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For Immediate Release

Top 10 Tips to Prepare E-Retailers for the Holiday Rush

CEO of Successful Online Art Gallery, overstockArt.com, Shares Top 10 List of Holiday Sales Tips

Wichita, Kan., Oct. 25, 2010 – With The National Retail Federation expecting e-commerce sales in the U.S. to rise by 15% this year, e-retailers of all sizes are getting ready for the quickly approaching holiday rush. Co-founder and CEO of the successful online gallery, overstockArt.com, David Sasson, knows that the best way to take advantage of the holiday sales spike is to put a plan into place in advance.

Being well-prepared for the robust holiday selling season has allowed overstockArt.com to experience better than expected holiday sales in recent years, especially during the 2009 holiday season. The company's top-line growth rate for December 2009 alone totaled 75%. "Our success is indicative of our competitive advantages in the field," said Sasson. "We focus on serving the two groups that provide us with the best returns - our customers and our employees. By effectively creating and implementing a holiday sales plan we are able to please our customers and employees and continue to grow aggressively and profitably."

Sasson typically begins employing his holiday sales plan in August and September. Retailers that are off to a late start still have plenty they can do to maximize on the biggest sales season of the year. Sasson's Top 10 holiday sales tips are:

1. Plan a code-freeze on website improvements in November and December. It is better to schedule and target to end these projects in September so that you have plenty of time to test and launch the projects to your e-commerce website in early October at the latest.
2. Have a brain storming session with key individuals in your company. Include individuals that are in the front lines, dealing directly with customers and order fulfillment. Discuss what worked and what didn't work in previous holiday seasons. Discuss other ideas they might have from other experiences. This will give you a fresh perspective from both an operational and a customer point of view.
3. Plan for inventory availability. Either make sure vendors are committing to hold stock for you, or provide solid inventory forecasting plans to vendors so that you don't run out of the bestselling products. In cases of long lead time you should already have product on order to satisfy forecasted demand. Take seasonality into account. In many industries holiday sales differ significantly from the rest of the year.
4. Make sure you have an escalation plan for marketing. Like any aspect of your business all marketing and advertising aspects need to be planned in advance. Traffic to your site is much more likely to make a purchase in November and December than it is in any other part of the year. So you want to drive as much traffic as possible during that crucial period.
5. Operationally, make sure that your facility is ready for the increase in inventory coming in and in shipments going out. Make sure that you have the personnel and the systems ready to handle the

increase in volume. Shipping on time during the busiest days is very crucial, as customers expect to get their gifts on time.

6. Establish shipping cut off dates early. This will help your organization to prepare. The shipping cut off should be available to customers early, but do not make it too available. If customers see that they have more than a month to place their order they may procrastinate, which is never good. Be sure to offer expedited shipping options for that last crucial week of holiday sales.
7. Plan for the increase in phone orders and customer service questions. You can't just hire additional reps in November and expect them to be knowledgeable in your business. Allow time for proper training.
8. The holiday is about gift giving so you must make sure you have an attractive, easy to use gift center. If you already have a gift center go through and "clean" it. Update the categories and the products within the categories. Depending on your product mix there may be a lot of changes to your best sellers and color schemes or there may only be a few changes. But this is an area where a lot of your traffic will visit and if you lead them towards a purchase it can help conversions. Finally, gift certificates are a great gift idea (merchants love gift certificates!), so make sure you have plenty of options and make it easy for your customers to invest in them as gifts.
9. Take a fresh look at your website. Take a quiet hour and visit your website as if you are customer coming to purchase a product. Make sure you clean all of the cache, cookies and other content so that your browser is as close to the browser of a new visitor. Make your best attempt to think like a customer so that you can find the pitfalls in your website. Sometimes small adjustments can help customers with the purchase process. Another option is to have a person you know that is close to your target market go through a purchase and explain to you what they like or do not like about your website and the process of purchasing.
10. Last but not least, we all dislike returns but they are a necessary part of most retail businesses. Doing an extended return policy will help your customers shop with confidence early since they will know that they'll be able to return the product after the holidays as well. If you can offer free return shipping that will also encourage gift givers.

By employing a sales plan for overstockArt.com that incorporates the tips above, Sasson expects to see an increase in holiday sales again this year. He feels confident that other e-retailers who plan in advance can also achieve holiday sales success.

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About overstockArt.com:

[overstockArt.com](http://www.overstockArt.com) is the web's leading distributors of art reproduction oil paintings, with more than 100,000 wall décor combinations to choose from. In business since 2002, the company provides decorating assistance, custom framing and commercial wall decorating services. With an inventory of more than 60,000 paintings in stock at all times, order wait is minimal. The Wichita-based online art gallery was recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in the U.S. in the 2010 Inc. 500|5000 list. For more information, visit <http://www.overstockArt.com>.