

WON BY DECISION

A Strategic Seven-Point Checklist
for the Most Discerning
Black Friday-Cyber Monday
Shopper in History



The 2026 BFCM SHOPPER WILL BE READY

They'll hit your site, email, push notification, SMS, and storefront having already compared products, checked prices, read reviews, asked AI what to buy, and narrowed the field before they reach you.

The problem is, most brands see only what happened after the visit, so every hesitation gets the same treatment.

The discount goes out, the sale closes, and the offer takes the credit.

That's the difference this checklist is built to find.

That doesn't
make them
harder to win.
*It means the
decision's still
open.*

Every discounted sale looks like it was won
by the discount.

But some were won by a decision the shopper already made, and you paid for them anyway.



01 Diagnose the cart before you discount

OBJECTIVE

Respond to the likely cause of each abandoned cart.



Are you solving the reason a shopper is hesitating, or paying them to move past it?

SEPARATE ABANDONMENT SCENARIOS

- ☐ Review the primary reasons shoppers abandon carts in your business.
- ☐ Distinguish between product uncertainty, comparison behavior, price sensitivity, unexpected costs, availability, delivery timing, and simple interruption.
- ☐ Use cart contents, visit history, product engagement, customer status, and channel behavior to inform the likely barrier.
- ☐ Separate first-time shoppers, returning customers, loyal customers, and recent purchasers.
- ☐ Identify high-value carts that may warrant a different response or service intervention.

For returning customers with rich behavioral data, preload carts with relevant products based on their browsing and purchase history, then let them review before checkout.

MATCH THE RECOVERY TO THE BARRIER

- ☐ **Reinforce** relevant product proof when confidence appears to be the issue.
- ☐ **Clarify** stock, delivery timing, returns, or fulfillment details when logistics may be holding up the purchase.
- ☐ **Remind** the shopper of the specific product and reason it fits their needs.
- ☐ **Recommend** a credible alternative when the original item is unavailable or may not be the best fit.
- ☐ **Coordinate** recovery messages across email, SMS, advertising, and onsite experiences.
- ☐ **Define** when a discount enters the sequence instead of automatically making it the first response.
- ☐ **Stop** recovery messages as soon as the shopper purchases.

PRESSURE TEST →

Does your recovery experience respond to what the shopper is still deciding, or does everyone receive the same coupon?

02 Recover margin on the way to checkout

OBJECTIVE

Increase order value by making the purchase more complete.



Does the recommendation make the shopper's purchase feel more complete? Is it curated well enough to settle hesitation rather than add to it?

IDENTIFY USEFUL ADDITIONS USING THIS FRAMEWORK

- ☐ Review the products most likely to be purchased during peak and identify logical complements for each.
- ☐ Build bundles around products that are genuinely used, worn, installed, gifted, or replenished together.
- ☐ Identify upgraded configurations that offer clear additional value.
- ☐ Review whether threshold benefits could increase order value without further discounting the original product.
- ☐ Use cart contents, shopper preferences, prior purchases, and intended use to determine relevance.
- ☐ Account for inventory and availability before recommending an add-on.

PROTECT THE PURCHASE EXPERIENCE WITH THESE KEY ACTIONS

- ☐ Explain why each recommended product belongs with the original purchase.
- ☐ Limit the number of recommendations shown at checkout.
- ☐ Avoid introducing products that create a new or more complicated decision.
- ☐ Prioritize additions that help the shopper complete a routine, outfit, setup, gift, or solution.
- ☐ Test whether the recommendation increases order value while checkout completion holds.
- ☐ Test whether a targeted incentive on the final add-on (like a 5-10% off or using it to unlock free shipping) helps complete the purchase without discounting the full cart.
- ☐ Measure the margin impact of bundles and additions separately from the original discount.

PRESSURE TEST →

Are your recommendations increasing order value, or just replacing margin with more discounting?

03 Catch intent while it is still visible

OBJECTIVE

Distinguish shoppers who are actively deciding from those who are casually browsing.



When a shopper shows signs that a real purchase decision is underway, what changes?

DEFINE MEANINGFUL SIGNALS WITH THIS METHODOLOGY

- ☐ Identify the behaviors that indicate increasing purchase intent for your business.
- ☐ Include signals like repeat visits, return frequency, category depth, product comparisons, cart activity, review engagement, and interaction with high-value products.
- ☐ Separate signals that indicate general interest from those that suggest a specific decision is underway.
- ☐ Define combinations of behavior that should qualify someone as high intent.
- ☐ Act on anonymous behavior as soon as it appears, ahead of any email address.

DECIDE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT TO REWARD YOUR BEST SHOPPERS

- ☐ Group shoppers according to the strength and type of intent they are showing.
- ☐ Define a next action for each priority intent pattern.
- ☐ Change the experience when someone repeatedly returns to the same product or category.
- ☐ Suppress recent purchasers from further acquisition and recovery campaigns.
- ☐ Confirm that useful behavioral context survives when a shopper moves between channels or identifies themselves.
- ☐ Assign an owner to validate that each signal is being captured and used correctly before peak.

PRESSURE TEST →

Are your earliest and most valuable shoppers seeing a different experience, or are they blending in with everyone else?

04 Turn offers into advantage

OBJECTIVE

Use promotions strategically to drive profitable growth.



Are your offers attracting the right shoppers, for the right products, at the right time?

