bring in overall, and how long did it take them to pay back their acquisition cost?**

Then compare cohorts with each other: do customers acquired on Black Friday come back more or less than those acquired in January? Are those from TikTok more loyal than those from Google? These answers are what let you allocate next year's budgets.

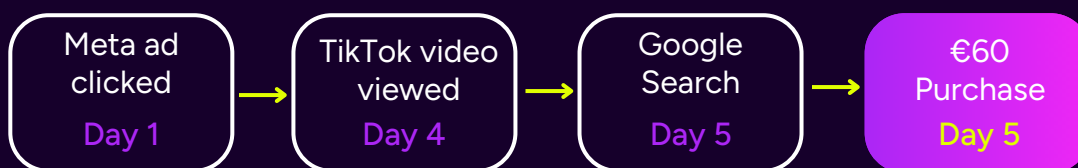
Four metrics to steer without drowning

Metric	What it tells you	How often to track it
ROAS	Are your campaigns profitable today?	Daily during key moments
Customer acquisition cost (CAC)	How much does a new customer cost you?	Weekly
Repeat purchase rate	What share of your Q4 customers bought again?	Monthly
LTV at 3 and 6 months	How much is a customer really worth over time?	Monthly, by cohort

Attribution: why the numbers don't add up, and how to make sense of them

It's a question every e-commerce brand asks. Meta, Google and TikTok each measure the sales they helped generate, using their own rules. **The same purchase can therefore be claimed by several platforms at once: adding up their results gives a total higher than your actual sales.**

ONE PURCHASE, THREE PLATFORMS CLAIMING IT



Meta: 1 sale (click)

TikTok: 1 sale (view)

Google: 1 sale (click)

In reality: 1 sale

Total reported by the platforms: 3 sales, i.e. €180.

Actual sales: 1, i.e. €60.

This is what's known as **attribution**: the rule that decides which ad “deserves” a sale. Each platform applies its own, and each tends to give itself the starring role. Three concepts are enough to find your way.

Attribution windows: how long a platform can claim a sale

A platform credits itself with a purchase if it happens within a certain time after a click, or after simply viewing an ad. Default settings differ from one platform to another:

Platform	After a click	After a view
Meta	7 days	1 day
TikTok	7 days	1 day
Google Ads	30 days	Not counted by default on Search

In the example above, the sale is counted three times because each interaction falls within its platform's window: the Meta click happened 4 days before the purchase (under 7 days), the TikTok view the day before (under 1 day), the Google search the same day.

In practice: **before comparing two platforms, make sure they're measured with equivalent windows.** And be wary of “view-through” sales: they often inflate the results of video and retargeting campaigns.

Web and app: two measurement systems to reconcile



On the website, your analytics tool (GA4, for example) tracks visits and purchases. Ad blockers and cookie refusals mean some signals get lost, which is why the pixel is complemented by server-side tracking (Meta's Conversions API or TikTok's Events API), which sends purchases directly from your servers.



In the app, a dedicated measurement tool called an MMP (such as Adjust or AppsFlyer) links each install and each purchase to the campaign it came from.



On iPhone, users must accept ad tracking. For those who decline, Apple only shares aggregated data, with a delay of one to several days. In practice, app campaign results on iOS show up late and in less detail. Don't cut a campaign after 48 hours based on these figures alone.

The challenge is to reconcile these sources to get a single view of your customers, whether they buy on the website or in the app.

A SINGLE VIEW... AND FLEXIBLE BUDGETS

Reconciling measurement only matters if you can act on what it reveals. Yet in many companies, budgets are siloed: an app budget, a web budget, a budget per platform, a promotions budget, often managed by different teams.

Working in silos costs profitability. If your Q4 buyers buy more in the app than on the website during the sales, or if TikTok becomes more profitable than Meta in January, teams can't shift their investment to what works best.



Our recommendation: set an overall profitability goal (for example a target acquisition cost or customer value), then keep a “flexible” share of the budget that you can reallocate each week between web, app, platforms and promotions based on results.

Incrementality: the sales advertising really created

This is the most important question: how many sales would not have happened without advertising? A loyal customer who would have come back anyway during the sales will still be counted by your retargeting campaign.

The simplest method is a **control group**: a random share of the audience (10 to 20%) is excluded from the campaign for 2 to 4 weeks, then the purchase rates of the two groups are compared. Meta and Google also offer their own tests ("Conversion Lift"), and you can compare exposed and non-exposed regions.

EXAMPLE

Your retargeting campaign targets 100,000 Q4 buyers. 10% of them are set aside as a control group.



After three weeks, 5% of exposed customers bought again, versus 4% in the control group.

- Without advertising, 4 out of 5 customers would have come back anyway: only one sale in five claimed by the campaign was actually created by it.
- This figure, not the ROAS shown by the platform, tells you whether the campaign is profitable.

Three best practices

- ✓ **Choose a single source of truth for your budget decisions**, your analytics tool or your MMP, rather than the sum of the platforms' figures.
- ✓ **Align your settings (attribution windows, tracked events)** before comparing Meta, Google and TikTok with each other.
- ✓ **Test incrementality at least once a year**, ideally on your retargeting campaigns, to check that they really generate additional sales.



Key takeaway

A sale claimed by a platform isn't necessarily a sale it created. Judge your campaigns on what they really bring in, over several months.

