

A guide to navigating tentpole events on Amazon

A guide to help brands optimize their operational and marketing efforts during high volume eCommerce sales events.

By Chris Moe, Cameron Benton, Sam Kaplan, and the Cartograph Team

A note from our CEO

Tentpole events – major sales days like Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and Prime Day – are massive opportunities for brands to capture significant traffic and revenue on Amazon.

Traditionally considered big sales days for categories like electronics and appliances, they've also become essential sales moments for CPG and consumables brands.

In addition to generating revenue, these events carry the potential to turn many new one-off purchasers into loyal customers.

In this guide, we'll help you understand:

Why these sales events are meaningful for consumer brands

How to prepare for them, what to do during them, and how to maintain momentum after them.

Challenges that come with investing in events like this and how to overcome them.

+ more

If you have any feedback, questions, or ideas, please let me know; we'd love to hear from you!

Chris Moe, CEO of Cartograph



A collage of Cartograph customers we work with to grow their Amazon business

The TL;DR

- Why tentpole events matter: Understand the significance of tentpole events like Prime Day, Black Friday, and more, and how they can drive substantial growth for your brand.
- What you should do before, during, and after: Learn actionable strategies to prepare for, execute, and capitalize on tentpole events to maximize your success.
- How to win with your brand: actionable guides to inventory planning, dynamic pricing, promotions, and audience-building that help your brand stand out during these high-traffic occasions.
- Case studies: See how luxury skincare brand Nécessaire used Prime Day to achieve massive growth, providing insights you can apply to your own strategy.
- Common obstacles and how to overcome them: Identify potential challenges brands face during tentpole events and practical solutions to navigate them effectively.
- Retention strategies for long-term success: Find out how to convert one-time buyers into loyal customers using retention techniques such as remarketing and subscription services.

A guide to tentpole events on Amazon

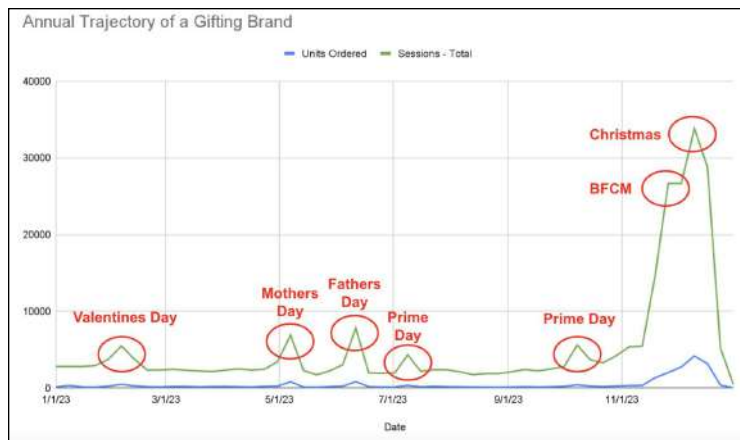
What are tentpole events? 🤔

There are three tiers of tentpole events. **Prime Day** (July & October) and **Black Friday, Cyber Monday** are the most obvious examples in tier 1.

Tier 2 tentpole events are holiday-specific, such as Valentine's Day, Mother's & Father's Day, Easter, or Halloween.

Last, seasonal swings can be tentpole opportunities too, like changing seasons, New Year's resolutions, back-to-school shopping, or the start of spring for sunscreen.

While tentpole events drive immediate revenue spikes, their long-term value extends beyond short-term sales. Short-term benefits include immediate cash flow improvement, inventory reduction, and market share gains.



This graph shows the shopping spikes around tentpole events for a gifting brand.

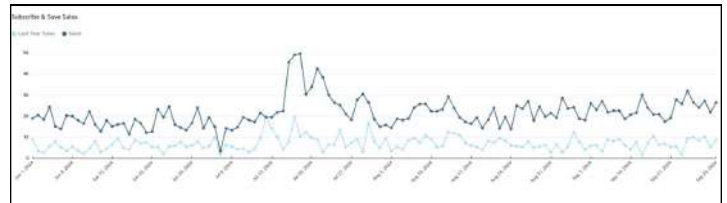
Additionally, brands that thrive during tentpole events see sustained rank improvements, customer lifetime value growth, and strengthened brand presence. In some scenarios, some brands see boosted organic rankings in the last 60 to 90 days post-event, creating a compound effect that builds with each successive tentpole event.

Why should you care?

