



Thriving Through
the Holidays:
**Your Small Business
Preparedness Guide**



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Welcome

A guide to getting your piece of the holiday shopping frenzy

The holiday season is right around the corner – in fact, many small business owners start preparing for the holiday shopping rush in **June or July**. Merchants who haven't started planning yet, or may feel a little bit behind, can still catch up with this guide to holiday preparedness, courtesy of Clover. We designed this guide to help you prepare for small business for the holiday season.



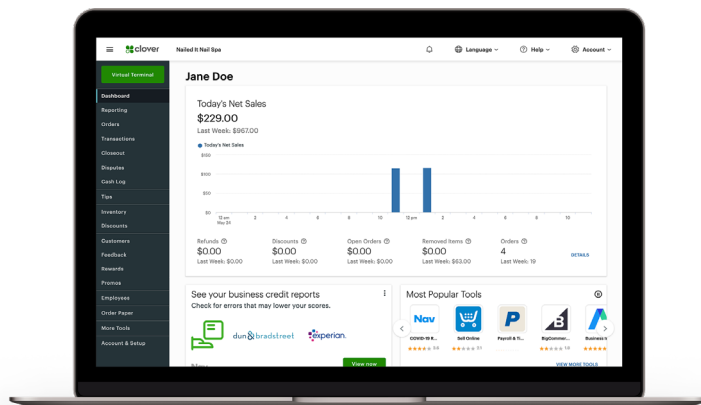
Pre-holiday preparations

Fueling your energy

Merchants will have a lot of additional things to juggle on top of the normal workload of running a business. It's important for small business owners to be proactive about managing their stress and energy to avoid burnout.

Ideally, merchants can start to delegate early and add automation tools – like Clover's inventory management feature, admin tools like Order Paper, and other apps from **Clover's App Market** – to help keep things running smoothly.

With this in mind, here are some ways merchants can start preparing for the holiday season.



Ramp up your marketing

According to a **National Retail Federation survey**, 17% of customers start researching holiday purchases before September. As a result, small businesses need a marketing strategy in place in early autumn.

Clover's analytics tool provides actionable business insights needed to create an impactful holiday marketing strategy. This tool can help small business owners understand their average sales and highest-selling products to set their targets for this holiday season. It also allows business owners the ability to track business anywhere, at any time – directly from a dashboard or the Clover Go mobile app.

One of the most effective forms of holiday marketing is gift guides. Emails featuring gift guides generated a 48% increase in transactions compared to other kinds of mailings, showing that it's a great way to convert casual browsers into paying customers.



Merchants should also start planning what holiday promotions they plan to offer during the peak sales season. Businesses should think through what they are looking to achieve. Promotions that work well for building a social media following may not work as well for bringing in new customers. The holidays are a great time to focus on increasing customer loyalty and customer acquisition. Merchants could try a friends and family discount, exclusive sales preview, or cross-promotion with another local business.



And finally, businesses should make sure they're equipped to offer gift cards. There are dozens of benefits to offering gift cards: from moving unique inventory to increasing sales, gift cards are a win-win for customers and merchants alike. Holidays and special occasions present perfect opportunities to boost gift card sales. Small business owners should look for fun ways to build connections locally and turn basic presents into ones that feel more personal and special. Clover makes setting up and managing a gift card program quick and easy. **Clover Gift Cards** are available in physical or digital options and are simple to design and execute.

Building a strong holiday team

Hiring during the holiday season can be tough. Many businesses are competing for part-time workers and trying to manage their own employees' holiday time off.

Small business owners can search for seasonal workers by advertising on social media accounts and asking current employees for referrals. Referrals are ideal: these candidates can be vouched for and may be more reliable than other applicants.

The hiring process can be time-consuming, so merchants and HR teams should find ways to streamline seasonal recruitment. **Clover's Homebase Hiring** app can help businesses create and post a job listings across multiple sites and keep candidates organized. Likewise, managers can prep ahead for onboarding by setting up a new hire's workstation, personal locker, uniform, nametag, or any other employee materials they need.

Juggling employee schedules during the holiday season can get especially tricky, with requests for time off and busy shopping hours all happening simultaneously. **Clover Schedule** and **Time Clock apps** allow employees to message each other and you directly about covering shifts, and easily track their hours.



During the holidays

The holiday shopping period can feel hectic for small businesses. There are so many moving parts to manage – from staffing to sales to customer service. Most small business owners will be laser-focused on sales, trying to make the most of the peak shopping season while meeting customer needs. Holiday seasons have historically offered a key opportunity for building customer loyalty.

