

PEAK SEASON PAID MEDIA.

How to prepare for Black Friday, Cyber Monday and every peak trading period across paid media, starting now.

OVERDOSE DIGITAL · RESOURCE GUIDE

WHAT THE PLATFORMS ARE MEASURING RIGHT NOW

Every figure below comes from a named source, not an estimate.

54%

"exceeded expectations" at a 21-40% discount, the highest of any bracket

GOOGLE

47%

of a retailer's short-term growth driven by brand salience, the single biggest factor

GOOGLE/KANTAR

650

ads the average Australian sees a day

TIKTOK

\$14.2B

in global sales influenced by AI agents, Black Friday 2025

SALESFORCE

2.5B+

monthly users of Google AI Overviews, over 1B on AI Mode

20%

CTR uplift from GTINs in the product feed

GOOGLE

74%

of shoppers say reminder ads sway their likelihood of shopping a sale

META

2.3x

more likely Australians are to use Google Search over ChatGPT for purchase decisions

GOOGLE

HERE IS HOW YOU WIN PEAK THIS YEAR.

Black Friday 2026 falls on 27 November, Cyber Monday on 30 November. This is the moment to lock in and gear up.

What follows draws on what Meta, Google, TikTok and Microsoft Advertising are telling agencies right now, plus what we see across our own client accounts every peak season. The short version: audiences, creative and product feeds all need real lead time, so the work that decides how this peak performs has to start now, not in October.

Expect costs to spike highest around Black Friday itself, and expect campaigns to take longer than usual to settle in, since the platforms' delivery systems need a steady run of data to optimise well. AI agents are already part of this peak too: Salesforce measured \$14.2 billion in global sales they influenced during Black Friday 2025. None of this replaces the fundamentals below, it sits on top of them.

WHY PEAK SEASON NEEDS AN EXPERT HAND, NOT JUST A BIGGER BUDGET.

Six things happen at once every peak season, each manageable alone, each one catching out brands who treat peak as a bigger normal month.

CLUTTER

Around 650 ads a day

That is what the average Australian now sees, according to TikTok. Cutting through takes deliberate creative variety, not one hero ad running unchanged for ten weeks, and the brands who plan for this now are the ones still visible in week six.

COST

CPCs spike hardest on the day

Every advertiser in your category is bidding on the same shoppers at the same moment, so the exact days you most want visibility are the exact days it costs the most to get it. Budgets built for an average month run out fast here.

DELIVERY

Campaigns take longer to settle

Meta's own delivery systems need a steady run of conversions to optimise properly, and Google's Performance Max needs the same from its own signals. Both take longer to find their footing when auction volatility is high, which is exactly the peak season condition. Launch and lock in changes early so campaigns are already performing well before the days that matter most.

FATIGUE

Winning creative plateaus if left alone

Meta describes this as the paradox of success: a format that works becomes the safe default, gets over-optimised, and performance quietly stalls. The fix is running proven creative alongside genuinely new concepts throughout peak, not relying on last year's winner all over again.

AI

\$14.2B in AI-agent-influenced sales

Salesforce put this figure against Black Friday 2025 globally. Agentic tools are already shaping a meaningful share of how people research and buy during peak, on top of the fundamentals, not instead of them.

COMPLIANCE

Regulators are watching sale claims

The ACCC has penalised Australian retailers over misleading "was/now" pricing, countdown timers that outlast the stated sale, and discount claims that do not match what is actually on offer. Urgency messaging works, but it has to be genuine.

PHASE 1

HERE IS WHAT NEEDS TO START TODAY.

Audiences, creative and feed hygiene all need real lead time. Leaving this to November means launching into peak on the back foot.

01 Build full-funnel audiences now

Nearly nine in ten shoppers are still undecided this far out. A pre-registered "hype list" built now, through email sign-ups and reminder ads, means you are not starting from zero on the day: Meta reports reminder ads sway 74% of people's likelihood of shopping a sale.

02 Diversify your creative

Amidst daily competition of 650 ads, static messaging fails. Per Meta's guidance, brands must balance creative expansion (iterating on proven assets) with creative exploration (testing net-new concepts for broader audiences) by running both approaches concurrently.

03 Get your feed and account house in order

Google prioritises products with GTINs, delivering a 20% CTR uplift. Optimising feed data (titles, GTINs, images, pricing) and ensuring a clean account structure with correct goals are crucial high-leverage fixes ahead of peak season.