PLAN OFFERS WITH INTENTION

- ☐ Define clear goals for each offer, such as acquisition, conversion, order value, or category growth.
- ☐ Match the offer to the audience, product, and stage in the journey.
- ☐ Avoid blanket discounts across your entire catalog.
- ☐ Consider non-discount incentives like limited-edition products, early access, bundles, or loyalty perks.
- ☐ Set guardrails to protect margin and brand value.
- ☐ Test different offer structures, including percentage off, dollar off, free shipping, and gift with purchase.
- ☐ Ensure offer messaging is clear, compelling, and consistent across channels.

EXECUTE AND MEASURE

- ☐ Personalize offers based on shopper behavior, preferences, and intent.
- ☐ Tailor offers for new vs. returning customers.
- ☐ Monitor performance in real time and adjust as needed.
- ☐ Track the impact on key metrics like conversion rate, average order value, and margin.
- ☐ Identify which offers drive incremental revenue vs. those that would have converted without a discount.
- ☐ Document learnings to inform future campaigns.
- ☐ Coordinate offer timing and messaging across paid, owned, and onsite channels.

PRESSURE TEST →

Are your offers creating real incremental growth, or simply rewarding demand that already existed?



05 Remove friction from checkout

OBJECTIVE

Make it fast, clear, and easy to complete the purchase.



What friction might be stopping a shopper from completing their purchase, and have you removed it?

SIMPLIFY THE CHECKOUT EXPERIENCE

- ☐ Minimize the number of steps required to complete a purchase.
- ☐ Offer guest checkout and multiple payment options.
- ☐ Clearly display total costs including shipping, taxes, and any additional fees up front.
- ☐ Ensure the checkout experience is optimized for mobile.
- ☐ Use progress indicators to set clear expectations.
- ☐ Allow shoppers to easily edit their cart without starting over.
- ☐ Test checkout regularly to identify and fix issues.

BUILD TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

- ☐ Display security badges and trust signals.
- ☐ Provide clear information on shipping times, returns, and customer support.
- ☐ Include customer reviews or ratings where relevant.
- ☐ Be transparent about inventory and delivery estimates.
- ☐ Offer accessible support options like live chat and FAQ.
- ☐ Localize the experience for key markets including currency, language, and payment methods.
- ☐ Monitor checkout abandonment reasons and address recurring issues.

PRESSURE TEST →

If a shopper is ready to buy, is your checkout experience helping them finish, or giving them a reason to leave?

06 Turn first-time shoppers into repeat customers

OBJECTIVE

Lay the foundation for long-term growth beyond the first purchase.



Are you capturing the right signals and creating an experience that makes a second purchase the obvious next step?

CREATE A POST-PURCHASE EXPERIENCE

- ☐ Send a timely relevant thank you message that reinforces the value of their purchase.
- ☐ Provide helpful content like how-to guides, styling tips, or product care.
- ☐ Introduce complementary products based on what they bought.
- ☐ Highlight loyalty benefits or early access to future drops.
- ☐ Make it easy to create an account or build a profile.
- ☐ Use data from the first purchase to personalize future communications.

KEEP THEM ENGAGED

- ☐ Trigger follow-up messages based on product usage, replenishment cycles, or category interest.
- ☐ Show relevant new arrivals, back-in-stock items, or curated recommendations.
- ☐ Invite them into your loyalty program with a clear value exchange.
- ☐ Test timing and cadence to find what drives the best repeat purchase rate.
- ☐ Measure repeat purchase behavior by channel, offer, and segment.
- ☐ Continuously refine based on what motivates your first-time buyers to come back.

PRESSURE TEST →

Does your post-purchase experience build momentum, or does the relationship end after the order is delivered?

07 Measure what actually works

OBJECTIVE

Separate real impact from assumed impact to make smarter decisions next year.



Are you measuring the right signals to understand what truly drove performance, beyond the discount?

TRACK THE FULL PICTURE

- ☐ Measure performance across acquisition, conversion, order value, retention, and margin.
- ☐ Compare discounted vs. full-price performance to understand true incremental lift.
- ☐ Use holdout groups or geo tests where possible to isolate the impact of specific offers.
- ☐ Evaluate performance by channel, segment, and offer type.
- ☐ Look beyond revenue to include metrics like new customer rate, repeat purchase rate, and contribution margin.
- ☐ Identify which tactics drove the highest long-term value, not just the highest short-term sales.

TURN INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

- ☐ Document key learnings from this year's BFCM performance.
- ☐ Share insights across teams - marketing, ecommerce, product, finance - to inform next year's strategy.
- ☐ Identify offers, audiences, and channels to scale, adjust, or remove.
- ☐ Use insights to refine your year-round strategy, not just next year's BFCM plan.
- ☐ Build a measurement framework you can repeat and improve.

PRESSURE TEST →

Are you making decisions based on what actually drove results, or what is easiest to measure?

LET'S DELIGHT SHOPPERS TOGETHER

This 2026 BFCM checklist finds where your plan is paying twice for demand you already earned, so you protect margin instead of giving it away.

Acting on it means recognizing intent while the shopper is still anonymous, carrying what you learned from one channel into the next, and changing the experience while the moment is open.

SCHEDULE A GROWTH CONSULTATION

Find where your BFCM plan could be paying twice for demand you've already earned, and what you can still change in 30 days or less.

[Schedule Time](#)