

2019 HOLIDAY READINESS GUIDE

Proven strategies that bring holiday success and shopper happiness together.



salesforce

Power Your Best Holiday Season Yet

It's the most wonderful time of the year – to meet shoppers where they are with differentiated, personalized experiences.

We're here to help you every step of the way to deliver what shoppers expect – and to give them a few extra welcome surprises. Based on our experience helping hundreds of brands achieve holiday success, we've collected practical tips and strategies to apply now, including tools to extend your brand across your owned and third-party channels. Plus, get a view into the latest trends and discover what's changed since last year.

This is everything you need to know to power your best holiday shopping season yet.



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MEET ASTRO:

Hi, I'm Astro.

My friends and I love showing Trailblazers like you around Salesforce and its business solutions. Follow along as we guide you down the path to holiday readiness.



GET HOLIDAY-READY: EXPLORE OUR HOLIDAY READINESS HEADQUARTERS

Visit [the HQ](#) to discover all of the monthly tips and strategies your teams need to be well-prepared for peak holiday season.

Chapter 1: Plan Holiday Campaigns and Promotions

It's time to map out your holiday campaigns and promotions by digging into data and understanding shopper preferences across marketing, commerce, and service channels. These are your top to-do's.

Create an integrated promotional calendar.

Retailers can combine what worked last year, such as the emails that drove the most site visits or the product bundles that led to high conversion, with what's new this year. Use this as your base to create:

- Special gift promotions
- Gifts grouped by price or personality type
- Must-have stocking stuffers

Learn, evolve, and scale existing campaigns.

Draw on your most effective campaigns from the past year to get a read on what will make an impact on your shoppers during the holiday season. Adapt these successful campaigns for the holidays at scale.

SPOTLIGHT: HICKORY FARMS

[Hickory Farms](#), a food brand synonymous with holiday gatherings, saw 125% revenue growth from email traffic thanks to an interactive email program that included automated journeys, quizzes, polls, countdowns, and more to engage shoppers planning for holiday gifting.

CAMPAIGN
EVALUATION



PROMOTIONAL
CALENDAR



OPERATIONS
PREPARATION



INVENTORY
PLANNING



DATA
PROFILING



DATA
COLLECTION



DATA
ORGANIZATION



AUDIENCE
SEGMENTATION



A/B
TESTING



AUDIENCE
EXPANSION



Align with inventory planning.

Your inventory planning team should ensure marketed products have the right levels of inventory support throughout the season. If sales don't track according to plan, there should be a contingency in place.

Prepare your operations teams.

First, map critical functions and goals to the right systems and teams, including online account management, in-store experience, purchase updates, and marketing key performance indicators (KPIs). From there, you're able to identify potential failure points and bottlenecks in your operations and develop a test plan with the steps needed to solve them.

Collect data early for maximum holiday impact.

Names and email addresses are your baseline. You can also gather demographic information, purchase history, and ad impressions to maximize impact.

Build better data profiles.

Find the overlaps in consumer touchpoints to uncover things like where shoppers click and the time of day they open email. These trends will inform how you approach dynamically serving up future personalized content and offers.

Create audience segments based on preference.

Forty percent of consumers won't shop with a brand that doesn't use their preferred channel.¹ Ask shoppers directly how they like to receive promotions, special offers, and other messaging with surveys located on an on-site preference center or your mobile app.

Keep data organized – and protected.

Nearly half (46%) of consumers aren't confident that companies protect their data.¹ Ensure your teams are easily able to access, understand, and use data properly with an easy-to-use database structure – like using rows to represent records and columns to represent fields.



¹ "State of the Connected Customer," Salesforce Research, 2019.

Expand your audience with second- and third-party data.

Gain a better understanding of search habits and behaviors beyond what your owned platforms can tell you by using premier data providers like [Nielsen](#) and [Acxiom](#) that are backed by consumer trust and consent.

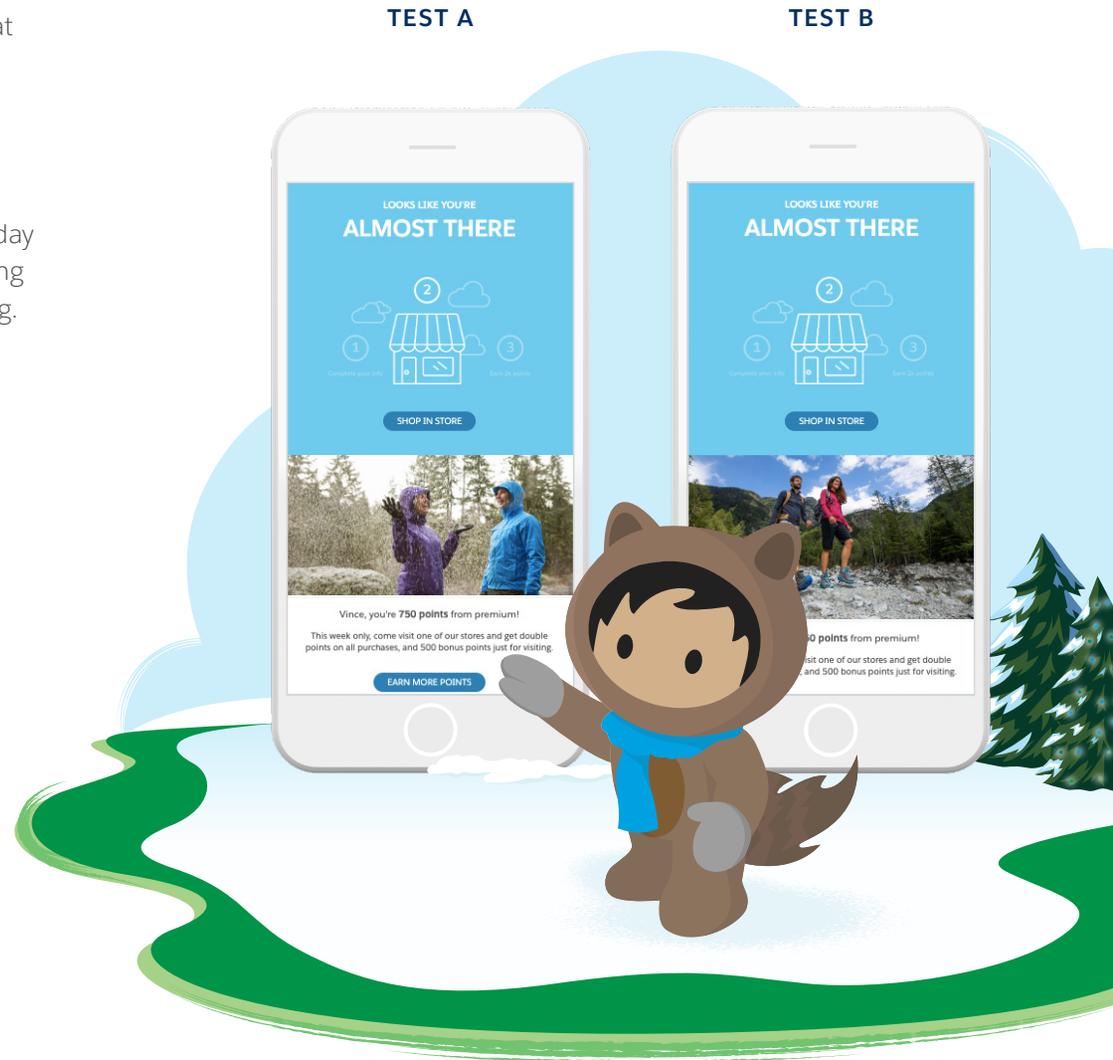
Test your messaging all season long.

