



How Small Businesses Can Win Big on Black Friday



You already know this but you will never out-doorbuster the big box stores. You are not supposed to. Your power is not in pallets of TVs sold near cost to get people in the door. It is in how people feel when they walk through your door.

If you lean into experience, Black Friday can shift from “we cannot compete” to “we own this lane.” Here’s how:

6 Ways to Win at Black Friday

1. Position Your Business as the Calm in the Chaos

Black Friday is loud, crowded, and a little unhinged. Use that to your advantage by being the opposite.

Think of your business as a holiday oasis.

Ideas you can try:

- **Quiet Hours Shopping.** Offer “calm hours” in the early morning or later evening with softer lighting, relaxed music, and a limited number of shoppers by RSVP. This is an ideal way to stand out.
- **Cozy Comfort Station.** Set up a hydration and warmth bar. Think hot cocoa, tea, cucumber water, and maybe a simple snack. You are literally refueling tired shoppers.
- **Phone Drop Zone.** Create a “scroll break” basket where people can put their phones while they browse. Add a small sign: “You will not find peace in your notifications. Try here instead.”

You become the place where shoulders drop and breathing slows. That alone is a competitive edge.

2. Make Black Friday Feel VIP, Not Bargain Bin

People love to feel like insiders. Use that instinct.

Ideas to elevate the day:

- **By-Appointment Shopping.** Offer 30-minute mini appointments for styling, gifting help, or product demos. Shoppers leave with decisions made and gifts checked off.
- **First Look Access.** Give your email list, top customers, or loyalty members early access to your best bundles or limited items. Frame it as a thank you, not a gimmick.
- **“Done and Dusted” Gift Packages.** Curate grab and go gift sets for specific people: “Teacher TLC,” “Hostess Hero,” “Self-Care Sunday,” “Office Secret Santa.” The value is not only in the items. It is in the decision fatigue you remove.

You are not trying to be the cheapest. You are trying to be the easiest and the most thoughtful.

3. Turn Shopping into a Memory, Not a Chore

If the big box experience feels like a stampede, yours can feel like a respite.

Add small, memorable touches:

- **Gratitude Wall.** Invite customers to write what they are grateful for on tags or sticky notes and hang them on a wall or tree. It creates a moment of reflection and looks great on social.
- **Photo Moments.** Set up a simple photo nook. A decorated chair, a small backdrop, a “We survived Black Friday together” sign. Offer to take photos for customers on their phones.
- **Word of Mouth Marvels.** Ideally, word of mouth testimonials will come from customers in the form of reviews or social posts. But you can also use the help of your employees. Help customers feel more confident about their purchases by telling them things like, “That’s one of our biggest sellers” or “I bought that for my son’s teacher and she loved it.” These short employee-led testimonials work in-person and even as physical signs near a popular product or service. If you’re not a believer, check out how Amazon designates some of its products as “Amazon’s Choice.”

4. Create Sensory Experiences That Match Your Brand

Use all five senses to stand out.

- **Sight.** Make your best bundles and gift solutions front and center. Use clear signage like “Gifts under \$25” or “Perfect for the person who has everything.”
- **Sound.** Choose a playlist that fits your brand. Calm acoustic, jazzy holiday, or upbeat pop. Just be deliberate.
- **Smell.** A subtle holiday scent can make your store feel warm and inviting. Candles, diffusers, or even a simmer pot if it is safe.
- **Taste.** If allowed, offer small sips or bites. Think sample cocoa, infused water, or a local treat.
- **Touch.** Invite people to try, test, feel, and flip through. Hands-on experiences make products more real and more likely to be purchased.

You want people to feel like they have stepped into a curated world, not just another errand.

5. Partner with Other Local Businesses

You do not have to do Black Friday alone. Collaboration makes everything bigger without blowing your budget.

Ideas:

- **Oasis Trail.** Partner with nearby businesses to create a “Holiday Sanity Route.” Each shop offers a comfort element or mini perk. Share a simple map online and in print.
- **Shared Experiences.** Host a pop-up inside your store featuring a local baker, maker, or artist. It brings their audience to you and gives your customers something extra to enjoy.

This is how you turn one good experience into a whole neighborhood story.

6. Communicate Clearly and Early

A great experience still needs promotion.

- Share your Black Friday “experience menu” on social media, your website, and via email.
- Focus the message on how people will feel. Less “10 percent off.” More “Skip the chaos and actually enjoy your holiday shopping.”
- Let your chamber know what you’re doing. They may share it in their newsletters or social feeds and send more people your way.

If you can make Black Friday feel human, calm, and a little bit magical, you will not just survive it. You will stand out from all the noise and become a place people seek out year after year. They’ll feel like you understand their needs.

You don’t want to compete in the race to the bottom on price. You are competing in something much more powerful: the memory of how your business made people feel in the middle of holiday madness.

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