04 Confirm budgets and sale dates

Lock spend approvals, key trading dates and creative deadlines with enough runway that nothing is rushed the week of the sale, and enough headroom in the budget that CPC spikes around the day itself do not eat your visibility.

WHY THE RUSH

Campaigns need a steady run of conversion data to exit the platforms' learning phases and deliver properly, and that takes longer to achieve when auction volatility is high. Launching early, rather than the week before Black Friday, is what gives campaigns time to settle before it matters most.

WHAT META IS TELLING US ABOUT CREATIVE THIS PEAK.

Creative is doing more of the targeting work than it used to. Meta's guidance splits into three practical moves.

MOVE 1

Split effort roughly 70/30.

Most budget goes to iterating on what already works. The rest goes to genuinely new concepts. Running only the safe 70% is what causes performance to quietly plateau.

MOVE 2

Let creative do the targeting.

Meta frames the right concept as an invitation into the brand that reaches adjacent audiences on its own, through unmet needs, life moments or passions the product connects to, without touching a single audience setting.

MOVE 3

Build for format and source liquidity.

The same idea adapted across 9:16, 4:5 and 1:1 gets maximum delivery flexibility. A mix of creator content, UGC and produced assets brings more kinds of trust than any single source can.

WHY IT MATTERS AT PEAK

This is the highest-leverage lever most brands under-use during peak season: it is the difference between a hero ad running flat for ten weeks and a campaign that stays fresh through Black Friday and beyond.

WHAT META IS TELLING US ABOUT SCALING THIS PEAK.

Two of Meta's newer tools change how the sale days themselves should be planned and read.

01 Day 1 is your peak, not your warm-up

Meta's data shows Black Friday's first day tends to outperform every other day of the sale. Easing in is the wrong instinct: scale aggressively from Day 1 rather than holding back, and frontload budget into the first 48 hours.

02 A dip on Days 2-3 is not a crisis

A drop after an exceptional Day 1 is regression to the mean, not underperformance. Judging it against Day 1 alone will trigger unnecessary panic. Cyber Monday brings a genuine second surge worth planning for separately.

03 Turn on Incremental Attribution

Meta's newer Incremental Attribution optimises in real time for sales an ad actually caused, not ones that would have happened anyway, without waiting for a lengthy experiment to conclude. Value Rules complement it by prioritising the audiences worth the most.

04 If you sell in the US, treat Cyber Monday as the main event

Cyber Monday is the US's biggest shopping day, with spend there growing year on year. If international demand matters to your business, push harder there specifically rather than treating it as a smaller echo of the Australian weekend.

PHASE 2

THE JOB IS VISIBILITY AND PACING, NOT NEW CAMPAIGNS.

By the time the sale is live, the building work is done. Now it is about staying on top of what is already running, and closing strong.

MOVE 1

Pace the budget.

Monitor spend daily against targets. Small pacing corrections during the window matter more than they will at any other time of year, especially with CPCs elevated.

MOVE 2

Refresh the creative.

Rotate in fresh variants as fatigue signals appear, rather than letting one set run flat through the entire event.

MOVE 3

Run genuine last-chance messaging.

Countdown timers and "final hours" creative in the closing day or two lift urgency and performance. Keep the stated deadline, discount and scope genuinely accurate throughout: the ACCC has penalised Australian retailers for countdowns that outlast the sale and discounts that do not match what is offered.

KEY DATES

Black Friday falls on 27 November, Cyber Monday on 30 November. Click Frenzy's Main Event is expected mid-November, exact dates to be confirmed closer to the event.

WHAT GOOGLE IS TELLING US ABOUT THE FEED THIS PEAK.

Google frames the product feed as the foundation everything else sits on, and gets specific about what a healthy one looks like.

01 Titles: brand, gender, type, then attributes

Google's recommended structure is Brand + Gender + Product Type + Attributes such as colour, size and material, with a unique title for every product. The most important attributes go at the start, since that is what triggers against highly searched queries.

02 Descriptions carry the proof

Specific, accurate descriptions that front-load key attributes let shoppers verify they have found the exact product they need. Vague or generic copy is one of the most common policy pitfalls Google flags.

03 GTINs are the single biggest lever

Accurate global product identifiers are how Google classifies a product and matches it to the right shopper: this is the single change Google reports the clearest CTR uplift from, worth 20% on its own.

