Checklist: Final steps for Black Friday preparation

Maximising Black Friday ecommerce site performance

Executive Summary

Maximising Black Friday performance

Black Friday is approaching fast. You've completed your traffic profile and likely been running your load testing programme for several months but what practical steps can you take to prepare before code lockdown and in the months and weeks running up to Black Friday?

To help you avoid the pitfalls and ensure your site's ready for a bumper holiday season, we've put together a ten point checklist to help you with the final steps for Black Friday preparation.

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Checklist for final Black Friday preparation

We've put together a ten point checklist to help you with peak season preparation.

1 Load test prior to code lockdown ☑

A comprehensive load test programme for six months leading up to Black Friday is the optimum solution for peace of mind but we understand that's not always realistic. One thing you shouldn't cut back on though is a load test prior to code lockdown with enough time to implement, test and fix any issues so there's no last minute pressure on tech teams to deliver the impossible.

2 Strip back your site to key functionality ☑

Consider stripping down your site to deliver essential core functionality to avoid slowdowns. A 'vanilla' site is perfect for Black Friday, sale shoppers aren't looking for bells and whistles but simply to make their transaction as quickly as possible. Reduce functionality and possibly the range of products/services offered for the peak period for the best speed and user experience at busy times .

Third party content accounts for the majority of performance issues so ensure you remove any non-essential third party content or calls.

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③ Keep journey pages small ☑

In this age of mobile, web performance optimisation is critical. Check your page weighting, look out for page bloat - oversized elements and numerous calls.

In particular remove unecssary images where possible and check that any images, fonts and icons are optimised/responsive. Optimise code making sure that JavaScript and CSS is minified. Ensure compression is enabled.

Consider page loading - in particular deferred and asynchronous loading technologies especially for third party components - so that key functionality is visible as quickly as possible.

④ Review infrastructure configuration and server-side optimisation ☑

Check back-end systems are configured and implemented correctly including load balancing and autoscaling.

Review server side optimisation; ensure caching is enabled, consider pre-rendering and confirm CDN implementation is working for appropriate content. Ensure all this functionality is covered by your 24/7 monitoring journeys.

⑤ Setup and test a contingency plan ☑

You may want to consider a queuing system such as Queue-it as a contingency plan. Consider load testing your site with and without the contingency solution in place and ensure monitoring journeys cover this functionality.

6 Lockdown code on time ☑

The best peak performers during Black Friday sales will be those that stick to the schedule, so you should aim to lock down code approximately six weeks prior to peak. Obviously, you'll want to update your website with special promotional sections and deal codes but these must be implemented before lockdown. It's important to involve business as well as tech teams so everyone's aware of deadlines, together with test dates and contingency dates.

7 Load test after code lockdown ☑

We suggest load testing key journeys two to four weeks ahead of peak – to check performance of the final system on the live environment, while allowing enough time to remedy any last-minute issues.

8 Monitor key journeys 24/7 ☑

Any change to a site carries the risk of performance problems, don't underestimate the impact of small changes. To reduce abandonment you need to ensure a fast, error-free experience right through to checkout. So make sure you monitor key journeys 24/7 prior to and during Black Friday to identify problems before they impact your customers.

Remember to monitor right to the journey's end, including 'Click and Collect' or delivery options.

9 Monitor performance on mobile browsers ✅

Mobile now accounts for more than half of online sales.

Mobile browsers expect a fast smooth mobile performance and are easily deterred by slow page load times and journey interruptions.

Don't assume Responsive Web Design will perform equally across devices. Realistic visibility of your customers' mobile experience has never been more critical. So make sure you monitor key journeys on iOs and Android browsers prior to and during peak traffic.
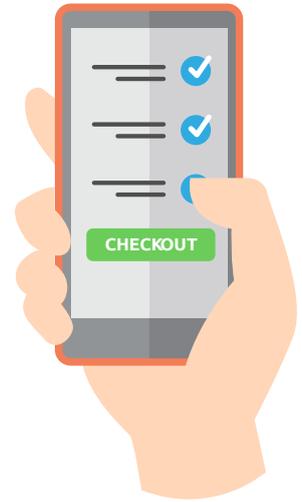
10 Share live monitoring data for fast resolution of issues before customers are impacted ✅

Make your monitoring wallboard - showing the top level performance of key journeys in real time - accessible to customer service, operations and third parties prior to and during peak season.

