



neto

# GETTING READY FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON

The low-stress guide to  
holiday retail success

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION \_\_\_\_\_ 4

DECK THE HALLS \_\_\_\_\_ 5

- ▶ Deck your online store, too
- ▶ Show your community spirit

MARKETING: HO, HO, SOCIAL! \_\_\_\_\_ 7

- ▶ Plan your content

STAFFING: PREPARE YOUR PEOPLE \_\_\_\_\_ 8

- ▶ Plan your in-store staffing
- ▶ Plan your online staffing
- ▶ Look after your warehouse team
- ▶ Recruitment and training

## INVENTORY: 3 WISE MANAGEMENT TIPS \_\_\_\_ 11

- ▶ Look at the trends
- ▶ Keep on top of stock counts
- ▶ Clear stock now

## CUSTOMERS: AT THE CHECKOUT AND BEYOND \_\_\_\_\_ 13

- ▶ Help them choose the right gift
- ▶ Highlight your returns policy
- ▶ Help them if they can't choose with gift cards
- ▶ Let them pay how they want...now or later
- ▶ Offer free or discounted shipping
- ▶ Wrap it up

## GET READY FOR CHRISTMAS WITH NETO \_\_ 16



# INTRODUCTION

We're just weeks away from the classic Christmas mayhem, when Australian consumers hit the shopping malls and online stores to spend their hard-earned cash on gifts for loved ones.

This window from mid-November to mid-January is a profitable time of year for most retailers, generating up to **30% of their annual sales** and **60% of their profits**. In 2016, Australians spent around \$50 billion during the silly season, including **almost \$10 billion on gifts alone**.

It can also be a high-stress time of year as retail competition reaches fever pitch. Retailers need to search for the right balance of marketing and promotions, customer service, and supply chain management to secure their fair share of festive season sales.

But if you put the time in now to do some solid planning and preparation, you'll be ready to seize all the opportunities the holidays can offer you—without the headaches.

This guide collates our favourite tips for getting your retail business ready to succeed this Christmas. We've put a lot in here, but don't worry—you don't need to use every single one. Just pick and choose the strategies that suit your products and customer base to see the biggest benefits.

Happy holidays!







# DECK THE HALLS

It wouldn't be Christmas without decorations, so put up your tree, set up your fairy lights, and inflate your giant Santa for everyone to see.

But don't stop there!

Christmas is a great time for you to show off your creative flair by

- ▶ designing a themed t-shirt for staff to wear, with a seasonal slogan
- ▶ building window displays that tell a holiday-themed story about your brand
- ▶ sharing the love with local charities or community groups by featuring their festive artworks in store.

## DECK YOUR ONLINE STORE, TOO

Christmas decorations aren't just for bricks-and-mortar stores. Your retail website should also get into the festive spirit with a Christmas variation on your usual theme, making use of traditional red, green, gold, and silver colours and holiday-themed images. You can also create special categories for themed merchandise and seasonal gifts, and feature these prominently on the home page.

Many retailers also feature an impossible-to-miss badge that explains the delivery timeframes in the lead-up to Christmas, such as

