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HOLIDAY 2026

The Holiday Sprint

A 2-week playbook for subscription marketing teams that are starting late or need a big holiday win.

> *Don't let your holiday offer take advantage of you.*

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
Know who's worth paying for	Match the offer to the audience	Build the funnel for each segment	Set the rules, catch early cancels

Late doesn't have to mean sloppy. Spend two focused weeks on the right audiences, the right offer, and a CAC you can defend, and your holiday starts carry into 2027 instead of cancelling at the first full-price charge.

Black Friday is November 27. Start today.

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START HERE

Define the win, then build in the right order

✦ WHAT COUNTS AS A HOLIDAY WIN

Not the sign-up spike. Subscribers who reach the first full-price renewal above your margin floor, and revenue that carries into 2027.

BUILD IN THIS ORDER

01	02	03	04
Audience	**CAC target**	**Offer**	**Funnel**
Who stays, who leaves	Pay more for customers who stay	One built for each segment's renewal	Creative, landing page, messaging

Most late teams start at the funnel. Start with the audience. The offer, the CAC target, and the creative all follow from who you're trying to keep.

IF YOU ONLY DO FIVE THINGS

1. **Split audiences by how long they'll stay.**
2. **Set a CAC cap for each segment.**
3. **Give each segment an offer built for the renewal.**
4. **Show the full price everywhere: today's charge, the next charge date and amount, how to cancel.**
5. **Ask early cancellers why, and write the pause rule before launch.**

THE SPRINT

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Launch	After
by Nov 16	by Nov 18	by Nov 20	by Nov 24	Nov 27–30	Dec–Jan
AUDIENCE	OFFER	FUNNEL	RULES	WATCH	READ RENEWALS

ABOUT **61%** of voluntary cancellations happen in the first two renewals. For a monthly holiday cohort, those renewals land in December and January. That's when you find out whether the offer worked.

Source: Recharge renewal-cycle analysis (July 2025–March 2026), aggregated subscription-commerce brand data. View the analysis →

STEP 1

DAYS 1–3 · BY MON, NOV 16

Know who's worth paying for

Not every customer is worth the same acquisition cost. Find out who stays, then decide what each customer is worth paying for.

FROM THE FIELD: TUNE-IN VS. LIFESTYLE AT SLING TV

We split acquisition into two audiences. **Tune-in** customers came for sports or a single season. They stayed six months at most, so we held CPA close to $25 and the customer was still profitable. **Lifestyle** customers watched Bravo and news. They were cord cutters planning to stay a long time, so they were worth paying more to acquire.

Same product, two audiences, two CAC targets. The offer, the creative, and the landing page followed from there.

- [ ] Split last year's customers by why they joined and how long they stayed: an event, a season, or one product vs. everyday use.
- [ ] Estimate paid months for each segment from your own cohort data or a predictive model. Use observed tenure, not hope.
- [ ] Set a CAC cap for each segment from its contribution and expected paid months. Have finance sign off.
- [ ] Pass each segment's predicted value to Google and Meta with value-based bidding, so the platforms bid more for customers who stay.

SET THE CAP

Max CAC = expected paid months × monthly contribution, minus the profit you need to keep.

YOUR SEGMENTS

SEGMENT	WHY THEY JOIN	PAID MONTHS	MONTHLY CONTRIBUTION	MAX CAC

STEP OWNER

DONE BY

STEP 2

DAYS 4–5 · BY WED, NOV 18

Match the offer to the audience

One offer for everyone overpays for the customers who leave and undersells the ones who stay. Build the offer around each segment's renewal.

- [ ] **Short-tenure segment:** a modest offer at a low CAC. Don't buy them with a deep discount you can't earn back.
- [ ] **Long-tenure segment:** a longer price lock or a prepaid annual plan. This is where you spend more to win.
- [ ] Write what each customer pays today and at the first full-price renewal. Set eligibility, end date, one use per customer, and no stacking.
- [ ] Show the renewal price in the offer and at checkout. Never only in the terms.

WORTH TESTING: WHERE THE RENEWAL PRICE SHOWS UP

VERSION A
Renewal price in the headline: "$9 today, then $24/month."

VERSION B
Renewal price shown clearly at the offer and at checkout, not in the headline.