A/B test offers, creative, content, and tactical elements such as time of day to increase messaging effectiveness and see what's resonating and driving results. Adjust accordingly and apply learnings to kickstart 2020 planning.

“The reason why a readiness plan is important is because it builds confidence in your organization that you are going to deliver on what your expectations are.”

– Zachary Bezyak

Senior Manager, Marketing Technology & Operations, Best Buy



Chapter 2: Boost SEO with Holiday-Specific Shopping Pages

Help shoppers check everything off their lists with holiday-specific content pages that surface curated and personalized gift ideas.

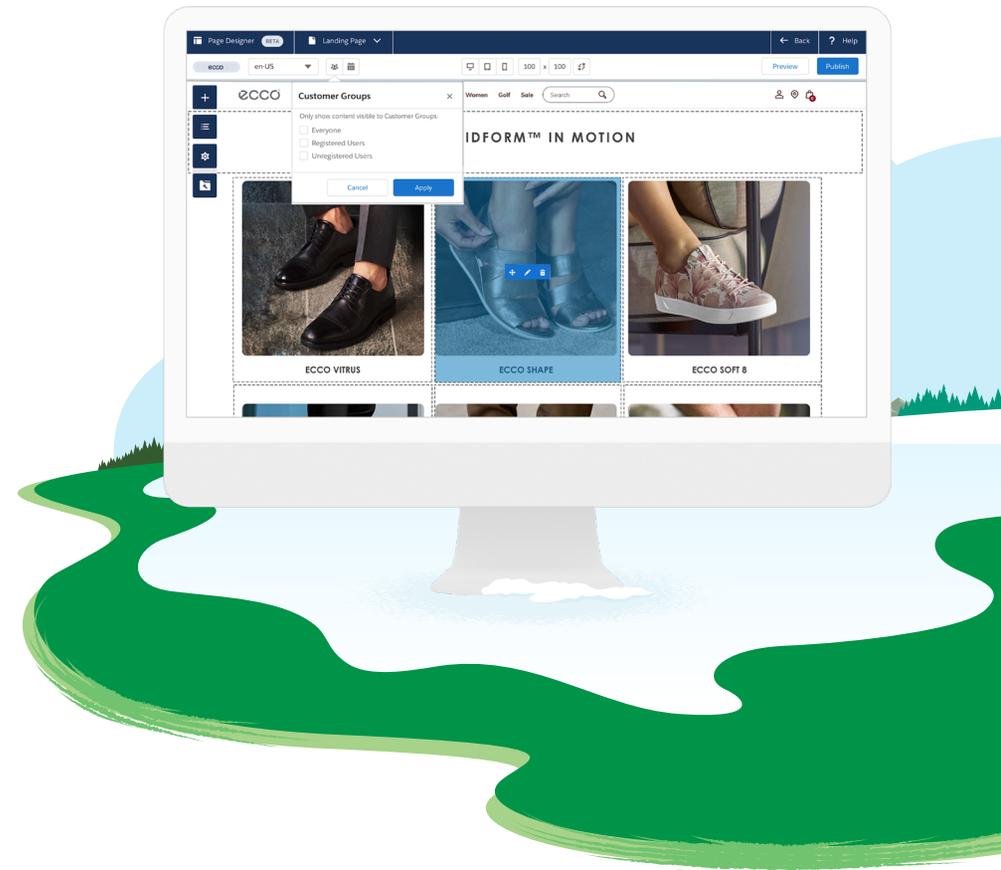
Launch holiday shopping landing pages.

Develop and manage engaging holiday pages in just a few clicks – no HTML required – with tools like [Commerce Cloud Page Designer](#). It's easy for marketers and merchandisers to implement pages because developers pull the Page Designer framework and solutions toolkit to translate design and business requirements into reusable components.

- Design, schedule, and publish new holiday pages.
- Drag and drop content with a visual editor to make updates easily.
- Build pages with reusable components from other pages without having to design from scratch.
- Preview changes across any device type, persona, schedule, or locale and make adjustments in real time.

SPOTLIGHT: MZ WALLACE

Luxury bag designer [MZ Wallace](#) launched gift guides tailored to the interests of their customers – travelers, students, fitness fanatics, and working professionals. These curated pages showcase unique product sets for more relevant campaigns that drive holiday sales.



Create holiday gift guides early.

Gift guides are an important component of every holiday strategy. You can organize them by recipient, category, or price point. Be sure to include an easy-to-find add-to-cart button to help shoppers build wish lists and drive conversion.

Rank for search engine optimization (SEO) before the season even starts with popular gift-related keywords and terms like “gifting,” “gift guide,” “holiday gifts,” and “stocking stuffers.” For an added boost in SEO, consider launching “sneak peek” or “coming soon” pages in September to generate excitement and help shoppers start gift planning early while boosting your SEO ranking.



WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO TO IMPROVE YOUR HOLIDAY SEO STRATEGY?

1. Ensure there's overlap between your existing [metadata](#) and holiday queries.
2. Test your top 50 terms from last year's season to see if the results were optimized.
3. Add your new products to this year's search strategy.
4. Redirect shoppers to dedicated holiday pages as soon as they land on your site.
5. Gain deeper insight into search with open tools like [Google Trends](#) and [AnswerThePublic](#) for emerging keyword trends and search intent by device.

Chapter 3: Master Holiday Site Search

Site search is a powerful tool that shoppers use more than ever to research products across every device.

In fact, the 2018 holiday shopping season saw an uptick in site search usage. Revenue from shoppers who used site search rose to 24%.¹ Here's how you can improve your search experience.

Put the search bar front and center.

A persistent search bar in lieu of a search icon at the top of each page keeps search easily accessible to shoppers and drives conversion.

Account for misspellings and low-converting terms.

Avoid missing out on search by adding the most common spellings (and misspellings) of products to your dictionaries and review weekly leading up to and during your peak season to keep an eye out for low-converting terms. Do the correct terms display results or should you adjust?

¹"2018 Holiday Shopping Report," Salesforce Research, 2019.

²Salesforce Shopping Index.



Search bars are particularly effective with mobile shoppers, who are

2.6x more likely to purchase when they use one²

With [Commerce Cloud native search functionality](#), brands have seen:



15% higher spend than those who browse.



3x higher conversion rate.



11% larger carts at checkout.

Embed artificial intelligence (AI) into site search.