Tentpole events are a gateway to discovering new customers you'd not have otherwise found. Here are some ways to get them to buy a product and convert them into loyal customers.

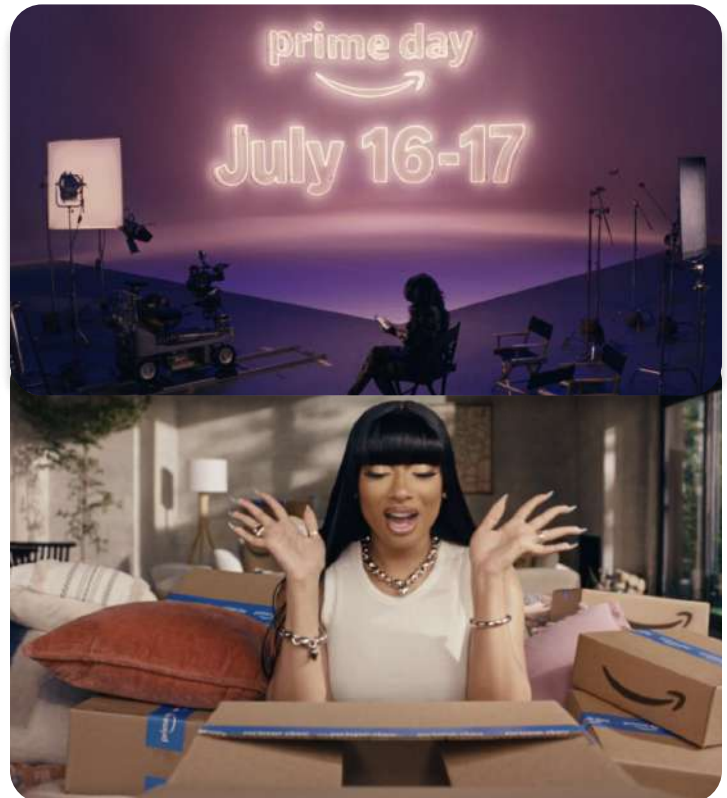
- **Free organic traffic:** These events attract massive shoppers, driven by Amazon's extensive marketing efforts and other brands promoting their deals. Because these deals often get prominent placement on Amazon's homepage, consumers flock to the platform for deals, leading to a substantial increase in overall traffic.
- **New customer acquisition:** Heavy traffic volume means it's easier to acquire customers who are more willing to test new brands and products out with a discounted purchase. Customers discover things differently on deal days: deal pages and recommendations are unique to each event.
- **Product reviews:** The more sales you generate during tentpole events, the more likely you are to collect product reviews, which is another huge opportunity to boost credibility long-term.

- **Improved category merchandising and seller rank:** Tentpole events improve your brand's merchandising within the category and enhance your seller ranking, and seller ranks can have a residual influence post-event.
- **Quick sales boosts:** During Summer Prime Day, CPG brands that run Prime-exclusive discounts see an average 4-5x lift in daily sales, while Fall Prime Day experiences a 2-3x increase in daily sales.
- **Inventory Clearance:** It's also ideal to use this to clear out slow-moving or excess inventory.



Example of growth in Subscribe & Save base before and after Prime Day. These customers become harder for competitors to reach and are more cost-effective to retain long term.

- **Subscription growth:** This is a great time to invest in expanding subscription growth, like Amazon's Subscribe & Save feature. When you acquire new subscribers this way, you can create a base of long-term customers who are more challenging for competitors to reach and more cost-effective to retain over time.



A campaign where Megan Thee Stallion partnered with Amazon to kick off Prime Day with a new music video announcing the dates for this year's shopping event, which are July 16 and 17.

Topics we'll cover

tentpole events



A guide to tentpole events on Amazon

Pre-event: prepare accordingly

1. Inventory management & forecasting

At Cartograph, we always say, "If you want to sell a product, you have to have products to sell."

While that sounds cheesy, you may be surprised how few people are actually prepared with products for a tentpole event.

Properly managing and forecasting your inventory is the most important work you can plan for "pre-event."