Crafting unforgettable experiences

Shopping during the holidays is often unpleasant: long lines, stockouts, and stressed out customers make the entire process.

Small business owners can motivate those first-time holiday shoppers to make a return visit by creating unique experiences: events, product demonstrations, or expert advice for using their products or services.



Small businesses can also set themselves apart from larger enterprises by personalizing the holiday shopping experience. The simple act of sending a personalized email, thanking new customers for their business is a small gesture that can have a big impact on wooing them back. Consider sending a note with a discount that can be redeemed during the holiday season with a private deal, gift with purchase, tiered discount offer, or even an exclusive item available only to those on the mailing list.

Customer rewards

A rewards program is also a good way to build loyalty with new and existing customers. **Clover Rewards** helps merchants nurture customer loyalty and satisfaction after their initial engagement with the business. Businesses can enroll first-time customers in Clover Rewards and delight them with a discount or exclusive offer sent via email or text message a few days after their initial visit.



Businesses can also solidify long-lasting relationships with customers by exceeding expectations during the holidays. Small touches like mailing packages with 3-5 day shipping to customers who chose 5-7 day shipping go a long way. Business owners can use **Clover Promos** to send high-value, real-time promotions via email, text, or social media to loyalty customers and those you hope to reel in for subsequent business.

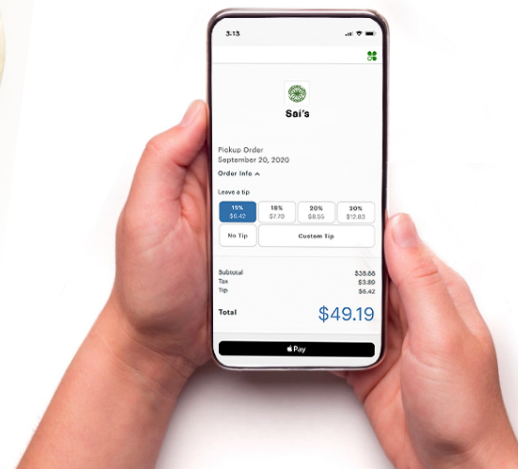
Drive foot traffic

Retailers with physical storefronts need to be prepared for higher-than-normal foot traffic. While many shoppers are researching products online, they still want the experience of going to a brick-and-mortar store to complete the purchase.



Businesses can help customers complete their journey (metaphorically and literally) by creating a Google Business Profile. A Business Profile helps customers find and connect with your store on Google Search and Maps. Discoverability also helps businesses serve shoppers who wait until the very last minute to finish their holiday shopping.

It's not just retail businesses that need to prepare for higher foot traffic. Restaurants, too, need to be ready for increased demand over the holidays. One way to make the most of the festive season is to design a menu that maximizes profit. Family-style and take-and-bake to-go meals are popular options for big gatherings, especially when customers get tired of cooking. Streamlined menus can cut down on waste. And, restaurants should offer additional ways to pay during extra-busy periods to keep things running smoothly (think: **Clover's Scan to Pay, Online Ordering**).



After the holiday rush

The official holiday season lasts from **November 1 – December 31**, but for many small businesses, it won't be until after January that things feel normal again. Some business types experience post-holiday lulls or booms. For instance, gyms get really busy in January with new year's resolutions, whereas bar traffic can slow down as people participate in Dry January. Merchants should factor planning for this period into their overall approach to the holiday season.

Thank your team

When the dust settles, small business owners should take time to celebrate the effort that went into making the season a success. Merchants can take time to thank their team: those who take and fulfill orders, handle sales, restock inventory, bake goods, serve customers, or simply keep things chugging along.



Review sales performance

Business owners can see how they performed during the holiday season by reviewing their sales trends. This data can help business owners understand what did and didn't work out. **Clover's robust point of sale reporting** highlights trends and benchmarking to track a business' performance over time. Sales analysis will offer insight into customer behavior and buying habits, so businesses can better strategize for next year's holiday selling season.

Allow data to drive strategy

Leverage your holiday data to make informed decisions about where to invest resources, which products or services to develop, and how to position them in the market for the remainder of the year.

Prepping for the holiday season takes a lot of time and forethought. Clover can help, with tons of tools and insights to help business owners get ahead of the rush. To learn more, contact your local business consultant.





Additional Resources

- **Contactless payments**
- **Clover Gift Cards**
- **BigCommerce** (eCommerce application)
- **Fisherman** (Website creation and hosting)

Disclaimers

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