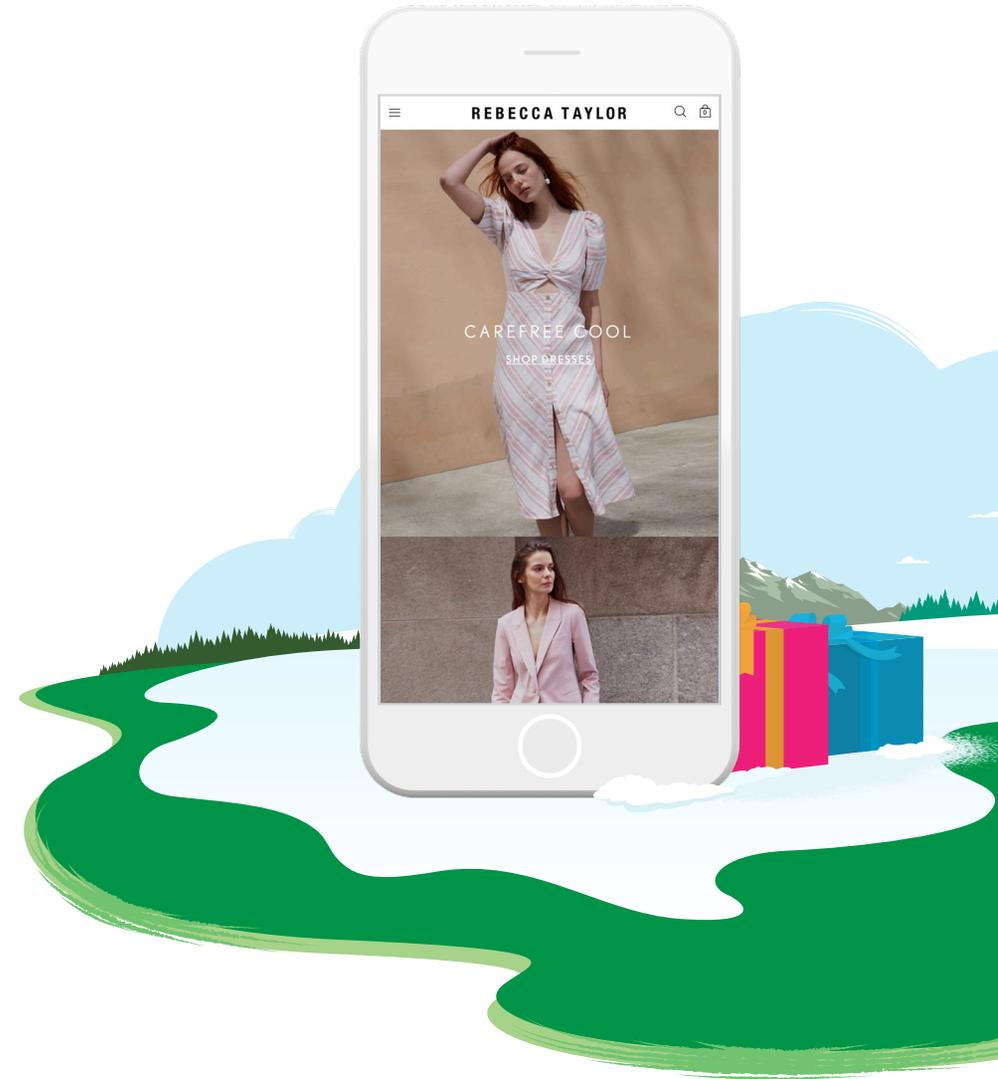
AI serves up product recommendations as users type search queries and optimizes your product sort based on shopper behavior. When AI is embedded into search dictionaries, relevant terms surface before a user types out a full product name, like “blue dress,” as soon as they start typing the first few letters.

“Snap and search” with image recognition technology.

Sixty-two percent of millennials want visual search more than any other search technology. Shoppers simply upload an image or screenshot from their phones into your search field. AI, embedded in the technology, searches your catalog and displays either exact matches or related products, making it easy for people to shop for whatever catches their eye.

SPOTLIGHT: REBECCA TAYLOR

Rebecca Taylor piloted visual search technology to give shoppers the opportunity to act the moment shopping inspiration strikes. For example, shoppers can snap a photo on their mobile phones of a must-have dress and find the exact product on Rebecca Taylor’s website in seconds.



Chapter 4: Embed Your Brand Everywhere

Today's shoppers expect brands to reach them on the platforms where they spend the most time, from social to messaging apps, and they want a tailored experience consistent across channels and devices.

Take an API-led approach to commerce.

Application programming interfaces (APIs) give retailers the ability to integrate with third-party apps to deliver amazing commerce experiences anywhere shoppers spend time. [MuleSoft for Commerce Cloud](#) offers pre-built API designs and omnichannel-specific implementations that integrate on top of an existing retail process and system APIs.

SPOTLIGHT: ASICS

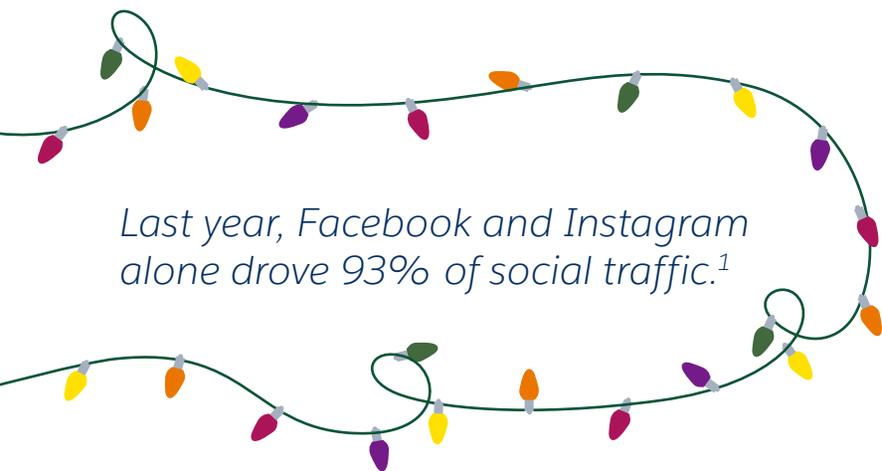
ASICS built a personalized retail strategy, unifying and modernizing systems across geographies and digital channels to achieve a single view of the customer. As they integrated back-end data from multiple ASICS brands into Salesforce, MuleSoft exposed data from order management, payment providers, and legacy systems through APIs, promoting governed access to customer information, order status, real-time inventory, and pricing.



Turn social into a transactional tool.

Last year, traffic growth from social channels went up 34% and social traffic share increased 22% year-over-year.¹ Consider these best practices to convert your followers into shoppers:

- Give exclusive holiday offers to followers to drive loyalty.
- Offer early-access holiday season sales, brand collaboration sneak peeks, and other special opportunities just for followers.
- Have local stores create their own social pages to promote store-specific holiday events – as an extra, local shoppers who visit will create user-generated content (UGC) that you can repost.
- Monitor engagement by sending followers who show interest in a product to your sales team for direct social selling.
- Integrate information on the propensity to buy inside the service application if your customer service team has the ability to sell.