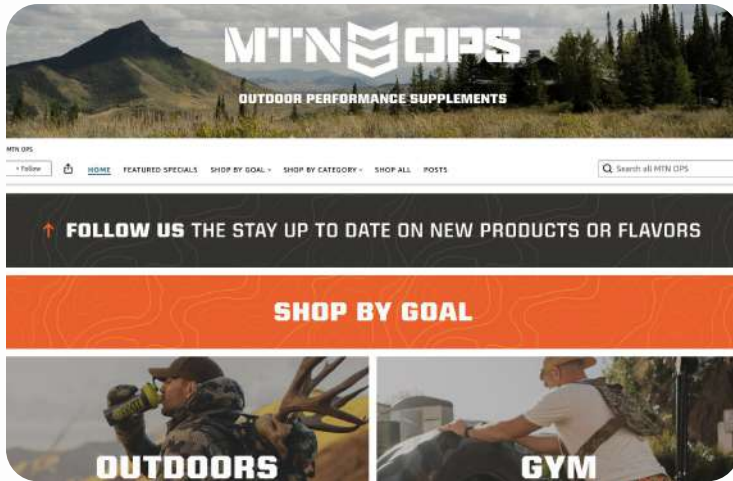
To mitigate inventory issues, ensure inventory arrives 60 days before major shopping events.

Why?

As you get closer, know that Amazon's receiving times slow down, and missed pickups become more frequent.

This is further complicated when you consider how high customer expectations are (where they expect Prime 2-day shipping or faster), so having inventory fully stocked and dispersed reduces customer delivery times.

To accomplish this, you need advanced forecasting and demand planning to keep pace. This process should begin before the fiscal year starts, aligning your manufacturing and inventory strategies with Amazon's event calendar.



Example of MTN Ops' page listing on Amazon

2. Optimizing Amazon listings

Ensure your product titles, images, descriptions, and keywords are optimized for discoverability.

People shop on Amazon to **fulfill their basic needs and discover something new**.

You need to market toward customer demand with creative content that stands out.

Making content specific to the tentpole event (e.g. Valentine's Day ❤️) is a great way to drive conversions and set your listings apart from the competition.

When it comes to optimizing your product listings, search and discoverability are even more critical.

Here are some tools that can help you with this:

- **JungleScout:** for sizing up search demand
- **Search Query Performance:** for insights into trending searches
- **Product Opportunity Explorer:** for understanding consumer behavior

By emphasizing what customers love about your products and addressing what they dislike in competitor offerings, you put yourself in a position to succeed.

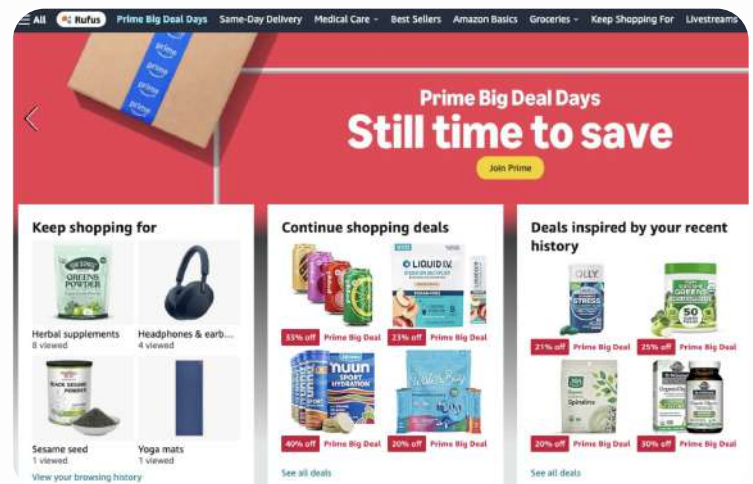
3. Promotions and discounts

Creating a compelling offer is a blend of art and science. The right combo of deals, coupons, and lightning offers can significantly boost visibility and sales.

Here are 4 ideas to consider when crafting your own promotions:

1. **Prime Exclusive Discounts** are particularly effective, as they receive the best merchandising and placements on Amazon. These discounts often appear on high-traffic pages like the homepage or in key promotional areas, helping brands gain organic visibility without additional advertising spend.
2. **Lightning Deals** are another powerful tool for driving brand awareness. While they may consistently deliver a different volume than Prime Exclusive Discounts, they create urgency and attract deal-seeking consumers, further expanding your brand's reach.
3. **Double Badging** is a powerful way to differentiate your offerings in a competitive deal landscape while expanding your customer base. Use Subscribe and Save coupons strategically drives long-term growth. This way you reduce advertising costs and enhanced customer retention. Last, it makes these customers significantly more difficult for competitors to acquire.
4. Another effective strategy is to implement a **Buy More, Save More** promotion. This type of deal encourages customers to purchase higher quantities, driving up average order values (AOVs) and increasing your overall profitability during the event.