Measure starts **and** the share who pay the first full-price renewal. Both versions must state the price clearly. Burying it in the T&Cs isn't a test arm: it's what regulators pursue. Amazon's $2.5B FTC settlement over Prime enrollment and cancellation (Sept 2025) and California's amended auto-renewal law (July 2025) both target it. Have counsel review the final copy.

TWO OFFERS BUILT FOR THE RENEWAL

STREAMING · HULU

$0.99/month for up to 12 months

Black Friday 2024, ad-supported plan.

Why it works: the price locks for a year, so the first real renewal decision comes after a year of habit. Across premium streaming, 36% of 2023 Black Friday promo sign-ups were still subscribed 12 months later, vs. 31% for other promotions. Antenna credits deals on annual plans.

REPLENISHMENT · CHEWY AUTOSHIP

35% off the first order (up to $20), then 5% off every Autoship order

As advertised in 2026; offers change.

Why it works: the discount keeps paying, so there's a reason to stay on every order, and skipping is easier than cancelling. Autoship customers generated 84.4% of Chewy's net sales in Q1 fiscal 2026.

Sources: **Antenna**; **Doctor of Credit** (Hulu terms); **Rivo** (Chewy terms); **Nasdaq** (Chewy Q1 FY2026); **Goodwin** (Amazon); **Cooley** (California).

STEP OWNER

DONE BY

STEP 2 · OFFER BY INDUSTRY

The offer that keeps them

Starting points, not rules. Test them against your own cohort data.

BUSINESS	OFFER BUILT FOR THE RENEWAL	WHY IT HOLDS	WATCH OUT FOR
Streaming & digital access	A price locked for 6–12 months, or a discounted annual plan.	The renewal decision comes after the habit forms.	Send a clear reminder before the price changes.
Replenishment pet, coffee, supplements, grooming	A modest first-order discount, a small ongoing subscriber discount, easy skip and pause.	The discount keeps paying. Skip beats cancel.	Deep first-order discounts attract one-and-done buyers.
Meal kits & premium boxes	Spread the discount across the first 3–4 boxes.	Gets customers to the routine, not one cheap box.	A delivery problem in the first box.
Memberships, software & fitness	Prepaid annual with bonus months: pay for 12, get 14.	Cash now, and a full year to build the habit.	A clear annual renewal reminder and easy cancellation.
Gifts	Prepaid 3, 6, or 12-month gift subscriptions.	Cash now, no renewal surprise for the giver.	A plan to convert the recipient before the gift ends.

WHAT MAKES ANY OFFER STICKY

- A cadence that builds a habit
- Setup or personalization they'd lose by leaving
- A benefit that keeps paying
- Pause before cancel

END THE YEAR STRONG WITHOUT KICKING THE CAN

- [ ] **Prepaid annual and gift plans** bring cash in now and carry customers into 2027. Ask finance how they're booked: cash collected and recognized revenue aren't the same thing.
- [ ] **Check when promotions end.** A promo that ends December 31 sends every holiday customer to full price in January at once.
- [ ] **A 12-month lock only moves the drop-off** to next November unless onboarding builds the habit.
- [ ] **Report starts that reach the first full-price renewal,** not total starts.

STEP 3

DAYS 6–7 · BY FRI, NOV 20

Build the funnel for each segment

Now build the funnel, one path per segment. The creative, landing page, and checkout should all say the same thing the offer does.

- [ ] Write creative and messaging for each segment. Short-tenure: the event, the season, the moment. Long-tenure: everyday value and the reason to stay.
- [ ] Send each segment to its own landing page with its own offer, not the home page.
- [ ] Make the checkout summary say: today $X, then $Y on [date], and how to cancel.
- [ ] Run test orders on mobile and desktop: code, plan, payment, confirmation, tracking, renewal, failed payment, and cancellation.

CAN'T TEST THE SITE? SPLIT AT THE AD

Two ad sets, two URLs

Same audience and budget, two landing pages. Compare cost per start **and** the share who reach the first full-price renewal. No testing tool needed.

IF YOU CAN TEST ON-SITE

Start with the default plan

Pre-select annual vs. monthly and compare. Then test where the renewal price shows up (Step 2). Run one test at a time so you can read the result before launch.

TRY THIS

Follow one test order ID through the ad platform, storefront, payment processor, subscription platform, and analytics. Confirm the same plan, amount, segment, and campaign tag in each system.

LATE-START SHORTCUT

Check every campaign link, code, and plan on mobile and desktop before the first email goes out. Test the renewal and the cancellation, not just the checkout.