Last year, Facebook and Instagram alone drove 93% of social traffic.¹

¹ "2018 Holiday Shopping Report," Salesforce Research, 2019.

WHAT'S HOT? SHOPPING ON INSTAGRAM

Instagram has made commerce possible directly on-platform. Shoppable posts redirect to your site or can be shopped within Instagram. If shoppers are directed back to your site, Instagram-specific catalogs should redirect URLs to attribute reporting back to Instagram, allowing for easy tracking.



Create evangelists on social.

You can complement your regular social content mix with UGC to drive loyalty and celebrate shoppers. Repost images that shoppers share featuring your product and consider including a carousel of UGC content on product pages.

Respond to brand-relevant imagery.

AI-enabled image-recognition technology like [Einstein Vision](#) allows you to classify related images featuring products, logos, scenes, and other attributes.

Practice social customer care.

Stay vigilant with complaints on social channels by connecting your marketing and service departments so you can react at a moment's notice.



67% of shoppers prefer support on social channels over phone calls.¹ Try this: Connect your social channels and customer service platform to automatically generate cases based on social sentiment.

¹ "2018 Holiday Readiness Guide," Salesforce, 2018.

MEET EINSTEIN:

Hi, I'm Einstein.

I analyze your data to help you predict behaviors and deliver personalized experiences for your shoppers.



Deliver amazing inbox moments.

For every [\\$1 spent on email](#), retail and consumer goods brands see a [\\$45 return](#). Emails should be mobile-optimized, personalized, and consistent with your brand's messaging.

- **Dynamic content:** Brands that include dynamic content in email see an ROI of 44:1 (compared to brands that never or rarely include it at 36:1). Content should display differently for subscribers based on product and category preferences and loyalty program status.
- **Holiday flair:** Include holiday design elements and emphasize special shipping dates and select product categories.
- **The QA process:** Better understand subscriber flow on every device and make sure content renders properly. Address any deliverability issues prior to code freeze through resources like [ReturnPath](#), which helps brands drive higher response rates.

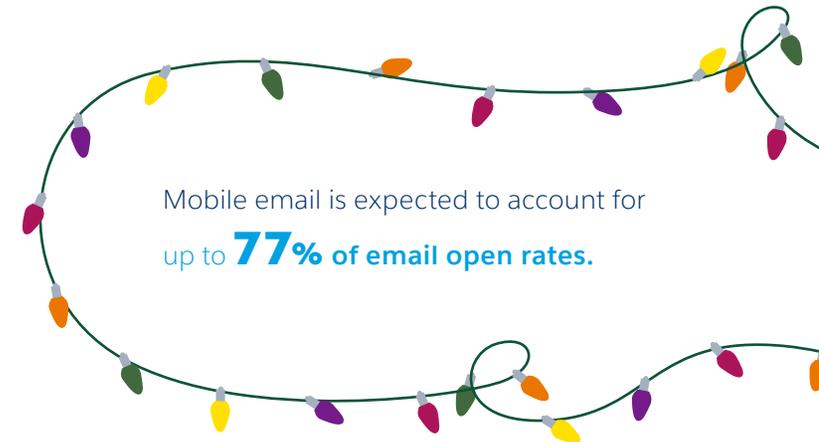
SPOTLIGHT: HERMAN MILLER

Furniture brand [Herman Miller](#) saw email revenue increase 200% and email conversion improve 100% after using Salesforce for their holiday sales.

Make digital ads work harder – and smarter.

Your data will unearth the most-clicked images, best copy, highest-performing channels, and overall impressions to create stronger-performing ads during the holiday season. You can also have shoppers enter their names and emails with a form directly on your ad. Or, make it easy for them by pre-populating these fields.

Intelligent ads boost performance by echoing messaging and driving opt-ins. They take commerce information from shoppers to create personalized ads based on product browsing history and drive shoppers back to your site.



Mobile email is expected to account for up to **77%** of email open rates.



Maximize your marketing ROI.

Understand the ROI on all holiday marketing efforts with [Datorama](#), a marketing intelligence tool powered with AI to connect data, insights, and teams to drive ROI, speed, and growth. Report across channels and campaigns and surface the right insights instantly to make smarter decisions at the speed of your shoppers.

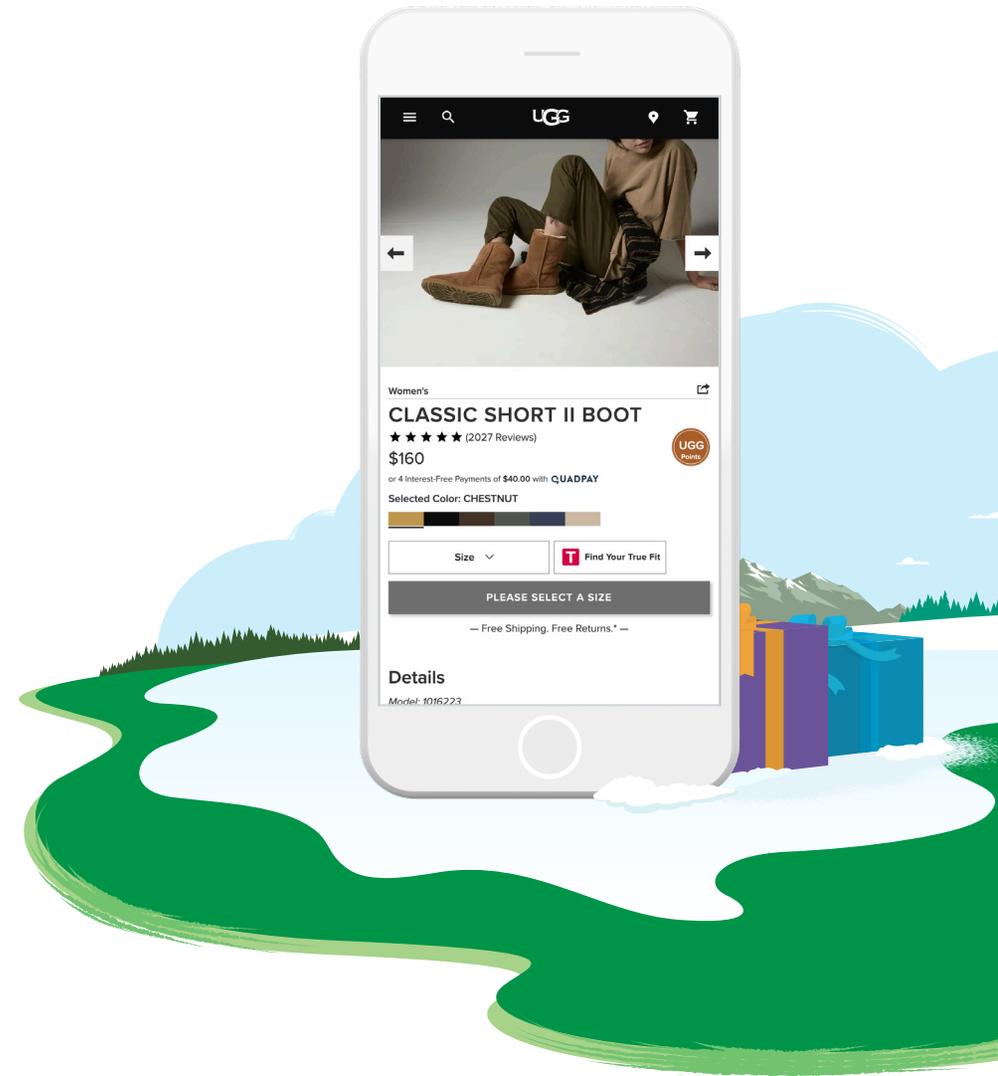
Make mobile optimization mandatory.

