dynasort

BFCM Merchandising Playbook

Practical tactics for ecommerce teams in the busiest season of the year

How to use this guide

This guide is a practical playbook to help ecommerce teams maximize their BFCM ad spend by ensuring shoppers quickly find the most relevant, high-converting products, turning peak traffic into peak sales.

Notes

- **Who it's for:** Ecommerce managers, merchandisers, and founders preparing for BFCM.
- **What you'll get:** A comprehensive playbook you can hand to your team: strategy, checklists, and ready-to-use templates.
- **Our POV:** Ad spend is at an all-time high. Don't waste it sending shoppers into poorly merchandised chaos. The win is simple: *get shoppers to highly relevant products—fast.*

ⓘ **Have questions or feedback?** Email us at hello@dynasort.io or reach out by social media, we'd love to hear from you.

Why BFCM is Different

Every year, brands spend more on ads during Black Friday and Cyber Monday than at any other time. In fact, ad spend is at an all-time high. If your store isn't ready, you're basically lighting money on fire.

The truth is, customer experience and conversion rate optimization (CRO) matter just as much as your ad creative. A poorly merchandised collection — bestsellers buried on page 6, "sold out" tags above the fold — can kill a sale faster than any TikTok ad can save it.

Global Retail Media (Ecommerce) Ad Spend, 2020–2024
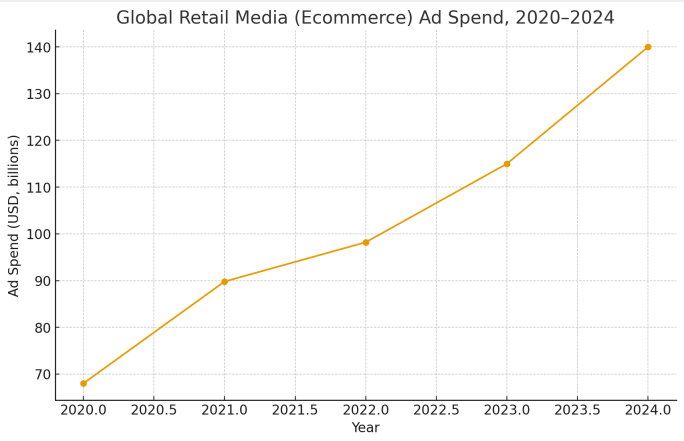
Ad spend is at an all-time high.

If your store isn't ready, you're wasting money.

Our philosophy is simple: **get shoppers to collections of highly relevant products, as fast as possible.** That's where sales happen.

Awareness	Consideration	Engagement	Conversion
Ecommerce ad spend has grown from ~$68B (2020) → ~$140B (2024).	38% of shoppers bounce if they don't find relevant products immediately.	Stores with optimized collections see up to 20–30% more add-to-cart actions	Shoppers who engage with well-sorted collections are 2–3x more likely to purchase.

Data Readiness & Roles (do this first)

If you can't see product-level performance in near real time, you're flying blind. Set up visibility **weeks before** BFCM.

Decide who watches what

- **Daily owner:** One person responsible for KPI monitoring and triggering actions.
- **Merch lead:** Executes pin/boost/swap changes on collections.
- **Ops/inventory:** Confirms stock depth, back-in-stock ETAs, and substitutions.
- **CX/QA:** Finds and reports bugs, broken promos, UX friction.

Know your signals

Platform-agnostic; use whatever stack you prefer

- **Conversion Rate (CVR)** by product/collection
- **Add-to-Cart Rate (ACR)** and **Units/Hour** (velocity)
- **Sell-through** and **Inventory depth** (days of cover)
- **Revenue per Session** (or per View) by collection
- **Refund/return triggers** (watch early spikes)

Cadence

- **Pre-BFCM (weekly → daily)**: sanity checks, dry-runs.
- **BFCM week (hourly → 3× daily)**: morning stand-up, midday pivot, end-of-day rollup.

> ### Pro Tip
> Define a simple "if-this-then-that" matrix. Example: *If Units/Hour > 20 and stock > 3 days: pin to top row site-wide.*

Pre-Season Prep (4–6 weeks out)

Think of this as preseason training. The stores that win BFCM don't start prepping Thanksgiving week.

