

# Holiday Action Saves a Sour Shopping Season

By Beka Ruse

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Usually, U.S. retailers earn 20-80% of their entire yearly gross during the holiday season. But this year, things are different. The sluggish US economy has prompted Deloitte Research's Carl Steidtmann to fear "the worst Christmas ever" in the retail sector.

Short of going door to door in a Santa suit, how can businesses increase profits and prevent a blue Christmas? Despite economic gloom, industry leaders have found that an e-mail follow up strategy can increase sales by a cheery 35%! To weather the ailing economy, use a follow up autoresponder during your holiday campaigns.

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What Does It Do?  
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Follow up autoresponders follow up with your leads for you. You create a series of messages, and decide when they should be sent, (daily, weekly, etc.). Your autoresponder will send the messages to each new lead automatically. With no further intervention from you, your leads will remember you throughout the winter chill. And this regular reminding will mean more sales during the all-important holiday shopping season.

Give yourself the gift of a higher conversion rate! Follow up automatically using these simple steps:

- \* Offer Useful Information
- \* Personalize Your Messages
- \* Track Your Leads
- \* Broadcast Tailor-Made Offers

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## Offer Useful Information

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Write your follow up messages for your leads - not for yourself. You want to talk about your great service, but your leads just want to know what they'll get out of it!

At some point, you must have purchased something like your product. What were you looking for then? Was it information about pricing, styles, or holiday gift wrapping? Maybe just a clearer explanation of the product? Figure that out, and put the answer in your follow up messages. That's what your leads want to know.

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## Personalize Your Messages

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You don't open postal mail addressed to "Current Resident", and your leads aren't going to read e-mail addressed to "Dear Internet Friend." People are simply more likely to read messages that address them by name.

Autoresponders let you use variables to personalize your messages. This way, you write just one message, but Lenny Lead reads "Happy Holidays, Lenny!" while Kate Customer reads "Happy Holidays, Kate!"

Names are only the beginning of the personalization features available, though. In addition to full, first, and last names, some autoresponders let you add e-mail addresses, dates, or an ad category. The best even correct the capitalization in your leads' names, giving your messages a much more professional look.

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## Track Your Leads

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Get even better results from your snowballing list of leads by experimenting with follow up content and timing. Your experimentation will be much more successful if you have access to proper statistics.

Only use a follow up autoresponder that offers detailed lead statistics. Look for live, graphical stats that show your incoming leads broken down by day / week / month, all of your active leads, and leads who have requested removal from your list.

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## Broadcast Tailor-Made Offers

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To get more bang for your holiday buck, look for an autoresponder that also lets you broadcast extra e-mails to all of your leads. Some even allow you to send tailor-made offers only to leads who meet certain criteria.

For instance, send everyone who's been on your list for a month a special discount. Or, notify all leads interested in a certain product when a new shipment comes in.

Follow up messages keep leads warm. Use periodic broadcasts to convert them to sales!

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## Prevent a Crummy Christmas

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Businesses of all sizes have seen their sales grow by leaps and bounds because of automated follow up. Implement your follow up strategy now to make the best use of holiday leads! Then, enjoy the season - your autoresponder is following up for you!

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Beka Ruse is the Business Development Manager at AWeber Communications. Find a free article archive, and more about automated e-mail follow up at:

<http://www.aweber.com/a/p170/lhs.htm>

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