Last, understand your marginal customer acquisition costs (CAC) and lifetime values (LTVs). This will help you justify giving up additional margin during tentpole events.

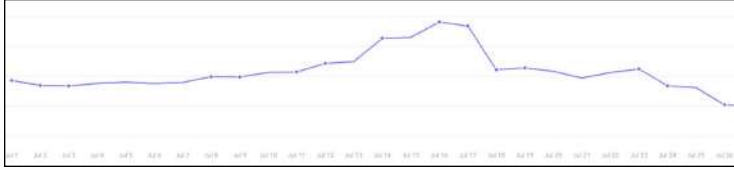


A photo of Buy More, Save More on Prime Day

A guide to tentpole events on Amazon

Pre-event: prepare accordingly

While steep discounts may reduce your short-term profit margins, acquiring new customers and scaling up in rank during high-traffic periods can lead to substantial long-term gains as you capture more market share and strengthen your brand's position on Amazon.



This graph shows the cost per clicks surrounding July Prime Day. CPCs can more than double during the event, showing the value of building your audiences well before Prime Day through unbranded PPC and upper funnel DSP advertising.

4. The lead up

When you're trying to build momentum before an event, keep these three components top of mind:

- 1. CPC Trends: Cost-per-clicks (CPCs)** rise significantly before and during major events, so plan accordingly to maximize ad spend efficiency.
- 2. PPC Strategy:** Drive pre-event visibility through strategic unbranded targeting to build your audience efficiently. Allocate increased budgets to non-branded search terms to build relevancy and capture new-to-brand customers.

Deploy Sponsored Brand Video campaigns to enhance brand visibility and storytelling. Implement targeted bid multipliers on proven high-performing keywords to maximize reach. Develop comprehensive negative keyword lists to optimize spending efficiency. Focus your KPIs on audience-building metrics like clicks rather than ROAS, as acquiring customers pre-event is typically more cost-effective than during peak periods when CPCs surge. This approach allows for more efficient retargeting during the tentpole event itself.

- 3. DSP Strategy:** Leverage Amazon DSP to build and test upper-funnel audiences before the event through strategic segmentation. Deploy multiple creative variants alongside Retail Essential Creative (REC) to identify optimal engagement patterns. Utilize Amazon Marketing Cloud (AMC) to create high-performing lookalike audiences based on both first-party and Amazon customer data.

Our data shows significantly lower effective Cost Per Detail Page View (eCPDPV) and higher linear conversion rates when using AMC audiences for upper-funnel targeting than traditional In-Market or Lifestyle segments. Focus on precise audience matching with tailored creative to maximize campaign effectiveness.

Your goal should be to lean on organic visibility, spend efficiently, and have multiple funnels in place so you never have to rely on a "one-size-fits-all" approach with potential customers who have unique preferences.

During event: maximize sales

1. Building the hype

First, you want to promote the event by targeting your users via email and SMS. Rather than cannibalizing your DTC business, it might be good to target users in this outreach who are labeled "inactive" or "dead" in your email list and re-engage them to push them to Amazon.

Second, make use of sales kickbacks by generating Amazon Attribution Links in the ad console to track off-Amazon traffic and qualify for the Brand Referral Bonus,

Ultimately, sending a burst of messaging at the start of the event can give you an advantage in your category and a larger share of organic traffic. For context, this is often the difference between having a 5x day and a 10-20x day.

2. Using Amazon's fulfillment network

Amazon's robust fulfillment network becomes an increasingly valuable asset as holidays approach, maintaining one-day shipping capabilities in many regions even when other channels can no longer guarantee timely delivery.

This creates a natural shift in consumer behavior, with shoppers migrating from DTC and other retail channels to Amazon for last-minute gift purchases.