STEP OWNER

DONE BY

STEP 4

FINAL DAYS · BY TUE, NOV 24

Set the rules, catch early cancels

Decide what makes you scale or stop, and be ready to learn from the customers who leave in week one.

- [ ] Write the scale rule and the pause rule for each segment against its CAC cap.
- [ ] Name who can cut spend, change the page, or pause the offer, plus a backup.
- [ ] Build onboarding that gets new subscribers to first value in the first week.
- [ ] Set up first-week cancel tracking and a one-question cancellation survey before launch.

MODEL WHO CANCELS IN WEEK ONE

Tag every early cancel so you can see the pattern before you scale:

Offer · Segment · Channel · Deal or coupon site · Device · Used the product?

If one channel or deal site drives most early cancels, cut it. If “price was higher than expected” is common, fix the disclosure.

ASK THEM

“What’s the main reason you’re canceling?”

- ○ I only wanted the deal
- ○ The price was higher than I expected
- ○ I didn’t use it enough
- ○ It wasn’t what I expected
- ○ Delivery or access problem
- ○ Other (tell us)

Then email early cancellers within 48 hours with the same question.

KEEP THE CANCEL EASY

Keep the survey optional and one click. A save offer is fine, but it can’t block the cancellation. California requires a prominent cancel option for subscriptions started online.

STEP OWNER

DONE BY

LAUNCH CONTROL · NOV 27–30

Fill this in before the first email goes out

THE OFFERS

SHORT-TENURE OFFER AND PRICE AFTER PROMOTION

LONG-TENURE OFFER AND PRICE AFTER PROMOTION

MARGIN FLOOR

STARTS TARGET THAT REACH FIRST FULL-PRICE RENEWAL

THE RULES

SCALE WHEN

PAUSE WHEN

WHO CAN PAUSE THE OFFER

BACKUP

BEFORE YOU SCALE

- [ ] We can name the customer and why they should stay after the offer ends.
- [ ] We know the first full-price renewal economics and the margin floor.
- [ ] The team can deliver the promise at the high-demand estimate.
- [ ] A named owner can pause the offer if the guardrails fail.

○ Ready to scale ○ Run a smaller test ○ Hold

DURING LAUNCH, WATCH TWO THINGS SEPARATELY

Fast signals

CHECK DAILY DURING LAUNCH

Spend, CAC by segment, conversion, stock, backlog, support volume, and first-week cancels.

Quality signals

JUDGE AT THE RENEWAL

Renewal and contribution by segment and offer. Judge subscriber quality when the renewal cohort is available.

AFTER: READ THE COHORT

- [ ] **Track the first full-price renewal by segment** and 30, 60, and 90 days where the billing cycle makes those checks useful.
- [ ] **Separate voluntary cancellations from failed-payment churn** and read the reasons customers gave.
- [ ] **Update each segment's CAC cap with what actually happened** and give the biggest fix a named owner before the next promotion.

AI SPEED KIT

Three prompts that save a late team days

Paste these into an approved AI tool with approved, clean data. They get you a fast first pass. A person checks the evidence and owns the decision.

01 Find your segments

STEP 1

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Using this aggregated cohort table, group customers by why they joined (offer, channel, and first product or content). For each group, show the count, paid months, and contribution. Flag small groups and missing data. Do not infer anything the data does not show.
```

02 Check the offer terms

STEP 2

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Compare the approved offer terms across these approved assets. List each mismatch or gap with the exact quote, asset and location, issue to review, and what remains unknown. Use only the supplied sources. Do not infer missing terms, rewrite customer language, decide legal compliance, or approve. If the source does not say, write “not stated.”
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03 Draft the test plan

STEP 3

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From this approved offer brief, draft a test matrix for iPhone, Android, and desktop. Cover the code, plan selection, payment, confirmation, tracking, renewal, failed payment, and cancellation. List the expected result for each case.
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AI HELP

GUARDRAILS

- Use a company-approved tool.
- Keep personal, payment, and unapproved data out. Use aggregate data.
- A person checks every result against the source and recalculates the numbers.
- Don’t hand AI legal or compliance calls, publishing, or customer-account changes.

Want the full version?

The 19-page Holiday Subscription Readiness Checklist covers all seven parts of holiday readiness, with an example for every check, benchmarks, and fillable working notes.

Need an operator to pressure-test the growth plan?

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