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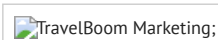
BLACK FRIDAY

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO BLACK FRIDAY FOR HOTELIERS - BY PETE DIMAIO

 October, 26 2021  TravelBoom Marketing

*TravelBoom has created a definitive guide to walk you through everything you need to know for your Hotel Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales strategies. There's a lot to cover, so let's dive in.*

 *The Definitive Guide to Black Friday for Hoteliers*



For decades retailers have relied on a massive sale at the end of the year to push their profitability into the black, hence the term Black Friday. What retailers have known for years has been slow to be adopted by hoteliers. Even now, far too many hotels and resorts are not participating in the annual shopping spree. Millions in bookings are lost every year and the sooner hoteliers jump on the bandwagon the sooner revenue projections and rate yielding for next year can take place.

This definitive guide will walk you through everything you need to know for your Hotel Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales strategies. There's a lot to cover, so let's dive in.

Background on Black Friday for Hotels

Here at TravelBoom we have been helping our clients promote Black Friday sales for well over a decade and what we have found is definitive proof that customers want hotel sales, the sales do not cannibalize bookings, and the revenue on the books allows a more aggressive rate management strategy for the following year.

Typically we have seen peak bookings on Cyber Monday with that one day representing the highest booking value for the year as well as highest conversion rates for the year, as illustrated in the below graphs of past years (three different properties).

These results are not unique to the properties selected for the graphs, every property that offers a sale and promotes it effectively, has seen the same success. And you can as well. Here's why:

Black Friday History:


*The 1st instance of Black Friday was believed to be in 1951 in Philadelphia where the police would describe the flood of shoppers and street traffic the weekend after Thanksgiving. Since then the biggest sales event of the year began to grow and grow. Years later, in 1975, The New York Times described Black Friday as the busiest shopping day of the year in Philadelphia.*

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- **The wallet is out:** The theory that when someone starts spending money, they want to keep spending money is known as the [Shopping Momentum Effect](#). Stanford completed a study on this behavior and found that, "Shopping momentum occurs when an initial purchase provides a psychological impulse that enhances the purchase of a second, unrelated product."
- **Fear of missing out:** No one wants to miss out on a great deal, and if hotels will create that true once-a-year, ultimate sale, travelers will take notice and take action to save the big bucks.
- **Positive outlooks and aspirations:** The holiday shopping season is kicking off and consumers are hungry to start buying gifts for the future. This aspirational feeling means a warm summer getaway, winter trip, or a great family vacation are high on the list of things people want to make happen.

#### Launching Your Hotel's Black Friday/Cyber Monday Strategy

The value of running a Black Friday/Cyber Monday is clear, though how you create an effective sale strategy can be a bit more confusing. We are going to break down, step-by-step, what you can do to launch a successful sale.

Before diving into the guide, the most important rule is to **start your planning early**. If you give you and your team the time needed to create an amazing program you will directly see the results in bookings, revenue, and ultimately RevPAR.

#### Meet With Your Revenue Management Team

First and foremost meeting with your revenue management team, and all teams for that matter, is a key step to success and team buy-in. In this meeting, you want to clearly understand your early year pace, anticipated rack rates for the following year, and how they plan to yield rates throughout the year. From this, you should be able to determine both the right "starting from" rate and how aggressive of an offer you can promote.

This meeting will also be fundamental in ensuring that your sale offer will be the best possible for the entire year.

#### Develop The Very Best Offer You Can

Once you have met with the revenue management team, you need to develop the best (the very best) offer you can put together. Black Friday sales only work when you can create urgency and fear of missing out.

*This is the salient point of the entire sale. Your offer must be the best deal for the year. If you break ranks later in the year, you will destroy your guest confidence and ruin any chance for future Black Friday success.*

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- Value adds such as gifts with purchase
- Complementary room upgrades during the sale
- A resort credit on your folio
- Gift card sales with bonus value (purchase \$100 gift card and get a \$10 bonus card)

This is why it is so important to plan your sale early and give yourself time to craft the perfect offer that will wow guests and have them whipping out those wallets.

#### Monitor The Competition

Whether you're a seasoned Black Friday marketer or diving in for the 1st time, it is paramount that you keep a close eye on the competition. Take note of what offers have they run in the past, what their pricing strategy looks like, and how they promote their sales. Competitor monitoring can be difficult since everyone will be launching their sales at roughly the same time. However, the following can help:

- Look at the Wayback machine on [Archive.org](https://archive.org), where you can enter competitor sites and see snapshots of past versions. Check out snapshots from Black Fridays and Cyber Mondays of the past, and you may even find success on the week or two leading up to these dates.
- Create a folder and grab examples of what your hotel's competitors are doing this year and save them. This will help with next year's plan.
- Have a plan, but be flexible during the sale and adapt if needed.