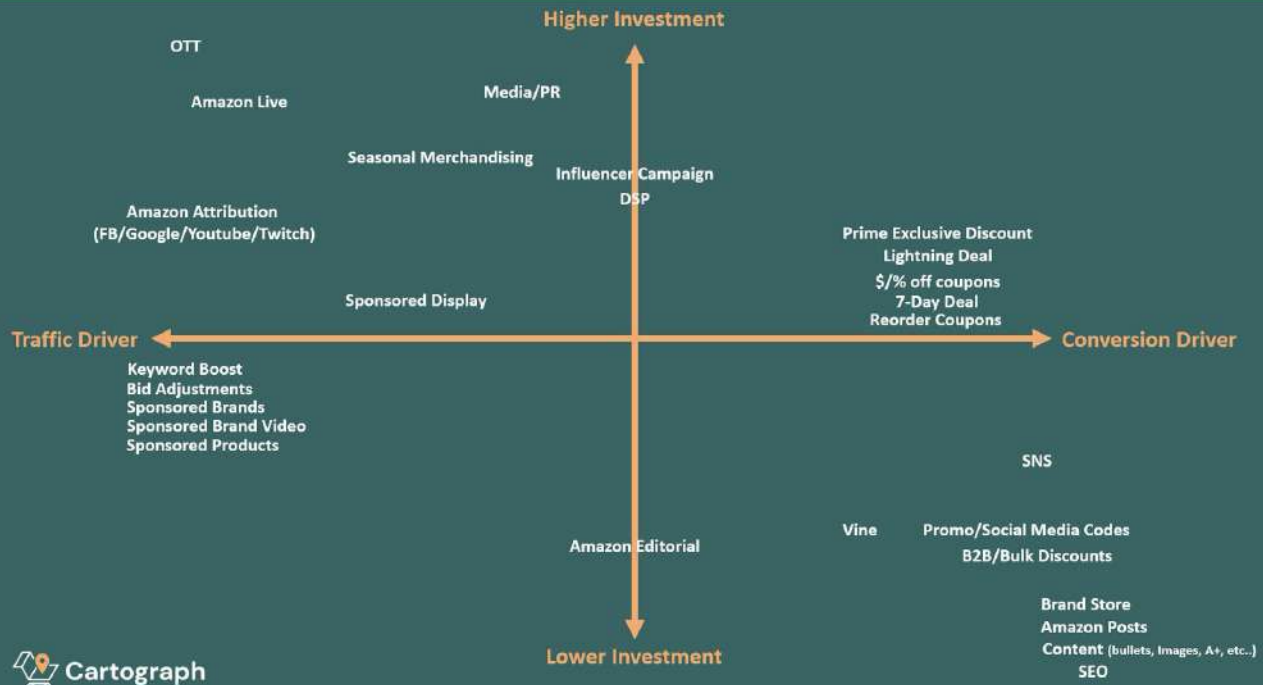
Photo of an Amazon warehouse

Capitalize on this advantage by strategically redirecting your off-Amazon traffic to the platform during the final shopping days. Deploy targeted email and SMS campaigns with urgency-driven messaging like "There's still time for that perfect gift" to capture late-season shoppers.

These campaigns drive sales and qualify for Brand Referral Bonus rewards, improving overall profitability.

A guide to tentpole events on Amazon

List of Amazon levers, organized by degree of investment and traffic vs. conversion focus



This is a visualization of how we (at Cartograph) think about helping brands prioritize their focus based on their goals

During event: maximize sales cont'd 💰

Implement a hybrid fulfillment strategy for your DTC operations. Integrate Buy with Prime on your website to leverage Amazon's fulfillment capabilities while maintaining your direct customer relationship.

Additionally, utilize Multi-Channel Fulfillment (MCF) to tap into Amazon's logistics network for orders from other sales channels, ensuring consistent delivery.

3. Real-time campaign adjustments

Many brands fall behind because they don't actively monitor or adjust campaigns during peak periods. Utilize platforms that provide real-time data insights and adjust your bids or spend dynamically to capitalize on spikes in traffic.

4. Dynamic pricing and promotions

Real-time adjustments are critical during the event. If you want to see a lift in revenue, you need to be agile, which is why we recommend that brands:

- **Monitor competitor pricing and discounts** in real-time and have the flexibility to adjust your deals to remain competitive.
- **Use automation:** Tools like Perpetua can help automate bid and budget adjustments, ensuring you capitalize on the highest traffic moments.

5. Specific advertising adjustments

- **Increase** advertising budgets during the event and loosen frequency caps for more visibility.
- **Prioritize** retargeting and remarketing ads to re-engage pre-event audiences.
- **Use** top-performing creative for audiences with high DPV rates.
- For Sponsored Display, **leverage** vCPM bidding to secure premium placements, especially on Prime Exclusive Deal (PED) pages.
- **Test** ad types. Sponsored Brand Video is highly effective for capturing unbranded traffic—create videos that speak to your customer needs (e.g., "Looking for a gift?").
- For Sponsored Products, **increase** bids on top category keywords, and use Search Query Performance data to optimize visibility. Adjust budgets hourly during peak times.

