Magento Holiday Prep Checklist

Preparation is the key to a well-executed and profitable Holiday season, and the following checklist will help you get your site ready for peak shopping hours.

1   **Know your backup or failover strategy**

Your System Integrator (SI) or technical support team may have created one for you, but have you reviewed it lately? Document what—and who—is involved in the Disaster Recovery Strategy and share it with your Solution Partner and Hosting Partner so you can be prepared and all teams are on the same page.

2   **Know your scale and database replication strategy**

Beyond knowing what to do if a server fails, you should have a plan in place for quickly deploying additional standby hardware to accommodate load spikes on days such as Black Friday or Cyber Monday.

3   **Load test your system under peak load scenarios**

Use your Holiday sales projections and predictive load testing to test your system for capacity to handle concurrent users in both browsing and buying scenarios. Predictive load testing services are available from companies such as Gomez, Concentric, and Magento's Expert Consulting Group (ECG).

4   **Check the timing of your scheduled processes**

You don't want routine backups bringing down your system during peak Holiday hours. Be sure that back-end processes—such as database backups and batched imports or exports—don't coincide with your busiest days and hours.

5   **Enable Magento Enterprise Edition application-caching features**

Magento Enterprise Edition allows you to cache configuration, layouts, blocks output, translations, collections data, web-services configuration, and full pages (Full Page Caching is exclusive to Magento Enterprise Edition). All these cache types can be enabled and disabled via the Magento Admin panel and can help improve overall system performance.

6 Use a Content Delivery Network (CDN) to serve static content and HTML pages

CDN services (provided by Magento Partners like Peer 1 Hosting) work by storing copies of your files on servers located in datacenters around the world; the server located nearest to your site's visitor responds to the page request. Offloading static pages, images, CSS style sheets, and Javascript files can increase your ability to serve more concurrent users during the Holidays and improve your site's overall responsiveness.

7 Clean up any inactive CMS pages and remove out-of-date promotions or products

The fewer data you have to serve up and rules you have to validate against, the faster your response times will be during peak times.

8 Archive old orders and limit your shopping cart lifespan

Unless you specify otherwise, your customers' abandoned shopping carts will retain their items indefinitely, so set a reasonable limit on shopping cart lifetime values (30 or 60 days during the Holidays). Likewise, archiving order data is a manual process in Magento Enterprise Edition. Offload last season's data to make room for more orders and transactions.

9 Limit the number of concurrent promotions in the system

The more promotional rules you create, the more calculations the system needs to perform at checkout—and this will slow your site performance. Instead of setting up multiple promotions, try targeting specific customers using conditions (customer segmentation is exclusive to Magento Enterprise Edition).

10 Apply catalog price rules well in advance of peak hours

Magento Enterprise Edition requires time to update price rules such as markdowns; apply the rules early to avoid slowing down your system while these updates occur.

11 Schedule heavy admin activity outside of peak hours

Also, refrain from flushing the cache or manually re-indexing during peak traffic periods.

12 Disable extra functionality you're not using

Magento Enterprise Edition is a robust and feature-rich platform. If you're not using certain native functionality—such as wish lists or gift cards—in your store, have your SI temporarily disable these so you can realize the best possible performance. **Note:** Disabling functionality must be done at the programming level.