- **Clean your product data**: Fix broken images, update titles, check variant options, tag generously. Clean data = fast merchandising.
- **Curate seasonal collections**: "Top Sellers," "Holiday Gifts Under $50," "Cyber Monday Exclusives." Keep it simple, and avoid the paradox of choice by trimming down to what matters most.
- **Get your analytics in place early**: If you don't know what's moving, you can't react. Make sure you can see product-level KPIs like conversion rate (CVR), add-to-cart rate (ACR), and revenue per session in real time. Decide *who on your team* is watching this data daily and how fast changes will get pushed live.
- **Align ads + landing pages**: Don't dump $50k of ad spend into a generic collection page. Build landing pages that match your campaign promise.
- **Benchmark now**: Record your CVR, AOV, and traffic baselines so you know if your BFCM moves are working.

Catalog hygiene

- Update hero images, titles, variant names, size charts, and specs.
- Remove zombie SKUs; consolidate duplicate variants; fix 404s.
- Standardize tags and product types for clean collections and filters.

Collection architecture (avoid paradox of choice)

- Core hubs: **Top Sellers**, **Holiday Gift Guides**, **Gifts Under $50/$100**, **Cyber Monday Exclusives**.
- Persona/intent: **For Her/For Him/For Kids**, **Work-From-Home**, **Stocking Stuffers**.
- Event-driven: **Party-Ready**, **Bundle & Save**, **Last-Chance Shipping**.

Ad → Landing alignment

- Each paid campaign should map to a **specific collection or LP** with matching promise.
- Keep **above-the-fold** SKUs aligned to the ad's hero offers.

Pre-Season Prep (4–6 weeks out) Cont'd.

Search readiness

- Create a synonyms/redirects list (e.g., "bfcm", "black friday", "cyber monday", brand nicknames).
- Ensure zero-results pages suggest relevant collections.

Ops readiness

- Confirm stock depth on winners; set substitution rules.
- Pre-stage bundles and gift sets; pre-calculate margins.
- Define **code freeze** windows and rollback steps.

Performance & accessibility

- Compress images, lazy-load below-the-fold assets.
- Check color contrast, focus states, tap targets.

Automation Through Apps

Consider automating your data responses so your catalog reacts in real time to rules you setup.

Collection Merchandising
Dynasort: Automate collection sorting & relevance so winners rise and sold-outs fall.

Product Data / Metafields
Espresso Live: Data and meta automation to keep your product catalog clean

Merchandising Strategy (what actually works)

This is where most brands stumble. They drive massive traffic into on-site and then leave everything to Shopify's default sorting options. That's a surefire way to bury your bestsellers and frustrate customers. Smart merchandising is about putting the right products in the right positions, and keeping collections fresh as data changes.

Above the Fold is Prime Real Estate

Your first row of products is your storefront window.

- Feature in-stock, high-margin, and high-converting products.
- Keep sold-outs and broken size runs below the fold.

Pin & Boost (With Intention)

- **Pin** proven winners — your evergreen bestsellers, press darlings, or top seasonal picks.
- **Boost** trending SKUs — products showing a spike in conversions or velocity.
- Review boosts daily to avoid stale placements.

Inventory-Aware Ranking

Availability matters. Don't frustrate customers by showcasing what they can't buy.

- Down-rank SKUs with **less than 2 days of cover**.
- Up-rank variants with a **full size run** so shoppers don't click into dead ends.

Margin-Aware Placement

When two products perform similarly, favor the one with better contribution margin. Merchandising isn't just about conversions — it's about profitable conversions.

Bundles & Cross-Sells

Maximize average order value (AOV):

- Build "complete the look" bundles or gift sets.
- Offer multi-buy pricing (e.g., 2 for $40, 3 for $55).

Badges & Social Proof

Badges guide attention and create urgency:

- "Holiday Bestseller"
- "Limited Time"
- "Low Stock"
- "Free Shipping"

On-Site Experience (navigation, search, mobile)

Traffic is expensive. Once customers land on your store, you need to make every click count.

- **Simplify navigation**: Add a BFCM tab to your menu. Don't make people dig.
- **Upgrade search**: If customers can't find it, they won't buy it. Invest in a tool that goes beyond Shopify's default search.
- **Add urgency and trust**: Countdown timers, "Low Stock" badges, free shipping thresholds. Just don't overdo it.
- **Mobile-first**: Test your store like a shopper on an iPhone. Checkout speed and thumb-friendly design win.

Navigation

- Clear **BFCM** or **Deals** hub in the main nav.
- Limit top-level choices; funnel into curated collections.

Search

- Autocomplete → product cards with price, availability, quick add.
- Handle typos and synonyms gracefully.

Upgrade Search

Layers App: Skip the synonyms with smarter on-site search that surfaces relevant products quickly.

Filters & sort

- Default sort to **Best Sellers/Relevance**, not Alphabetical.
- Quick filters: size, color, price, availability.