Mobile is where shopping journeys start and increasingly end with the final purchase. In 2018, mobile surpassed desktop, especially on peak days for last-minute shopping, accounting for 66% of traffic and 48% of orders.¹

Capitalize on the micro-moments that shoppers have every day by optimizing and testing your mobile site ahead of peak holiday season.

- **Search and navigation:** Anchor the search bar to the top of the page at 44 x 44 pixels to ensure easy tapping and infuse predictive product recommendation functionality to make search simple for mobile users.
- **On the product detail page:** Use arrows instead of dots for alternate images and anchor the add-to-cart button to the top of the page.
- **Sorting, refining, and filtering products:** Make selections clear with the option to remove and reset the product list.
- **One-tap ordering at checkout:** Include mobile payment options like mobile wallet and display the correct default keyboards so shoppers can enter their information quickly.

¹ "2018 Holiday Shopping Report," *Salesforce Research*, 2019.



Foster a two-way relationship on mobile.

Mobile is the hyper-relevant way to share timely news, offers, shipment updates, and password resets. Reach shoppers immediately by following best practices.

- At sign-up, be upfront about the value of opting in to a mobile program and tell them what they can expect.
- Disseminate time-sensitive information and craft timely holiday messaging based on order history, geofencing data, product preferences, and more.
- Keep customer support readily available if a shopper responds back to your mobile message with a problem or complaint. Resolve cases in the same message and cross-sell and up-sell once the case is resolved.

Weigh your mobile program options.

- **SMS:** When shoppers opt in, they are inviting you to speak with them directly. Treat it like texting an acquaintance and ask yourself if the message you're sending is worthy of interrupting their family dinner.
- **Push notifications:** If you have an app, push notifications can create a regular cadence of communication with shoppers. And remember that first impressions matter. If a shopper downloads your app and opts out of push notifications, it's unlikely they will go back to turn them on.
- **Messenger apps:** Facebook Messenger in the U.S. and LINE in Japan allow brands to directly communicate with shoppers in real time. Shoppers can reveal product preferences, age, and location to receive more personalized offers.



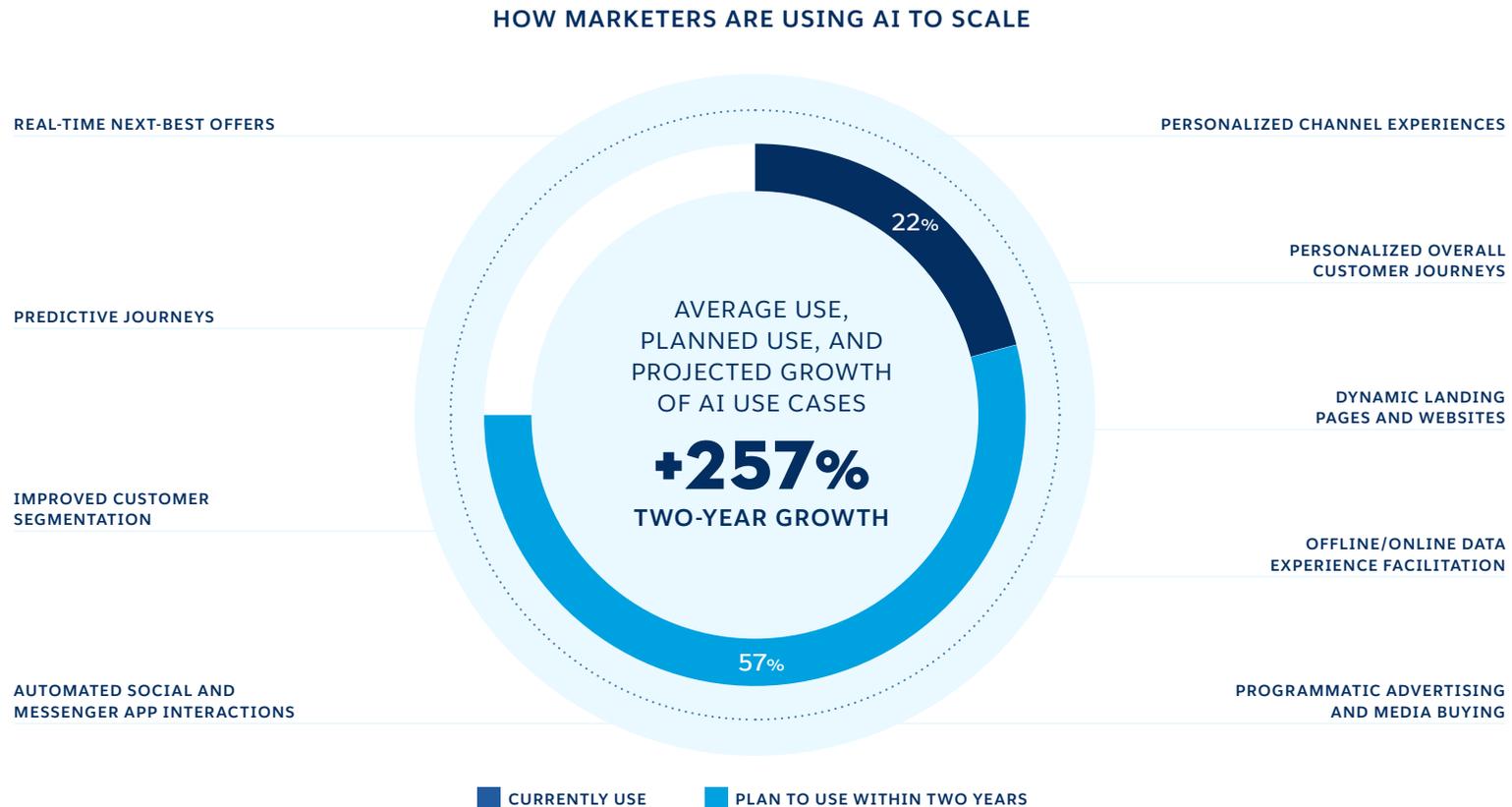
SMS programs increase productivity for service agents who can handle multiple messages, conversations, or cases at once.