Post-event: review performance, use momentum 🔍

Regarding performance, two kinds of KPIs indicate how successful a brand's efforts were: traffic and conversion.

And when you dive into each one, there are three things we look for to gauge success:

Post-event: review performance, use momentum 🔍

Traffic KPIs

- **Impressions:** How many times did your product listing appear in search results? High impressions point to solid visibility.
- **Clicks:** How often did customers click on your listing after seeing it in search results? Clicks reveal a genuine engagement with your title and main image.
- **Click-through rate (CTR):** What percentage of impressions turned into clicks? A higher CTR suggests your product is effectively capturing attention.

Conversion KPIs

- **Conversion Rate:** What percentage of clicks resulted in a sale? A high conversion rate indicates that your product listing and offer are convincing.
- **Units Sold:** What was the total number of units sold during the event? This will tell us the overall demand.
- **Revenue:** What's the total sales generated from this event? That reveals how well your strategy translated into profit.

Traffic vs. Conversion: which one's better for me?

If you care more about:

- Increased brand awareness
- Improving rankings
- Introducing new products

...we recommend prioritizing traffic-focused KPIs.

But if you're more concerned with maximizing sales and spending efficiency during an event, you should use conversion-focused KPIs.

Lead-out strategy and nurture flows

As a brand, your most important work comes following a sale.

You've built a solid layer of trust with a new customer, but you have to double down to create elasticity with that customer.

Here are some ways to accomplish that:

- **Remarketing:** Use DSP and Sponsored Display to remarket to customers who engaged but didn't convert during the event.
- **Cart abandonment:** Implement brand-tailored promotions to target customers who abandoned their carts during the event, helping drive them back to complete their purchases.
- **Subscription services:** Promoting Subscribe and Save options immediately after the event can lock in repeat customers.
- **Post-purchase engagement:** Leverage tools like "Manage Your Customer Engagement" to follow up with event buyers and encourage repeat purchases, offering promotions or personalized recommendations.
- **Cross-sell and upsell:** Do this with past purchasers by showcasing complementary products or upgrades, driving higher-order values.

- **Retargeting campaigns:** These use data on customer behavior from your Amazon storefront and event performance to keep your brand top of mind, especially after major events.



New Brand Architect
Finalist 2024
Amazon Ads Partner Awards

This year, we were named a finalist for Amazon's Ad Partner Awards for our work with Nécessaire

Customer Spotlight 🔦

How Nécessaire used Prime Day to drive sales

The context

Nécessaire, a luxury skincare brand, had been selling on Amazon, but it was only a fraction of the company's overall growth. During July Prime Day, they needed to acquire new-to-brand customers to drive overall growth while ensuring it did not cannibalize its core sales channel, DTC.

How we worked with Nécessaire

We implemented a robust, three-phased strategy for them that lasted six weeks.

Phase 1: The Run Up – 4 weeks before Prime Day

In phase one, we built a large, qualified "retargeting audience" pool for Nécessaire. This enabled us to redirect consumers to deal pages on Prime Day. We utilized in-market audience targeting with Amazon DSP to reach a large, relevant, top-of-funnel audience and then defined our qualified audience pool based on those who clicked the ads.

Given that younger people consume most content from their phones – and many Nécessaire customers are under 44 years old – we spent 80%+ of top-of-funnel DSP on mobile destinations.

We also used 1P data from Nécessaire to ensure we focused on shoppers who would convert on Amazon vs. Nécessaire's website. We did this to prevent cannibalizing their DTC channel.

In the final week of phase one, we offered 10% off coupons across the brand's catalog and used DSP to drive past purchasers to our detail pages, which helped us improve sales rank and organic visibility right before the main event.

Phase 2: The Main Event

During the Prime Day window, we focused on three things:

1. We leveraged the audiences we cultivated in phase one to drive brand-aware consumers to product pages on the deal days.

A guide to tentpole events on Amazon

Post-event: review performance, use momentum 🔍

Customer Spotlight cont'd 🔧

How Nécessaire used Prime Day to drive sales

Phase 2: The Main Event cont'd

During the Prime Day window, we focused on three things:

We utilized Amazon DSP to re-target two key segments:

First, people who viewed a Nécessaire PDP in the last 365 days but didn't purchase, and second, shoppers who purchased Nécessaire but hadn't repurchased in the previous 60 days.

