



## 2017 Holiday Marketing Timeline

### July-August

Now's the time to work on your store, office, vehicles and even employees looking their best. With warm weather in your favor, take advantage by painting, making repairs and deep cleaning your business. And include anywhere a customer or client may see. Have a running "to do" list that employees can use during slow times to start getting things done, big and small. Look into new and updated employee shirts or uniforms or have holiday ones designed (remember the Chamber's "Shift Your Shopping" logo? Feel free to use it on t-shirts, signage and in your advertising). If you have company cars or trucks, get them in for maintenance to avoid costly break-downs over the holidays.

Also, there are some things that are just necessities. Use the summer months to make sure these get done. Need help? Utilize a chamber member ad agency to help guide you. They're happy to help with any size project. Visit the chamber website at [www.jeffersoncountychamber](http://www.jeffersoncountychamber) for a complete listing. Here's what you need to have at minimum.

A website - even if it's very basic. They are affordable, easy to do and can be up quickly. Even if all you include for now is your name, logo, location, phone number, hours and what you're selling – it's much better than no web presence at all. And a Facebook page is nice but should be a compliment to your website, not your only online presence.

A logo - Again, it can be very simple, but you must have one and have it in the correct format and size so that it's usable in all of your advertising. Even if it's just your business name in a set color and font – it helps provide consistency in your marketing when it's used in all of your promotions and advertising.

A customer service policy – from how your employees answer the phone and handle a customer's question to returning phone calls in a timely manner and dealing with complaints, make sure your staff is clear on how everything is handled and make training an ongoing process. Also, don't allow employees to converse or gossip in earshot of customers, especially when it's negative comments about work, your business or another customer – it sends a terrible message.

A good phone system – whether it's voicemail, call forwarding or an old-fashioned answering machine, anything is better than no answer at all. You won't often get a second chance at gaining a customer if they don't get an answer, especially during the busy holiday season. No answer during what are supposed to be regular business hours is a huge red flag.

## **September**

Craft some creative text and sample ads for your holiday specials. Have a brainstorming session with employees to come up with copy for sales or events that you know will be on the schedule. Be sure to make them fit the medium – radio, television, social media, print – each is different. Poll customers, friends and family to see which ads they like best. Once you're happy with the offerings and your text, talk to your marketing person or graphic designer about implementing them onto your website and Facebook page. Now's also the time to check with suppliers to be sure they can meet your holiday needs. There's nothing worse than promoting a product and then not being able to provide it when the customer stops in.

## **October**

Design and schedule an email marketing blast to go out to everyone on your list. If you're really prepared, you've collected email addresses throughout the year from customers so you have a wide base of possible customers that *want* to be exposed to your holiday specials. Use the Chamber for affordable Eblasts but be sure they are high quality marketing pieces with no typos or outdated information. Coupons, one-day deals and other promotions that have a deadline are effective since they create urgency. Put a social media marketing calendar in place. (Watch next week's In The Know for how). This will take the guesswork and panic out of what you're going to post and when.

## **November**

This is when your hard work from the summer and early fall will pay off. Send out the emails you prepared earlier in the summer. Have employees or family and friends continually find out where people are talking about holiday and online shopping and direct them to your site or Facebook page. Post to your Facebook page and follow the social media calendar that you prepared in October, adding posts and timely items when you can that may pertain to the weather or stories in the news. Ex: "Snow is coming. Do you have a quality shovel and salt?" or "Come in tonight for wing and drink specials while we cheer on the Steelers!"

## **December**

Send out your last email blast and then take advantage of last-minute shoppers by offering them "one click" buying from the homepage. Provide last minute gift options, dinner specials or money-saving services that will help make customers' holidays easier and less stressful. Offer free shipping or delivery. And don't let the holiday crowds be an excuse for a messy or dirty store, store front, display or restroom.

## **Have a Stress-Free Holiday Season**

Plan ahead. Get content ready early. Follow your social media calendar and keep employees in line with customer service issues. This time of year is extremely competitive, and if you have a strategy in place early, the holidays won't seem so hectic and sales will reflect your hard work and planning.