SPOTLIGHT: RACK ROOM SHOES

[Rack Room Shoes](#) increased revenue with an SMS program that lets shoppers sign up for in-store rewards. If shoppers don't redeem their rewards, an SMS reminder is sent along with other personalized messaging and relevant offers.

Chapter 5: Scale Up Personalization with Artificial Intelligence

Sixty-four percent of consumers say they feel retailers don't truly know them,¹ which is why 24% of marketers with AI use it to personalize the customer journey.² Here's how to personalize at scale this holiday season.



¹"Shopper-First Retailing," Salesforce and Publicis.Sapient, 2018.

²"State of Marketing Report," Salesforce Research, 2018.

Create automated triggers and journeys.

Map out your communications cadence for shoppers who abandon your site while searching, browsing, or adding items to their carts. Pre-built templates help you to create common assets like cart-abandon retargeting ads, emails personalized with products shoppers viewed or left in their carts, or SMS reminders to complete a purchase.

To automate triggers that bring shoppers back to your site, work across teams to understand browse, abandoned cart, back-in-stock, and post-purchase journeys. Your data will also help you build new strategies or hone existing ones for better experiences.

SPOTLIGHT: ALDO

With predictive intelligence, [Aldo](#) can recommend a second pair of shoes in a similar style or a coordinating accessory. If shoppers view a pair of shoes on Aldo's website and then walk into a store, Aldo's A-List app, powered by Salesforce, lets sales associates know what they want faster. The app manages and tracks interactions with top-tier shoppers and showcases select shoes or prereleases, offering special perks for loyalty.

Predict shopper engagement.

Test how soon a shopper will look at your message to get a better sense of their behavior with [engagement scoring](#). Implement this prior to the holiday season to execute more quickly and anticipate shoppers' channel preferences.

¹"State of the Connected Customer Report," Salesforce Research, 2019.

MAKE EMAIL RELEVANT IN REAL TIME

Seventy-one percent of shoppers expect companies to engage with them in real time.¹ To do this, follow these steps when shoppers open your emails:

- Easily optimize creative so it is relevant to the shopper in the moment they open your email.
- Showcase time left in a sale or deal.
- Swap out expired offers and promote new ones, gift cards, or in-store sales.
- Show available items only using real-time merchandising that pulls in different items based on time of day and device.
- Send real-time updates on confirmations and shipping with [Marketing Cloud's Transactional Messaging API](#).
- Share a push notification if a shopper browses a product on your app to let them know about a special offer on it.



Deliver revenue-driving product recommendations.

Product recommendations make up **26% of revenue** and increase average order value (AOV) by 10%. Last year's holiday season actually saw a 14% increase.¹ Shoppers are also nearly twice as likely to come back to a site that serves up personalized recommendations.

- **Tailor the shopping experience:** Use predictive **product recommendations** to deliver highly personalized product suggestions that learn from every click.
- **Understand product groupings:** Gain deeper insight into the products typically purchased together to create product bundles that are popular with shoppers.
- **Personalize sort order:** Customize the order in which products appear based on shopper behavior so they see products they're more likely to click on and buy.
- **Define shopping moments in search:** Automatically surface terms not already on your keyword list with **synonyms, hypernyms, and search redirects** (think "sandals," "flip-flops," or "slides," and "blue," "navy," or "aquamarine").
- **Get more productive and efficient:** AI gives you deeper insights into your customers and removes labor-intensive merchandising activities.

Transform your contact center.

AI powers **faster, smarter customer service** to resolve cases and increase satisfaction.

- **Classify and escalate cases quickly:** Analyze incoming cases and move priority ones to the front of the queue while preparing agents with all available details before they start their interaction.
- **Solve cases faster:** Provide agents with recommended actions and communication prompts so they're prepared when cases come in.
- **Turn agents into sellers:** Include relevant product groupings and recommendations based on purchase history so service agents are prepared to up-sell.

¹ "2018 Holiday Shopping Report," Salesforce Research, 2019.



In 2018, AI-driven product recommendations peaked at **18%** on Cyber Monday.¹

Chapter 6: Give Choices at Checkout

Keep the choices coming for shoppers all the way through checkout with payment, shipping, and delivery options. What you offer and the ease with which you offer it can make or break a sale.

Offer shoppers flexible payment options.

Skip the multitude of checkout pages and form fields in favor of a seamless checkout experience with flexible payment solutions. On average, retailers that have a mobile wallet option see orders grow 14% and conversion rates double. Plus, shoppers spend a minute and a half less using mobile wallet than with traditional payment methods.¹

Shape up your shipping.

Implement a shipping countdown strategy to maximize sales through the season. Identify the last day for holiday ground shipping and plan timely upgrade offers from free three-day, two-day, and overnight shipping right up to the cutoff. If you have brick-and-mortar stores, offer last-minute shoppers the option to buy online and pick up in store.



¹"2018 Holiday Readiness Guide," Salesforce, 2018.

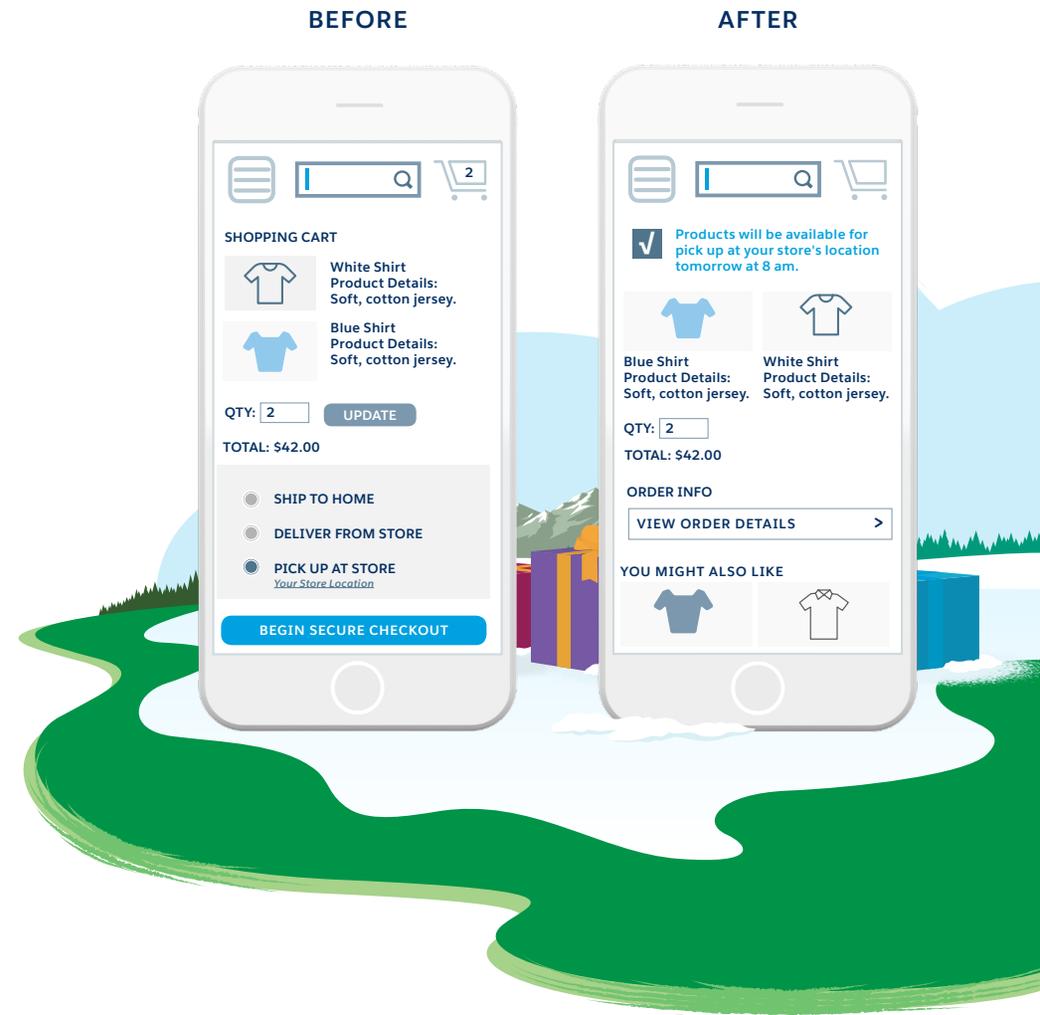
²"2018 Holiday Shopping Report, Salesforce Research," 2019.