PDP essentials

- Shipping cutoffs & return policy up-front.
- Gift options (notes, wrap), trust badges, concise benefits.

Mobile first

- Thumb-reach CTAs
- Sticky add-to-cart
- Smaller image weights (srcset attributes)

During the Sale (real-time ops)

Now it's game time — where all your prep work gets stress-tested. The key is to **stay agile**, react to data quickly, and make sure the customer experience holds up under pressure.

React Fast to Data

If a product is converting at 8% and moving 50 units an hour, you should know instantly — and push it front and center across collections, banners, and email. On the flip side, pull back underperformers. Prime real estate is too valuable to waste.

Daily Runbook

Keep a rhythm to avoid chaos.

- **Morning (30–45 min):** Review KPIs, identify winners/losers, update pins/boosts, confirm inventory, test promos.
- **Midday (15–20 min):** Speed checks, search sanity, swap under performers, update hero banners if needed.
- **Evening (20–30 min):** Roll up results: what moved, what's next. Prep tomorrow's swaps.

Bug Bounty Program (Make Chaos Fun)

> ⚠️ **Errors Cost $$$**
> Turn QA into a game by rewarding your team for finding issues before customers do.

- **Scope:** Broken promo codes, UI glitches, slow pages, confusing copy, checkout snags.
- **Rules:** First-to-report, reproducible steps, include URL + screenshot/device.
- **Rewards:** A real prize ($200–$500 gift card, extra PTO, or leader board bragging rights).
- **Channel:** Dedicated Slack/email with one owner triaging.

During the Sale (real-time ops) Cont'd.

Escalation & Rollback

Don't waste precious minutes figuring out what to do when something breaks. Have it documented:

- Pre-approved messaging for outages or promo failures.
- Rollback plan: last stable theme/version, cached assets, code freeze windows.

QA Sweep (Rapid)

Do quick sweeps multiple times a day:

- Homepage hero banners
- BFCM hub + top collections
- Search results & autocomplete
- Cart & checkout with promo code
- Mobile nav & PDP essentials

Post-BFCM Momentum (don't go dark)

Too many brands hit pause after Cyber Monday. That's a mistake. The weeks leading into December are packed with high-intent shoppers, and your job is to extend momentum instead of letting it die.

Extend & Segment

Recast BFCM offers into **Holiday Deals** or **Last-Chance Shipping** and run them through mid-December.

- Target **cart abandoners** who almost converted.
- Re-engage **product viewers**
- Nurture **first-time buyers** with cross-sells

Traffic
Buyers
Cart Abandoners
Re-Targeted Conversions
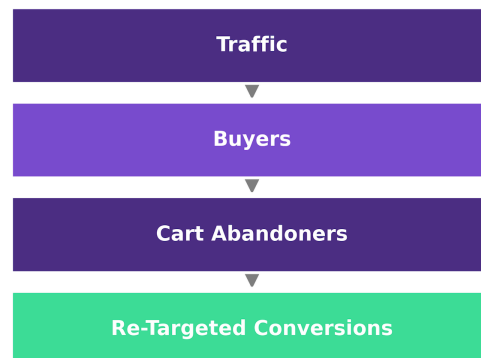
Gift Cards

When shipping deadlines loom, gift cards shine.

- Position them as the **stress-free choice**: instant delivery, no stockouts.
- Feature them prominently on PDPs, cart pages, and email campaigns.
- Tools like **iziGift** make setup painless.

Harvest Learnings

Your BFCM data is a goldmine—don't just file it away.

- Identify the **Top 20 SKUs** by revenue and CVR.
- Note which **badges, layouts, and collections** drove the highest performance (and keep screenshots for reference).
- Track where stockouts cost you revenue so you can forecast better next year.

BFCM Results: Performance vs Missed Opportunities

Relative Impact (index)

Top Performers: 85
Missed Opportunities: 40
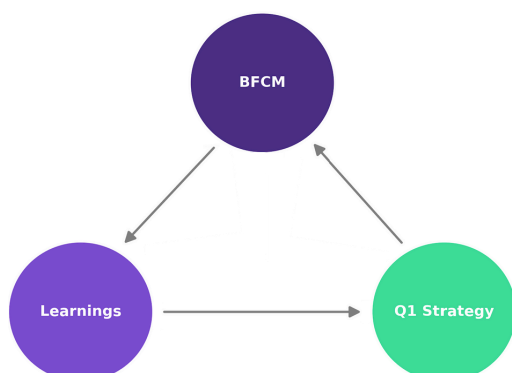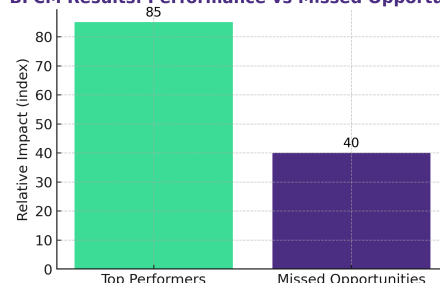
Roll It Into Q1

Use what worked during BFCM as the foundation for next year's merchandising logic.

