The Gift That Keeps on Giving: Post-Holiday Learnings

1. Analyze the Numbers
   What KPIs met or missed goal last season, and why?
   - **Outcome Analysis.** Compare your actual KPIs with your original holiday forecast — from impressions to profit, if possible.
   - **Share of Voice Assessment.** Look at your impression share (IS) to get an idea of how much of the holiday shopping demand you captured.
     - **Tip:** Calculate total available impressions (divide impressions served by 1 minus Lost IS) and trend this metric over time with your impression count. Focus this analysis with exact match impressions.
     - **Tip:** Trend Lost IS (rank) throughout the quarter to find times you had to bid down on seasonal head terms because of limited available budget.
   - **Keyword Activation.** Compare when you activated or bid up your seasonal keywords with when search interest actually began by using Google Trends.
   - **Bid Optimization.** Compare your CPA targets with spikes in conversion rates and order values on key shopping days for any profitable bid opportunities.
   - **Competitive Analysis.** Assess your relative position with other advertisers using auction insights over the holidays since it’s such a competitive timeframe.
     - **Tip:** Trend CTR and conversion rates throughout last season and recall if competitors ran aggressive promotions that could have affected performance.
   - **Cross-channel Analysis.** Compare KPI performance with other digital channels and discuss similar trends and major differences.

2. Gather Ideas
   What worked well and what could’ve been improved last season?
   - **Reporting Needs.** Identify additional metrics for your KPI dashboard that could have alerted you to opportunities, spend inefficiencies, and budget needs last quarter.
     - **Tip:** Be sure to track your holiday budget’s “burn-rate” next year (actual spend to-date divided by budgeted spend to-date) ensuring you have enough budget for peak shopping days.
     - **Tip:** Add the total available impressions metric mentioned earlier as a good way to track holiday demand captured next year.
   - **Team Communications.** Identify information gaps for your team or from your client during this past holiday season that affected performance.
     - **Example:** Revenue performance updates that could’ve affected bids.
     - **Example:** Mid-season promotional changes that could’ve changed creative.
   - **Productivity Analysis.** Identify workflow inefficiencies last quarter that slowed campaign updates needed to take full advantage of fleeting holiday traffic.
Plan & Prepare

What are your key initiatives this year that will set you up for success come next season?

- **Plan**. Forecast KPIs for the next holiday season using year-on-year trends.
  - **Tip**: Use your account data and Google Trends to see which products are growing fastest leading into the holidays.
  - **Tip**: Segment out mobile traffic in your forecast to assess how it’s affecting overall performance year-on-year.

- **Brainstorm**. Ideate initiatives and suggest resources that target your riskiest KPIs for next Q4.
  - **Example**: If you need to reach more shoppers, make sure your product listing ads are set up in time for the next holidays. Their contribution to the success of retail accounts will only grow this coming season.
  - **Example**: If you need to improve conversion rates, consider testing new landing pages or different promotional offers.

- **Communicate**. Speak with cross functional colleagues and account teams to stay abreast of their plans.
  - **Example**: Understand how potential new products will affect your keyword expansion and budgets.
  - **Example**: Know when your site goes into year-end “code freeze” for project management.
  - **Example**: Ask your Google account team to whitelist you for beta tests that could grow your account or improve workflow for the next season.

- **Recommend**. Propose a Q4 budget to stakeholders using your forecast and initiatives as a business case.
  - **Tip**: Know which parts to cut if you don’t get all the budget you need.

- **Implement**. Start a project plan and assemble a working group for the approved initiatives now.

And don’t forget to thank everyone (teammates, managers, agency, account team, and vendors) for a thorough post-holiday analysis and productive planning process.

Here’s to an even better holiday season this year.