Enable critical third parties access to your monitoring results and direct alerting for swift resolution of problems.

The future of Black Friday - don't get caught out

As Black Friday matures the peak is becoming less intensive running over a longer period. This gives retailers an opportunity to work with marketing teams to phase promotions to spread the traffic wherever possible.

If you're considering opting out of future Black Friday events as some retailers are, don't get caught out. We still see a surge of traffic even on the sites of clients who are not participating in the sale. This is due to a general increase in shoppers browsing and often due to traffic driven by failures on other high profile sites. So it's important to be prepared for an increase in traffic even if you are not actively participating in Black Friday promotions.

For brands without a key differentiator it's more difficult to stand back from Black Friday as shoppers will purchase the same goods from competitors who are offering promotions. If you fall into this category it might be worth following the lead of some other retailers looking to overcome this, by offering 'exclusives' to differentiate products from the competition.

About Tribe

Our portfolio of "dynamic user journey" based emulation, monitoring and load testing services enable business wide understanding of the impact of online performance on user experience and the bottom line.

With over 10 years performance testing experience, helping clients such as Debenhams, Boden, Joules and Dixons to maximise user experience and protect their brand, our highly experienced team of test professionals help clients implement monitoring programmes and proactively oversee testing; automatically updating journeys as a website changes, highlighting performance issues and helping clients quickly pinpoint root causes - saving time and money.
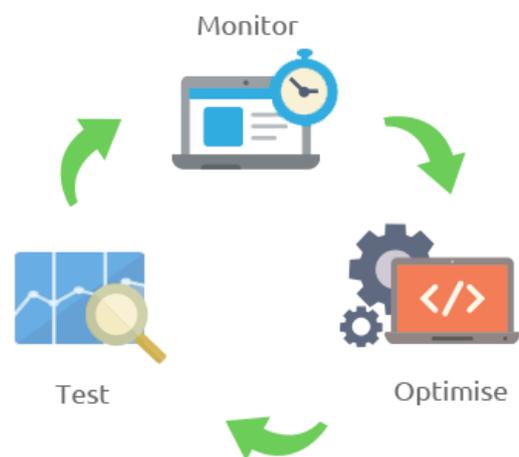
To find out how Tribe can help you implement the best monitoring or load testing programme to suit your organisation please contact us on 01227 768276 or visit our website at www.thinktribe.com

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Peace of mind with realistic load testing

Tribe provides a fully managed load testing service precisely tailored to each client's business and designed to optimise web performance

If you'd like more information about how taking a more realistic approach to load testing could help improve your customer experience, **visit our website here**

Make decisions based on realism

SV-Load emulates realistic journeys. Performs tasks, checks page content and makes choices just like real users

Accurate and reliable results

Provides the most accurate results on which to base decisions and deliver the best customer experience

Fully managed service

Fully managed, independent Load Testing makes it possible to manage load testing with minimum disruption internally

Test your anticipated peak

Initiates thousands of journeys and scales them up to - or even Tbeyond - anticipated peak traffic levels

Read more on our website

Maximise user experience with 24/7 performance monitoring

Tribe provides high touch 24/7 performance monitoring for optimum user experience and swift resolution of performance issues

If you'd like more information about how monitoring mobile performance can increase your conversions
visit our performance monitoring service page here

Maximise user experience by getting closer to your customers' true experience

Emulates realistic customer journeys. Performs tasks, checks page content & makes choices just like real users

Make decisions based on realistic, accurate & reliable data

Provides the most accurate results on which to base feature versus performance budget decisions

Save time & resource with an extension of your tech team

Manage the complexities of web performance whilst freeing resources. Our high-touch service means we find problems before you do

Bridge the gap between tech & business teams

Actionable data easily shared and understood by customer service, operations and business teams for swift root resolution of issues

Read more on our website

Increase conversions with mobile experience visibility

Tribe provides high touch mobile web and mobile app monitoring services for visibity of users' mobile experience and swift resolution of performance issues

If you'd like more information about how monitoring mobile performance can increase your conversions **visit our mobile monitoring service page [here](#)**

Increase conversions with visibility of mobile experience

Emulates realistic journeys delivered to mobile browsers. Performs tasks, checks page content & makes choices just like real users

Make decisions based on realistic, accurate & reliable data

Provides the most accurate results on which to base feature versus performance budget decisions

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Together for better digital journeys