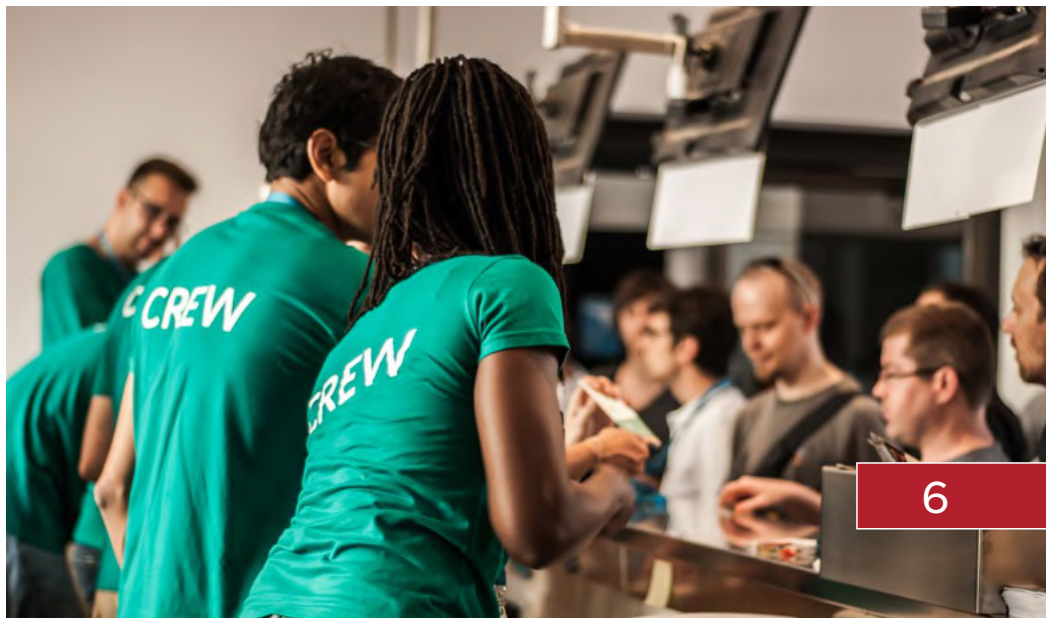
*Order by 21 December for Christmas delivery!*

Some of our retailers have worried that going all-out with the Christmas promotions might turn off some prospective customers. It's a valid concern, but remember that while not everyone celebrates holy days, everyone loves a holiday. You can get into the festive spirit and still be culturally sensitive by focusing on universal themes such as families, togetherness, kindness, and love.

Finally, stack your tech-deck as well: if you're planning big online sales during the silly season, make sure you've got the bandwidth to support higher transaction volumes.

## SHOW YOUR COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Australians are generous at Christmas time and they'll appreciate your efforts to help the wider community. Consider sponsoring a local event like a school end of year concert or charity dinner, and promoting it in store and on your website. You can also run a charity drive, collecting money or goods for underprivileged Australians.





# MARKETING: HO, HO, SOCIAL!

(Sorry. We had to.)

The festive season is an easy opportunity to engage your followers with themed content and promotions, so while you're redecorating your store and your website, don't forget to glam-up your social media profiles with a bit of green, red and gold, too.

## PLAN YOUR CONTENT

Now is a great time to also think about how you can theme some of your social media and email content over Christmas and schedule in discounts and incentives (more on this later). Be careful not to make everything about Christmas, or you're likely to overwhelm your followers!.

You could share good news stories about how you're helping others in the community, or let your fans know what your team will be doing for fun in their time off. But if you really want to share the timely, relevant, and useful content that converts, consider how you can tailor the stories for your customers. For example:

- ▶ If you sell hardware, you could create a series of DIY Christmas project videos.
- ▶ A kitchen store could share Christmas recipes from staff members and customers.
- ▶ If you're in lighting and electrical, run a feature on Christmas lights in your local area, or share photos of your customers' light displays.
- ▶ Everyone loves pets in costume, so pet shops could share a series of dressed-up pet photos.

You can even pair these ideas with a competition to win a related prize. That way, your customers will be happy to generate the content for you. Check out more [social promotion ideas](#) on our blog.



# STAFFING: PREPARE YOUR PEOPLE

Shoppers are out there looking for somewhere to buy, and the experience you offer your customers is what will **keep them coming back**. That's why it's so important to look after the other people who are so important for your business: your staff. The better you prepare your team to handle the increased load, the less of a toll Christmas will take on them.

## PLAN YOUR IN-STORE STAFFING

Christmas is always hectic, but some days are more hectic than others, and predictably so. CommBank's research over the past few years shows that one-quarter of Australians do most of their **gift shopping on the Saturday** that's about a week before Christmas. This year, that's Saturday, 16 December. Sunday, 17 December and Thursday, 21 December are also forecast to be seriously busy. And, of course, then you've got the Boxing Day sales on Tuesday, December 26, and then you're straight into New Year stocktake clearances! So make sure you're adequately staffed on all these days, and give your workers some down-time to decompress—customers will thank you for it.





## PLAN YOUR ONLINE STAFFING

By online staffing, we mean everyone who supports your online sales process, including online and phone-based customer support, IT services, and anyone who handles order management and fulfilment.