Our team manually adjusted bid levels and day-parting configurations to keep up with the speed of bid changes. This also helped ensure that Nécessaire didn't lose their share of voice (SOV).

On top of this, we are offering a 20% discount across the whole catalog that was exclusive to Prime Day.

Phase 3: Post-Prime Day

After Prime Day, we launched retargeting campaigns to convert new-to-brand DPVs that didn't convert during Prime Day.

These retargeting campaigns had ads with coupons, and we targeted users who clicked but didn't purchase and those who had previously purchased within the last 365 days but not in the previous 30 days.

We also used DSP to target brand-loyal customers who had yet to purchase on Prime Day with coupons to cultivate FOMO.

Last, we continued leveraging dayparting to optimize our budget and boost seller rank during key buying times.

The Results – by the numbers

We captured **2.7 million Ad impressions** during the four weeks before Prime Day, **generated hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales on Prime Day**, boosted their **best seller rank to #5** in Body Wash, and acquired **19,300 new-to-brand customers** in July alone.

Tools that make tentpole campaigns successful 🛠️

Below we have compiled a list of powerful tools—both native to Amazon and third-party—that you should know about. Perhaps you recognize some of these, but the reality is that if you want to double-down on success with tentpole events, each of these make accomplishing that much easier.

Amazon-native tools

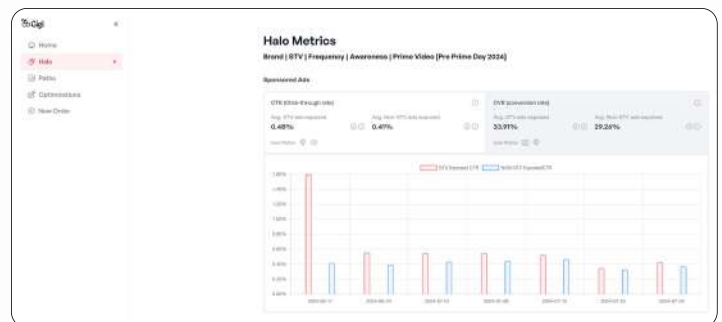
- Tools like Amazon **Advertising Console**, **Brand Analytics**, and **inventory forecasting**.
- **Search Query Performance**: Track keywords where your product ranks, and monitor impressions, clicks, and purchase share relative to your ad performance.

Amazon-native tools

- **Product Opportunity Explorer**: Gain insights into customer needs, search trends, and category opportunities to understand market demand and growth areas better.
- **Amazon Marketing Cloud (AMC)**: Build DSP audiences, analyze purchase paths, and identify new-to-brand customers at the campaign level for more targeted advertising strategies.
- **Subscribe & Save Dashboard**: Recent improvements make tracking how many customers stay subscribed easier. Subscription customers often have high LTV, contributing significantly to long-term growth.
- **Brand Store Insights**: Analyze how customers reach your store and their behavior once there. Using this dashboard, create event-specific landing pages and track performance to optimize campaigns and drive conversions.

Third-party tools

- **Perpetua**: Automate bid and budget adjustments before, during, and after events, supplementing manual monitoring in Amazon's ad console for more effective ad management.
- **Helium 10**: A robust Amazon research tool. Use the Keyword Rank Tracker to monitor keyword performance and make informed decisions on where to increase or decrease ad investment based on ranking.
- **Keepa**: Track competitor pricing and discounting strategies. Use it to analyze how competitor discounts impact their rankings and adjust your pricing strategies accordingly.
- **JungleScout**: Monitor market share by setting up segments with your top competitors and branded ASINs. This helps you understand whether you gained market share during key events like Prime Day.



This is a dashboard that shows how streaming TV ads affect new-to-brand purchases

- **Gigi**: A powerful tool for running Streaming TV campaigns. Build custom audiences directly on the platform and connect first-party data to optimize upper-funnel campaigns and boost click-through rates.
- **Intentwise**: A valuable resource for Amazon Marketing Cloud (AMC) reporting. Use it to track acquisition costs (CAC), customer journeys through the funnel, gateway ASINs, and other key performance insights to fine-tune your advertising strategies.

Obstacles with tentpole events and how you overcome them

From inventory shortages to rising ad costs and high customer expectations, tentpole events can be a double-edged sword.

Here are some common issues we see:

Inventory shortages

The challenge: Demand spikes during significant events are great, but poor inventory planning can delays in restocking, and no one wants that, especially when you're riding the momentum from a huge event.

