

## CASE STUDY



### About

Since 1999, Magazines.com has been the trusted online source for deals and discounts on popular magazine subscriptions.

Headquarters: Franklin, Tennessee  
<https://www.magazines.com>

### Goals

- Scale volume of revenue driven by Shopping campaigns
- Increase sales at a consistent return on ad spend (ROAS)

### Approach

- Launched Smart Shopping campaign in August 2018 containing all subscriptions
- Compared YoY performance with Standard Shopping campaigns from Thanksgiving to Cyber Monday

### Results

- 95% year-over-year (YoY) increase in sales
- 180% increase in revenue between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday

# Rakuten Marketing lifts Magazines.com's Black Friday revenue 180% YoY with Smart Shopping campaigns

## Looking for a new strategy to stay competitive

Since 1999, [Magazines.com](https://www.magazines.com) has offered deals and discounts on subscriptions to the world's most popular magazines. The brand and its data-driven agency partner, [Rakuten Marketing Agency](#), are no strangers to the power of automation — Rakuten Marketing has recommended dynamic search ads (DSA) since March 2018. After DSA increased clicks and conversions while providing valuable insights about content the brand's readers were craving, Magazines.com and Rakuten Marketing started exploring other ways the brand could tap into automation.

Magazines.com has used Standard Shopping campaigns since 2014. However, along with the entire industry, the brand noticed a steady decline in sales in the past few years. With online competition between brands growing more intense, Magazines.com needed an efficient way to reach a wider audience of readers and consistently drive sales. Leading up to the holiday season, Rakuten Marketing saw an opportunity for the brand to test Smart Shopping campaigns for the first time.

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*"Navigating the ever-changing landscape of paid search is complex. Maximizing wins by utilizing machine learning and AI has only been possible through our deep working relationship with Rakuten Marketing and their integrated partnership with Google."*

—Andy Sperry, CMO, Magazines.com

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## Using automation to reach a wider audience of readers

In the past, Magazines.com ran two Standard Shopping campaigns with target return on ad spend (tROAS) Smart Bidding, before switching to enhanced cost per click (eCPC) Smart Bidding. Performance was strong, but Rakuten Marketing's team knew the brand could see even stronger results with the help of machine learning.



## About Google for Retail

From smarter ads to easier transactions, Google for Retail helps build better retail experiences that help you sell your products to shoppers around the corner—and around the globe.

To learn more, visit:  
<https://www.google.com/retail/>

Magazines.com went all-in in August 2018, launching a Smart Shopping campaign for all of its subscriptions. To account for seasonal spikes in traffic, the brand also compared Smart Shopping campaign's performance between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday to its Standard Shopping campaigns from last year.

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*"Winning Black Friday was crucial to hitting our sales goals. We knew we'd need to innovate to reach more readers in such a competitive environment."*

*—Keith Cook, Director of Paid Media, Magazines.com*

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Magazines.com's main goal was to drive revenue at its set budget, but freeing up extra time and resources for Rakuten Marketing was just as important. Rather than wasting time with constant, manual campaign tweaks, Rakuten Marketing's team could focus on uncovering new ways to reach relevant audiences and drive sales.

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*"If Smart Shopping campaign performance remained consistent, then it was undoubtedly the right campaign choice. The time saved on monotonous but necessary tasks ultimately led to more creative ways to hit our sales targets."*

*—Teresa Davis, Strategic Account Manager, Rakuten Marketing*

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## Smart Shopping campaigns boost subscriptions and sales

When Magazines.com compared the campaign's 30-day YoY performance to its Standard Shopping campaigns, the brand saw an impressive 95% sales growth with a minimal impact on ROAS. As for holiday performance, between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday, the brand's revenue increased 180% YoY at a steady ROAS.

Since Rakuten Marketing has shared Magazines.com's results, many of its other clients have been inspired to test Smart Shopping campaigns. In Q4 of 2018, just 35% of Rakuten Marketing's clients had adopted the automated solution. The agency expects that number to grow to 70% by Q1 of 2019. Automation has also been key to Magazines.com's ability to scale efficiently, and it will continue testing additional Smart Bidding features, including target CPA (tCPA) for its future non-brand campaigns.