Enable click and collect.

Click and collect is when shoppers buy online and pick up in store, giving them even more control of their experience. It offers peace of mind against [porch thieves](#) and saves you on last-mile delivery costs. If you can, pull inventory at the individual store level and synchronize it with your site so shoppers can search available products near them.

- **Set expectations upfront on the product detail page:** Provide a clear explanation about how click and collect works with a pop-up window.
- **Make it clear that it's not immediate:** Let shoppers know that the order is ready to pick up once they receive an alert – not once they hit the buy button.
- **Add an incentive:** Small discounts, a free gift, or a discount off the next order will sway shoppers to choose to click and collect.
- **Keep shoppers informed with notifications:** Deliver regular order notifications so shoppers get updates and ETAs and are alerted once their order is ready to pick up.
- **Overcommunicate the details:** Include what identification shoppers need to provide to pick up their order as well as store details like address, directions with a link to maps, phone numbers, and store hours.
- **Have agents ready:** If a shopper receives a notification and realizes they selected the wrong store, they should be able to respond to the same message and chat with a service agent to resolve their issue in real time.

As a bonus, once in the store, shoppers are more likely to make additional purchases, increasing average order values.



Prepare your store for order pick-ups.

1. Train staff on the process for online orders and have at least one associate available to fulfill online orders on the fly.
2. Set a dedicated area for online pick-ups with clear signage near the store entrance.
3. If it's an option for your store, consider curbside pick-up or dedicated parking for online shoppers to make the experience even more seamless.
4. Set order thresholds to manage volume sent to each store.
5. Turn off click and collect on peak in-store days like Black Friday to avoid inventory discrepancies between offline and online.

SPOTLIGHT: FLOOR & DECOR

For [Floor & Decor](#), an online strategy tightly aligned to their retail stores is critical to their business – over 80% of web sales are picked up in store. They use Salesforce to provide different experiences for two main customer segments, DIYers and construction professionals. Shoppers can use the site for inspiration, for information on professional services, to search the entire catalog of available products, or to refine inventory to their local store.

GET AN ACCURATE VIEW OF INVENTORY

Click and collect relies on an accurate view of inventory, which is especially challenging during the busy holiday season. Retailers can now do this successfully with Commerce Cloud [Inventory Availability Service](#). Import mass quantities of inventory and segment within one simple, up-to-the-millisecond view.

- **Activate inventory across all channels** to ensure merchants can leverage all inventory positions.
- **Avoid inaccurate counts**, which lead to disappointed shoppers and a poor brand experience.
- **Prevent over- and under-stocking issues** for specific products and locations.
- **Give online shoppers a location-specific view;** if they want your latest-edition sneaker, they can see their nearest store only has six pairs left in their size.



Chapter 7: Get Your Site Peak Performance-Ready

Even the most well-known retailers suffer storefront outages and receive complaints about site speed during the holidays. Mitigate this with a continuous readiness model for site performance all year.

Prepare for peak holiday.

Every moment your site is down can cost thousands of dollars in lost revenue, so strive for 99.99% up-time:

- Establish a sound sales and traffic forecast.
- Regularly perform load testing.
- Implement monitoring and troubleshooting tools.
- Create and align to a risk-mitigation plan.
- Prepare your team to be on alert.

On a continuous basis, ensure your teams are including performance testing in every delivery and QA process. Collect common performance metrics after every release and compare them to identify where performance could improve. Purge old data to keep working data as slim as possible.

And, make sure you're load-testing prior to the holidays to determine peak traffic thresholds and confirm if they exceed traffic estimates.

¹ "2018 Holiday Readiness Guide" Salesforce, 2018.

IT ONLY TAKES SECONDS TO LOSE A SALE FROM SLOW SITE PERFORMANCE¹



NEARLY HALF

of consumers expect a web page to load in **two seconds** or less.



40% of shoppers will abandon a site if it takes **more than three seconds** to load.



There is a direct correlation between a **one-second delay** in page response and **a 7% reduction in conversion.**

Regularly check site speed.

If you find a performance bottleneck, test the experience to identify the friction points and address each issue individually. Then, retest until performance is back to normal.

DESIRED STOREFRONT RUNTIME RANGES

Experience	Desired Range (in milliseconds)
Home Page	100ms to 250ms
Product Search / Listing	250ms to 500ms
Product Detail	250ms to 500ms
Cart	500ms to 1000ms
Checkout	1,000ms to 1,500ms
Place Order	1,500ms to 2,000ms
All Other Experiences	500ms

Catch poor caching.

We recommend that retailers strive to cache 90% of editorial content, like the home page, and 50%–70% of product-specific content. Unused content that sits in the storefront cache prevents useful content from being cached. To improve caching:

- Identify the most-trafficked storefront experiences.
- Determine the percentage of cached requests.
- Examine how to raise the percentage without invalidating the experience business objectives (e.g., improve caching without degrading personalization).
- Find the percentage of content cached but not reused and prevent it from being cached in the future.

Govern third-party integrations.

Integrations are critical to your business – analytics tracking, security functions, services added to your core back-end system, and social integrations – but they can break the shopper’s experience if not implemented or governed properly. To mitigate the stress placed on your system:

- Adopt a thoughtful approach during implementation that considers failure scenarios that are QA’d.
- Ensure each integration has a time-out function enabled.
- Create a governance policy that sets concurrency and rate-limiting thresholds.
- Tie monitoring events to third-party failures and set automatic notifications to your team if this occurs.
- Place enablement controls on integrations to shift off or turn back on if there is an outage.



Chapter 8: Wrap Up Service Cases Faster

From in-store employees to remote agents, customer service is on the front line of every twist, turn, and return. Cyber Week 2018 saw a move in cases across channels as more shoppers took inquiries to social, messaging, and chat. Be ready for the influx in cases with the right tools.

