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Cyber Monday: The New Hallmark Holiday

by Chris Copeland, Friday, Oct 26, 2007 3:30 PM ET

IN 1910, J.C. HALL, A young 18-year-old from Kansas City, Mo., began a revolution in communication. His business changed how we send wishes and recognize special days through the year. Hall's company now includes 6.4 billion pieces sent every year, and is credited with turning ordinary days into major events. What Hall started with a \$200 purchase of postcards sent unsolicited to local merchants is today the mighty Hallmark Cards. But even he could not have foreseen the latest holiday on the calendar. It's not a holiday for all, but for anyone in the digital space the first Monday after Thanksgiving may be one of the most important days of the entire year. Everyone knows what Feb. 14, July 4 and Dec. 25 are all about. And with Halloween coming next week many marketers are well on their way to the next key mark in the year: the day after Thanksgiving, Black Friday.

Black Friday (so says Wikipedia) was first acknowledged in name back in 1975. The original references were to the volume of traffic and activity that merchants and bus drivers of the time saw in that day after Thanksgiving. So, 65 years after J.C. Hall started his card business, we found ourselves with a day all about giving through buying. But if that is tough to comprehend, imagine his mind pondering the newest of holidays in this country, Cyber Monday.

Cyber Monday, or the first Monday after Thanksgiving, has become the defining day of the holiday season for many e-commerce sites. Created by the National Retailer Federation some 30 years

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after Black Friday was coined, it's become synonymous with the first day when consumers return to work to do a decidedly non-work-related activity: shop online.

So what is my point, beyond a lesson in the origins of holidays? I wanted to provide some help in preparing for the holidays - but not a "how-to" on getting your business ready for search ads. There will be an endless stream of those articles in the next 30 days. *No, this is a look at how to get your business ready for the season by focusing on non-search activity.*

Last year during the holiday season we conducted a series of analyses that examined the impact other media had on search volume. One limitation in the search space is volume. There are only as many searches as there are people multiplied by the queries they do. So, when you reach 100% Share of Voice and you have coverage across the engines, what can you do?

Our objective was to determine what sort of impact other media channels could have on search. And here's what we found:

We found that on average 63% of all searches were going to happen regardless of other activity.

Another 4% of shoppers are going to come into the mix based on the proximity to the holiday and the end of free shipping periods.

A small percentage -- 3% -- comes from print volume.

As you'd expect, online media has a distinct and important role with 9% of volume coming about due to a strong online advertising program. This is consistent with all of our findings - that there is a high correlation between display activity and search activity.

So, what moves the needle? What can lead to an extra 20% coming into the search space looking for information and merchandise to buy?

Here is where all of those people who argue for dollars to shift from search to TV have to change their tune a bit. We found that 20% of all search volume can be correlated to TV GRP volume. So, while we've always known that TV creates an interest that search can fulfill, this gives us sufficient evidence that it creates a volume of

interest which can substantially move the impression needle, and therefore increase CTR and potentially CVR for your campaigns.

So, when you are considering how to prepare for these distinctly non-Hallmark holidays, in addition to seasonal message, shipping offers and low, low pricing, there is a new component to consider.

How will your other media contribute to your search program, and can you leverage that media further to boost sales? Most companies see a sharp drop when free shipping ends, but using other media to continue to engage and spark interest may be one way to make the most of your holiday efforts and extend the life of Cyber Monday.

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