You're likely to see spikes in online sales on different dates from your in-store sales, as customers allow time for delivery of their online purchases. **Two critical dates for 2017** are Black Friday on 24 November and Cyber Monday on 27 November. These sale periods originated in the US but are catching on in Australia, and if you're planning on participating you'll need to have the resources in place to avoid Click Frenzy-style disappointment.

## LOOK AFTER YOUR WAREHOUSE TEAM

If you think your in-store team has a big job ahead, that's nothing compared to what your warehouse staff will endure. They'll be absolutely critical in making sure you've got adequate stock-on-hand in your retail stores and in getting your online customer orders packed and delivered before Christmas.

Start by **streamlining your warehouse operations** to make their job as easy as possible, and then ensure you have a plan in place for managing the increased pace over Christmas. As with your in-store and online staff, give them some down-time, and be sure to celebrate their successes.





## RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

If you're bringing in extra staff, remember that you'll need enough time to train them adequately and build their confidence before the season rolls around. This isn't always feasible, and you may find it more efficient to find alternatives, such as re-hiring former staff who are keen to earn some extra money over Christmas and are easy to onboard.

You may also be able to avoid hiring sales and fulfilment staff by optimising your processes to make their jobs easier. For example, you could hire temporary staff to carry out administrative tasks, reducing the burden on your employees so they can focus on supporting the sales cycle.

And if you haven't already got an **all-in-one retail management platform**, you should definitely look at investing in one before the next holiday season rolls around.





# INVENTORY: 3 WISE MANAGEMENT TIPS

(Sorry. I swear, no more bad puns.)

It's critical to closely manage your stock as you head into high sales periods, or you risk one of two profit-eating outcomes:

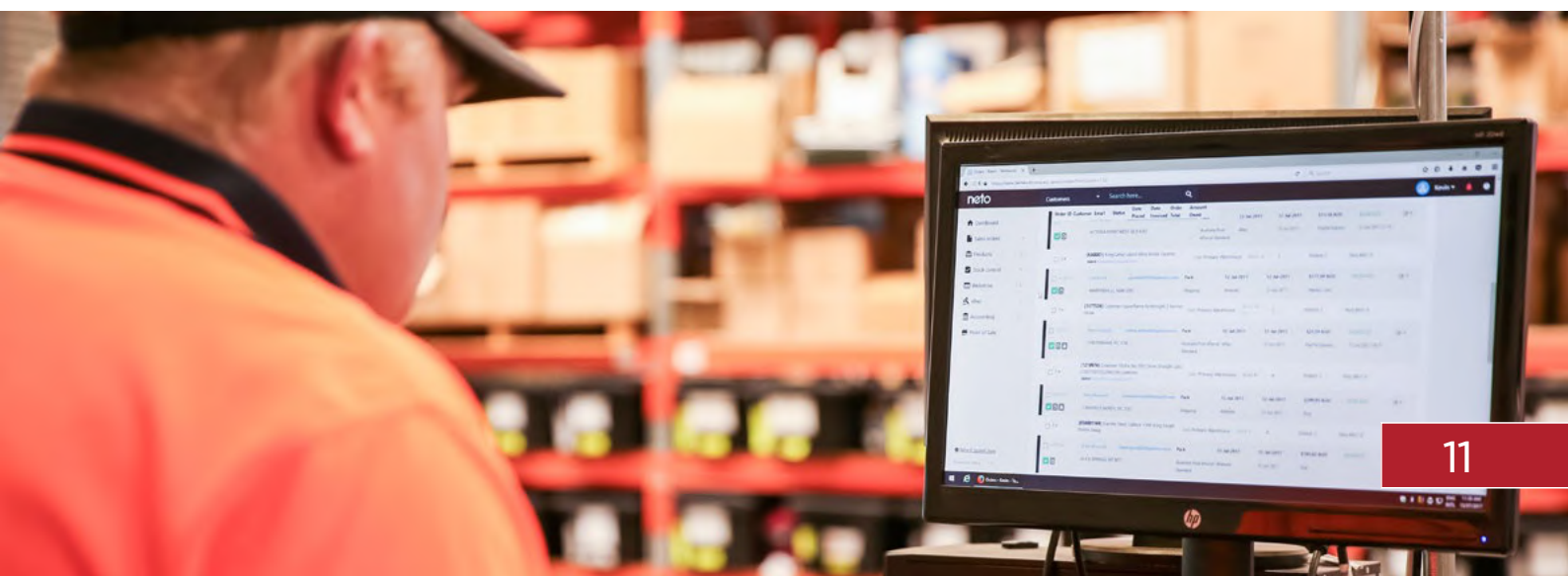
- ▶ you run out of stock, so your customers buy elsewhere
- ▶ you end up with leftover stock that you can't move without heavy discounts.