How to overcome it:

- **Advanced forecasting:** It's best to use historical data and demand forecasting tools to predict how much stock you'll need. As a general rule, plan on having inventory inbound at least 60 days in advance to avoid fulfillment center delays.
- **Diversify fulfillment channels:** Utilize FBA (Fulfilled by Amazon) and FBM (Fulfilled by Merchant) options to ensure your products are always available, even if one channel experiences delays.

Advertising Competition

The challenge: It's simple: more competition during tentpole events drives up CPCs (cost-per-click), making it harder to maintain profitability. That's why all brands should carefully manage bids and budgets to stay competitive without overspending.

How to overcome it:

- **Bid adjustments & automation tools:** Use tools like Perpetua to automate bid adjustments based on real-time data, ensuring you stay competitive without overspending. Prioritize high-converting keywords over those with high CPCs.
- **Focus on long-tail keywords:** Target more specific, niche keywords to reduce competition and costs while reaching relevant shoppers.

Fulfillment delays

The challenge: It's great to rack up sales, but that means nothing when fulfillment centers are overwhelmed, causing more delays in processing and shipping inventory. Delays and infrequent restocks will hurt rankings and sales without timely restocks.

How to overcome it:

- **Preemptive inventory planning:** Ship inventory well before major events to avoid potential delays in Amazon's fulfillment centers. Consider staggering shipments to avoid complete stockouts.
- **Use inventory alerts:** Set up low-stock alerts through Amazon's systems or third-party tools to ensure you know potential issues before they impact sales.

Expensive ad costs

The challenge: The surge in advertising demand during events like Prime Day often results in inflated costs, reducing the return on ad spend (ROAS) if campaigns need to be optimized. Brands need to balance spending with expected sales to maintain profitability.

How to overcome it:

- **Optimize your spending:** Focus on selling products with the highest margin or most robust demand. Cut back on lower-converting ads or products that won't move quickly—track performance daily to fine-tune your spending.
- **The power of retargeting:** Use Amazon DSP to retarget high-intent shoppers and drive conversions more efficiently, reducing wasted ad spend.

Pricing pressure

The challenge: Your competitors might get aggressive discounts, putting pressure on brands to lower prices or offer promotions, which can squeeze your margins.

How to overcome it:

- **Bundle offers or value-added promotions:** Instead of lowering prices, offer product bundles or value-added promotions to differentiate from competitors without sacrificing margin.
- **Use strategic discounts:** Apply targeted discounts on best-selling products or those with high stock to maintain market share without cutting prices.

Navigating customer expectations

The challenge: Shoppers expect fast shipping and great deals during events. To meet these expectations, brands should ensure operational efficiency and offer competitive promotions.

Effective planning is essential to overcoming these challenges and maximizing event success.

How to overcome it:

- **Maintain fast shipping options:** Ensure Prime-eligible products are fully stocked and dispersed across Amazon's fulfillment network to meet fast shipping demands.
- **Create event-specific storefronts:** Build event-specific landing pages on your Amazon Storefront to streamline the shopping experience, highlight deals, and improve conversion rates.

Have a Plan B ready

Always have a contingency plan. If main ASINs sell out, have backup products and creative assets ready. If CPCs get too high, shift the budget to more efficient ad types like Sponsored Brand Videos. If a Lightning Deal fails, pivot to Subscribe & Save or Prime Exclusive Deals.

The key to nailing Prime Day is agility; knowing when to adjust quickly makes a huge difference in overall performance.

Thoughts

At a time when brands have to sell everywhere at all times to everyone, investing energy into a tentpole event on Amazon can feel daunting for some brands.

However, these events are excellent ways to alleviate pressure from brands that over-rely on paid spending for growth and visibility.

And, sure, it's great to generate a lot of revenue in a short amount of time, but the more satisfying results of investing in these moments are:

- Sustained seller rank improvements
- Growth in customer lifetime value
- Strengthened brand presence
- + more

At Cartograph, we help brands move from seeing Amazon as an afterthought to treating it as a primary channel for sustainable growth. If this is your goal, we'd love to discuss how we can bring creative and operational value to your team.



Helping brands products that are better for people and our planet.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss your brand approach on Amazon, please feel free to reach out. We're always happy to chat, and offer a free audit of any Amazon strategy.

Get in touch here: contact@gocartograph.com

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