CHAPTER 8

Your action plan from December to February

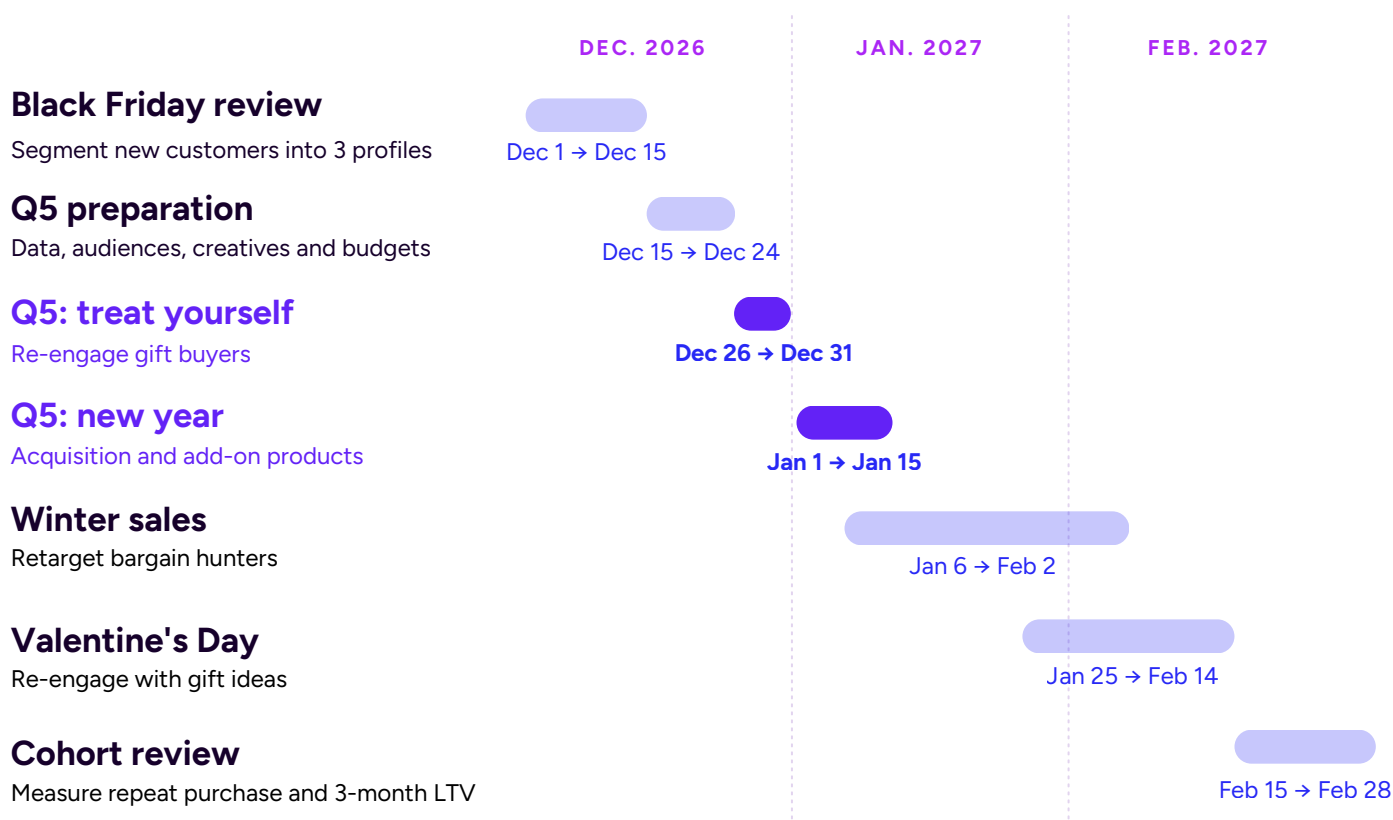


Here is what to do, period by period, to turn your Q4 shoppers into profitable customers. Keep this calendar handy and share it with your team or your agency.



Key Takeaway

The periods overlap on purpose: the sales start during Q5, and Valentine's Day is prepared during the sales. The most decisive moment remains the week before Christmas, when everything must be ready for December 26. A clear calendar, prepared in advance, keeps you from being caught off guard by the season.



CONCLUSION

The season doesn't end on December 25

Black Friday and Christmas bring you customers, often at a high price. What makes the difference is what you do with them next.

The brands that get the most out of their year end aren't necessarily the ones that spent the most in November. They're the ones that prepared their data and audiences before Christmas, took advantage of low Q5 costs, and knew how to speak to each shopper profile at the right time. They're also the ones that judge their customers over several months, not on a single purchase.

None of this requires complex tools. All it takes is a clear method, a calendar planned ahead and rigorously managed campaigns.

Want to go further?

Our experts offer a free audit of your end-of-year campaigns and re-engagement audiences, on your website and in your app. You'll leave with concrete recommendations, ready to apply before Q5.

[Request my free audit ↗](#)

About Addict Mobile

Addict Mobile is a performance marketing agency for web and apps, part of the Digital Virgo group. Our teams manage acquisition, retargeting, creative production (including UGC) and conversion optimisation on Meta, Google, TikTok, Snapchat and beyond.

Discover our e-commerce expertise:

[Our e-commerce offer](#)

Sources

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