Create help centers on your site.

An FAQ page with answers to your most common questions, like how to initiate a return, will empower shoppers with self-service.

- Start simple with FAQs on your site that will show up in search.
- Surface personalized, relevant content with AI to help shoppers reach a resolution faster.
- Make it easy to submit a case through the web if shoppers can't find what they're looking for.
- Provide shoppers with even more choices like chatbots or a text-enabled 800 number.

Prepare service agents.

In 2018, agent activity peaked during Christmas and Boxing Week.¹ Get your personnel ready by training them up to six weeks before the holiday shopping season begins.

- [Trailhead guided learning paths](#) teach new agents about case de-escalation, how to use the platform, work with AI, implement guided selling techniques, and more.
- According to the Small Business Chronicle, shoppers hang up after one minute and 55 seconds of being on hold. Consider adding chat and messaging to increase customer satisfaction and reduce hold times.
- Teach first-call resolution best practices, showing agents how to increase efficiency and customer satisfaction using a decision tree.

¹"2018 Holiday Shopping Report, Salesforce Research," 2019.

SPOTLIGHT: ADIDAS

[adidas](#) has set themselves up with the goal to identify consumers' needs in order to map out premium experiences tailored just for them.



Put bots to work.

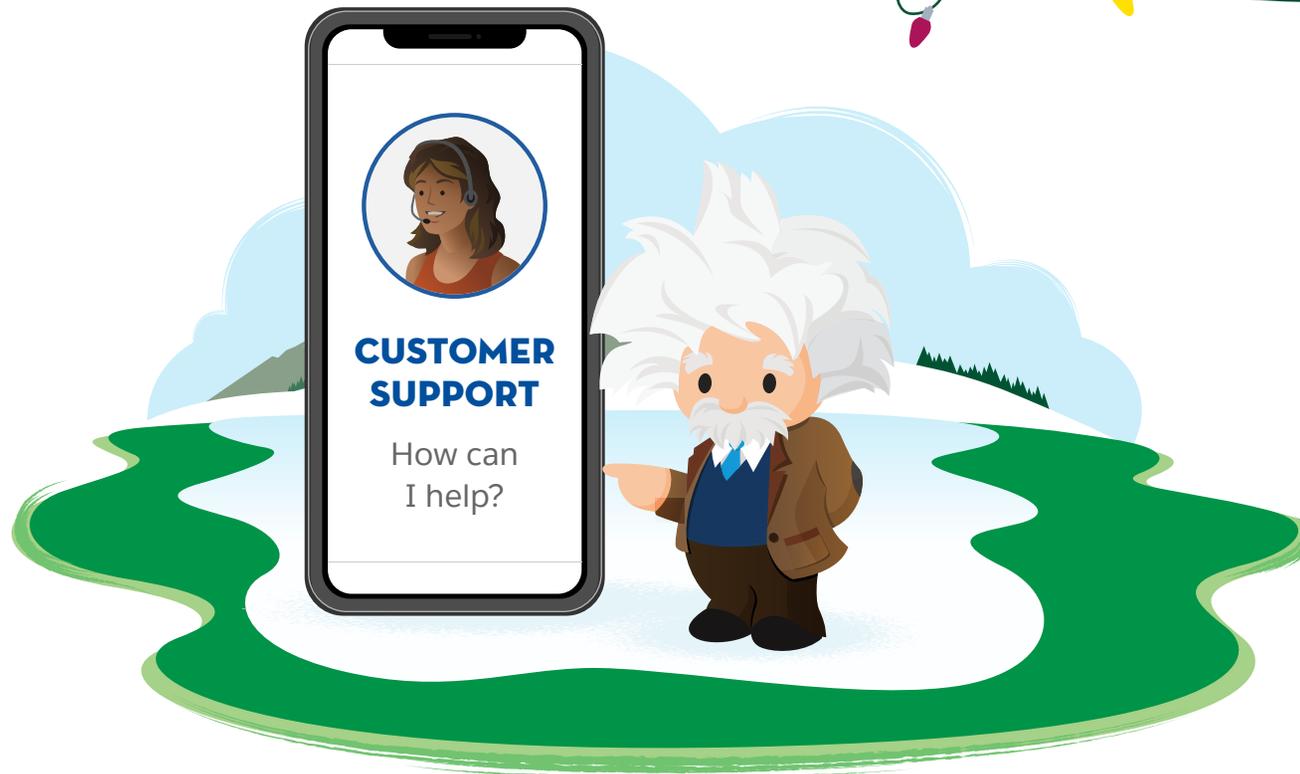
Bots scale support and provide personalized service while freeing up agents to focus on escalated cases. A chatbot in retail should answer simple questions like “What is my order status?” “How do I initiate a return?” and “What’s my username to reset my password?”

If bots can’t answer a question, they can escalate the case to a live agent and collect and qualify shopper information to reduce the total handle time.

[Salesforce Einstein Bots](#) get smarter over time and can provide consultative selling.



Chatbots should greet shoppers and identify themselves as bots as soon as a chat is initiated.



Conclusion: Your Next Steps

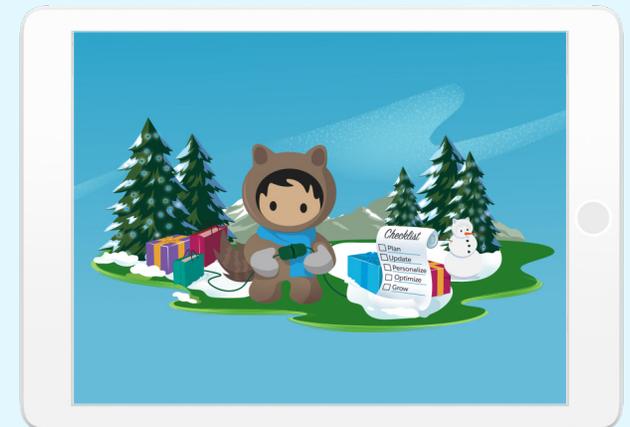
As you prepare for the 2019 holiday shopping season, we hope you feel empowered to use these strategies and tools to have the best holiday ever.

What you learn throughout the season will matter long after the presents are unwrapped and the lights are taken down. Post-holiday, review your performance and reporting metrics to understand what worked and what didn't. This will guide your approach for 2020 planning and, of course, next year's holiday strategy. Build on your momentum to deliver compelling brand experiences and reach more shoppers across every platform in the new year.

We can't wait to see your brand shine this holiday season.

YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO. NOW IT'S TIME TO PUT IT INTO ACTION!

Discover the [Holiday Readiness Headquarters](#) for monthly to-do's and learning resources to help your marketing, commerce, service, and IT teams prepare for the holidays.



Want more? Learn about the Salesforce solutions that can power your brand during the holidays and all year long.

- [Personalize Shopper Marketing](#)
- [Deliver Any Channel Service](#)
- [Connect Your Commerce](#)