04 Images: mix product shots with lifestyle

A clear, professional product shot plus lifestyle imagery captures attention and drives clicks; Google recommends at least three additional images per listing. Accurate sale-price badges and strikethrough pricing round out a feed built to stand out in the auction.

WHY IT MATTERS

Google frames the feed as a data problem, not a creative one: a healthy feed boosts competitiveness in the auction, routes budget to your best-performing listings, and builds shopper trust, all before a single ad dollar is spent.

WHAT GOOGLE IS TELLING US ABOUT THE BIGGER SHIFT THIS PEAK.

Beyond the feed, two changes are reshaping how people find and buy through Google this year.

MOVE 1

Agentic checkout is already live in Australia.

Google's Universal Commerce Protocol now powers seamless checkout inside AI Mode and Gemini for real Australian retailers, Wayfair among them: a universal cart and identity linking mean a shopper can move from an AI answer straight to a completed purchase without leaving the conversation.

MOVE 2

Brand salience is the single biggest driver of short-term sales.

Google and Kantar data puts salience, simply being top of mind, ahead of both differentiation and meaningfulness as the strongest predictor of who gets chosen at the point of sale. Since discovery closes off by September, brand-building spend now is what earns a place on the shortlist later.

MOVE 3

Shoppers trust Google over ChatGPT for purchase decisions.

Australian shoppers are 2.3 times more likely to use Google Search than ChatGPT when researching a purchase, and nearly twice as many find information on Google easy to verify. Being visible and well-represented in Google's own AI experiences carries real weight with a genuinely more cautious shopper this year.

PHASE 3

PROTECT WHAT YOU BUILT, DO NOT SWITCH IT ALL OFF.

This is where most brands undo their own work. What you do in the days after the sale decides how much of this peak carries into the next one.

THE MISTAKE

PAUSING EVERYTHING AND STARTING FROM ZERO.

- 01** Audiences and learnings are abandoned rather than kept warm
- 02** No measurement of what actually worked
- 03** Next peak starts the research and build all over again

THE MOVE

BANK THE LEARNINGS, KEEP THE MOMENTUM.

- 01** Keep high-value audiences warm for the next event
- 02** Review performance properly while it is fresh
- 03** Carry creative and targeting learnings straight into next year's plan

WHAT EVERY PLATFORM IS TELLING US THIS PEAK SEASON.

Meta and Google carry most peak budgets and get the full deep dives above. Here is the short version of all four, side by side.

META

Diversify creative, scale hard from Day 1

Split creative effort roughly 70/30 between proven winners and genuinely new concepts, and treat Black Friday's first day as the peak itself rather than a warm-up: frontload budget rather than easing in.

GOOGLE

Fix the feed, then think beyond it

Clean titles, GTINs and images are the highest-leverage fix available before peak. Beyond the feed, agentic checkout is already live in Australia and brand salience is the single biggest driver of who gets chosen at the point of sale.

TIKTOK

Cut through the clutter with variety

Full-funnel consideration campaigns and creative diversification, including Symphony's generative tools, help brands stand out against the roughly 650 ads the average Australian now sees a day.

BING / MICROSOFT

The holiday journey is 52 days long

Shoppers start researching well before Black Friday. Audience ads for early awareness paired with Performance Max for conversion cover the full window.

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER.

AROUND 10 WEEKS OUT

- Build full-funnel audiences and warm consideration segments
- Clean product feed: titles, GTINs, images, pricing
- Produce diversified, refreshed creative across formats
- Confirm budgets, sale dates and creative deadlines

DURING THE SALE

- Monitor and pace budget daily
- Rotate creative as fatigue signals appear
- Keep the offer visible everywhere it needs to be
- Keep countdowns, deadlines and discount claims genuinely accurate

AFTER THE SALE

- Keep high-value audiences warm, do not pause everything
- Review performance and bank the learnings
- Carry findings straight into next year's plan

ONE GOOD PEAK SEASON SHOULD COMPOUND INTO THE NEXT.

We run this playbook with e-commerce brands across Australia and New Zealand every year, across paid social, search and everything in between.

01 Talk to your team

If you already work with Overdose, your account team can map this against your specific dates and budgets.

02 Get a second pair of eyes

If you are not yet a marketing client, we are happy to look at your current setup and flag what matters most for your timeline.