#### Develop Your Promotional Strategy



Though we despise the term "omnichannel" it does seem fitting to describe the proper Black Friday/Cyber Monday sale for hotels. Your promotional strategy should focus on every single place your property has a presence, including avenues that would typically not be productive for your general day-to-day marketing. Just a sampling would be:

- Website
- Paid search (don't forget your audience matches)
- Paid and organic social
- Email marketing, such as the example here
- Partnerships with your chamber, CVB, or destination portals
- Paid online you might typically overlook such as YouTube, OTT, Instagram, TikTok and others.
- Targeted print campaigns

Beyond just your outlets, consider your tactics. Remember it's all about urgency and FOMO. We've found countdown timers work incredibly well. and in every test. the

This once-a-year sale should have the benefit of your creative “A” game with a suite of ads, banners, emails, and creative layouts that contain a uniform sale message with compelling language. Start early, invest the money, and roll out a campaign that will not only make you proud but also push your customers to take action.

**Have a Great Game Day Plan**

Black Friday and Cyber Monday should not be sneaking up on your hotel's staff. However, creating a during-sale staffing plan will make a lot of sense. Before your sale starts, begin by:

- Ensure your call center staff are aware of the sale and are prepared for the high call volume.
- Make sure your site and hosting providers are aware of the sale and have a specific plan for handling additional bandwidth.
- Black Friday sales start early, which means you're going to need to have someone on call should issues arise. Have a contact with your PMS provider, website team, marketing team, revenue management, an anyone else that you can think of. Then, let them know that you may be calling and you expect someone to answer the line.

**Measuring Results**



Results always matter and when you're looking at large-scale sales such as your Hotel's Black Friday sale, you want to make sure your reporting ducks are in a row. This goes beyond just tagging some links, you want to put thought into what you want to get out of your campaign and what you will need to make decisions based on next year's campaign.

Specifically, as you build out your analytics strategy:

- Ensure you set benchmarks for success.
- Go beyond "campaign" level tagging so you can properly group which elements of your campaign are working most effectively. Medium, Source, and Campaign Content are your friends, use them effectively.
- Consider phone and chat conversions and how those will best integrate into your reporting.
- We're big fans of **ABT**, or Always Be Testing. Since your Black Friday sale is very limited in time, you should consider some advance user-testing of your creative and offer to ensure it resonates with your potential guests.
- **Pro Tip:** Google's Data Studio is easy to use and a powerhouse report display system. Create a dedicated Data Studio report and share with the team. This way you can isolate your sale campaign performance and view results near-realtime.

**Black Friday Best Practices Cheat Sheet**

Ready to launch your hotel's Black Friday and Cyber



not too late. A properly run campaign takes time to develop.

- **Include Revenue Management Early:** Your revenue management team will need to do the heavy lifting to determine the right price point or percentage discount to lead the sale.
- **Create The Best Deal:** The best deal should be that – THE BEST DEAL! If you don't hold the line your future Black Fridays will fail. Exclusive add-ons such as a free breakfast, t-shirt, or resort credit go a long way to really ramp up the FOMO.
- **Give Your Guest History The Best Deal:** Plan to offer a great deal to your site traffic, but make sure your guest history either has "exclusive early access" or something that rewards them for already being part of your family.
- **Invest In Creative:** You're competing with thousands of deals from thousands of other hotels. Be sure your creative is eye-catching and compelling. It should also be uniform for the sale across all platforms (email, social, site, print, display, etc).
- **Countdown Timers Work:** Seriously, just put them everywhere.
- **Align Your Paid Tactics:** Making sure all your paid tactics are aligned. It is incredibly important for not only launching your campaigns but also taking them down. Plus don't forget the multitude of opportunities you have access to but may not have taken advantage of in the past such as OTT, YouTube, and others.
- **Alert Your Technology Providers:** Make sure your site and your booking engine can handle the surge in traffic and bookings.
- **Alert Your Staff:** Your staff will need to be ready to field calls, chats, social media DMs, and be ready to jump in should anything start going sideways. You may want to plan for an on-call schedule and have extra staff on-hand.
- **Plan For An AAR:** Congrats, you made it through Black Friday and hopefully it was a great success. Now's the time to meet with your team and document what worked and what didn't work.
- **Schedule Next Year's Kick off:** When is next year's Black Friday? Go ahead and create a meeting invite well in advance so you're ahead of the curve in planning for next year.

#### **In Conclusion: Hotel Strategies for Black Friday and Cyber Monday**

Hotel's and resorts have a great opportunity every year to take advantage of a sales feeding frenzy and whether you enjoy the craziness of the season or not... it is likely your guests do. Therefore, do not waste the opportunity to jump in with the sharks and make Black Friday and Cyber Monday your sales event of the year.

To recap, our data shows Black Friday sales are effective and allow you to get ahead of the yield management curve. Properties that participate see the highest sales and conversion rates for the entire year. While properties do see a surge in bookings, they don't see a post-sale lull in conversions. This is a key point and our data over nearly a decade of managing Black Friday sales for clients bears this out.

**Can we help?** TravelBoom is here to lend a hand and make your marketing efforts work double-time.

#### **About TravelBoom Marketing**

TravelBoom specializes in developing and executing customized data-driven marketing solutions that drive direct bookings and growth for its clients. With over 25 years of experience in digital marketing for travel and hotels, TravelBoom leverages advanced data science and

quarterly Traveler Sentiment Study both of which can be found at [www.travelboommarketing.com](http://www.travelboommarketing.com).

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