- Update your **default collection sorting rules** to prioritize proven winners.
- Build new creative campaigns around your best-selling products.

BFCM
Learnings
Q1 Strategy

Master Checklists

Before BFCM	During BFCM	After BFCM
☐ KPI visibility & owner assigned	☐ Morning/Midday/Evening cadence running	☐ Retargeting + gift card push live
☐ Data hygiene complete (images, titles, variants)	☐ Winners boosted, losers demoted	☐ Extended offers scheduled (Holiday/Last-Chance)
☐ Collection architecture live (Top Sellers, Gift Guides, Price bands)	☐ Bug bounty program live	☐ Debrief documented with screenshots
☐ Ad→Landing mapping confirmed	☐ QA sweeps passing (sitewide & mobile)	☐ Collection logic updated for Q1
☐ Search synonyms/redirects set	☐ Changelog maintained	
☐ Performance & accessibility pass		
☐ Code freeze window + rollback plan documented		

Templates & Worksheets

A) Landing Page Brief

- Campaign/Offer:
- Promise in ad copy:
- Primary collection(s):
- Above-the-fold SKUs (6–12):
- Badges & guarantees:
- Shipping & returns callouts:

B) Product Prioritization Matrix

SKU	CVR	Units/Hour	Margin	Stock (days)	Action
ABC123	2.78%	0.79	46	3.5	Pin/Boost/Demote

C) Collection Map

- **Hubs**: Top Sellers, Gift Guides, Cyber Monday Exclusives, Under $50
- **Persona**: For Her, For Him, For Kids
- **Utility**: Last-Chance Shipping, Bundle & Save

D) Search Synonyms & Redirects

Query	Synonym/Redirect	Note
bfcm	→ BFCM hub	include typo variants
blackfriday	→ Black Friday Deals	no space variant
cyber monday	→ Cyber Monday Exclusives	

Templates & Worksheets, Cont'd.

E) Daily War-Room Agenda

1. Review KPIs & winners/losers (10m)
2. Inventory & ops flags (5m)
3. Merch changes (10m)
4. QA & bug bounty triage (5m)
5. Assign owners & EOD recap (5m)

F) Bug Bounty Submission

- URL:
- Issue type:
- Steps to reproduce:
- Device/Browser:
- Screenshot/Video:
- Severity (P1–P3):

G) Shipping Cutoff Comms

- "Order by **Dec 18, 1pm ET** for Standard. **Dec 20** for Express."
- Add to site-wide banner, email/SMS, PDPs, cart, and order confirmation.

H) Promo Code QA Suite

- Valid codes + exclusions documented
- Test on desktop + mobile
- Edge cases: stacks, expired, minimums, bundles

I) UTM Taxonomy (optional but helpful)

- utm_source, utm_medium, utm_campaign, utm_content conventions

Dynasort for BFCM (light primer)

Dynasort is an app that automates Shopify collection merchandising, helping you pin, boost, and rank products dynamically based on data. This primer shows how to tune it for the chaos of Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

	Pin evergreen heroes in row 1
	Boost short-term spikes
	Turn on **sold-out demotion**
	Prefer **full size runs**
	Add **margin-aware** and **inventory-aware** rules to avoid dead ends.
	Keep a **default Recipe** and a **BFCM Recipe** (more weight on velocity & availability).

Need help setting these up? Just ask, email us at hello@dynasort.io

Final Word

We've been doing ecommerce for 15+ years and running Dynasort for 3+. The data is clear: **relevant collections convert**. But you can only optimize what you can measure.

So before the sale even starts, make sure you have the analytics and processes in place to know what's moving fast, what's dead weight, and how to act on that data in real time.

Don't let your ad spend and hard-earned traffic die in a mess of poorly merchandised products. Get your customers to what they want, fast. *That's the whole game.*

Credits & Contact

Made by the Dynasort team.

Questions? Feedback? Want the editable worksheets?

- Web: dynasort.io
- App w/ free trial: https://apps.shopify.com/dynasort
- Email: hello@dynasort.io