Inventory management can be complex if you don't have the right tools, which is why we recommend **inventory management** that's built right into your retail management platform. We've got lots more information about inventory management on our blog, but here are the key points for peak season.

## LOOK AT THE TRENDS

Your sales and inventory history both hold a lot of clues, if you take the time to investigate them. Identify which products or categories usually sell well over the Christmas period, and stock more of them. Also check whether your sales are currently higher now than during the same period last year, which could indicate a rising market.

Look beyond your own history as well—what are you seeing in the market? Is **business sentiment** in the retail sector positive or gloomy? The 2017 Christmas retail forecasts haven't been released at our time of publication, but look out for them in early November, when the Australian Bureau of Statistics releases the September Retail Sales figures.

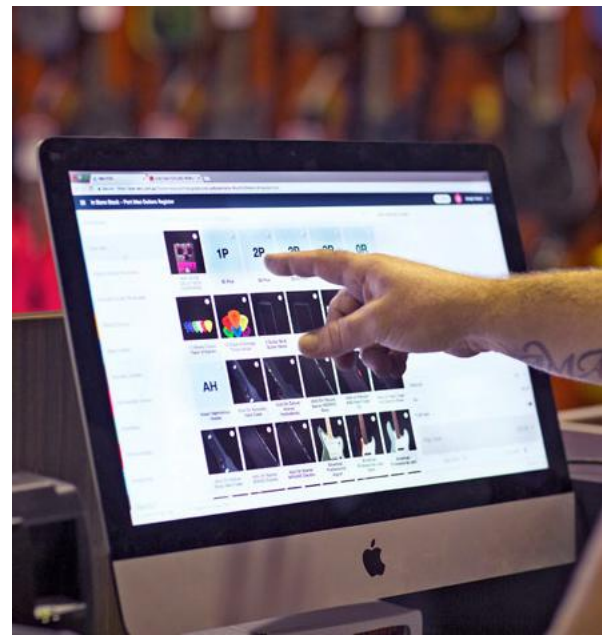


## KEEP ON TOP OF STOCK COUNTS

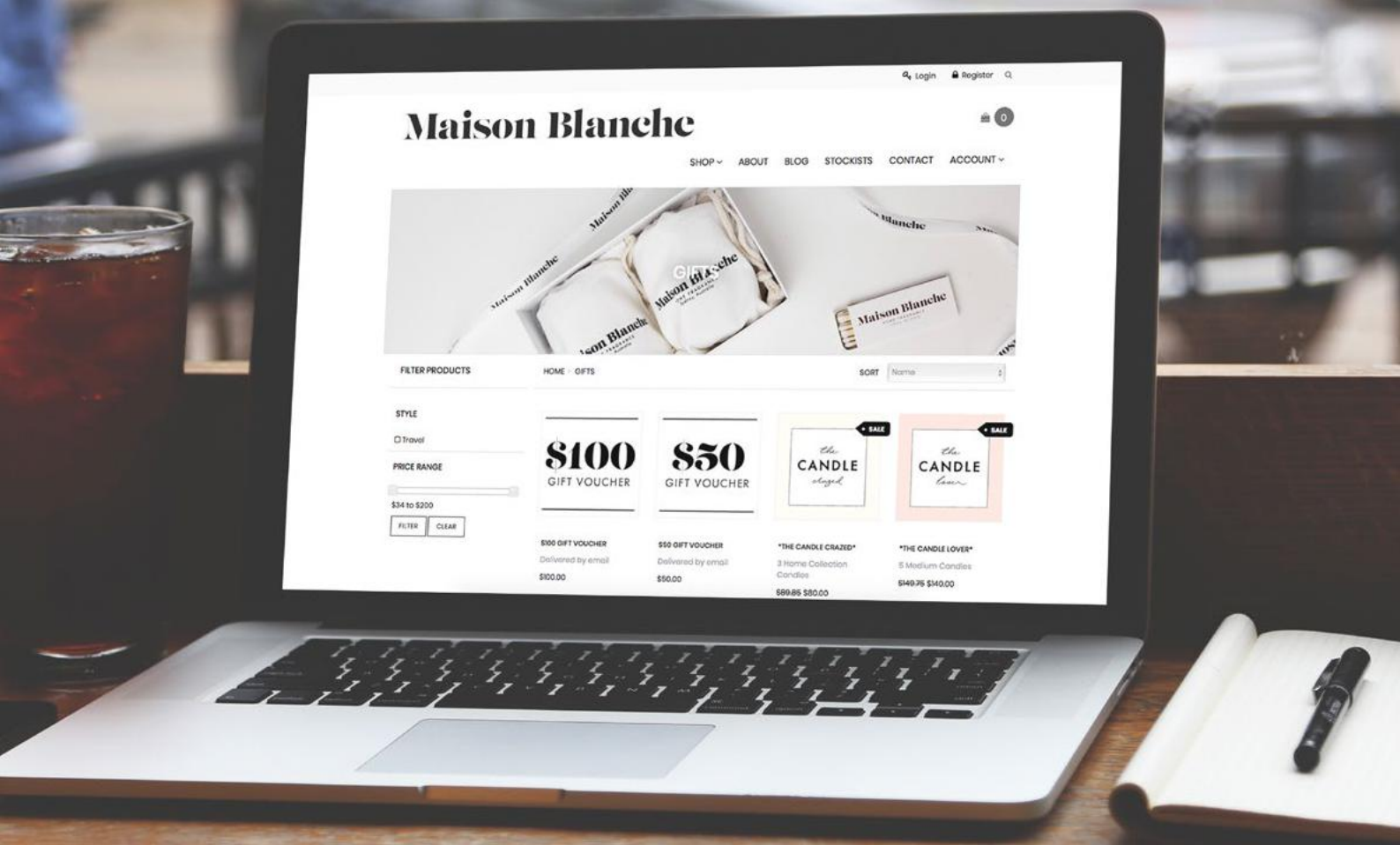
Don't get the nasty surprise of running out of stock when you're not expecting it. Track your stock levels and place replenishment orders as early as possible, remembering that your suppliers are also handling increased volume over the festive season, and may not be able to manage rush orders. And don't forget your non-inventory Christmas supplies, like gift wrapping paper, gift bags, and ribbons.

## CLEAR STOCK NOW

This is one of the best times to start clearing out your slow-moving stock by bundling it into a promotional deal as an extra incentive for your customers. Who doesn't love a freebie? You can find out more about [pricing strategies](#) on our blog.







# CUSTOMERS: AT THE CHECKOUT AND BEYOND: MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS

Christmas can be a stressful time for shoppers, too, as they try to buy the best gifts while **sticking to tight budgets**. You can help by reassuring them that, when they shop with you, they're making a smart decision.

How? By **making it easy** to find what they're looking for, offering seamless order fulfilment, and being clear about your store policies.

## HELP THEM CHOOSE THE RIGHT GIFT

Online gift buyers often browse categories rather than searching for specific items, so make sure you categorise your products appropriately, with groups like "Gifts under \$20" or "Gifts for teenagers". Buying guides take more effort to create, but your customers will appreciate your effort.

## HIGHLIGHT YOUR RETURNS POLICY

Customers are more likely to buy if they know they can return an unwanted gift. This is especially true of online orders, with 76% of shoppers **viewing a company's returns policy** before placing an order and 51% of shoppers abandoning their cart if the returns process isn't easy and convenient. So make sure your returns policy is easy to find, easy to read, and easy to use.

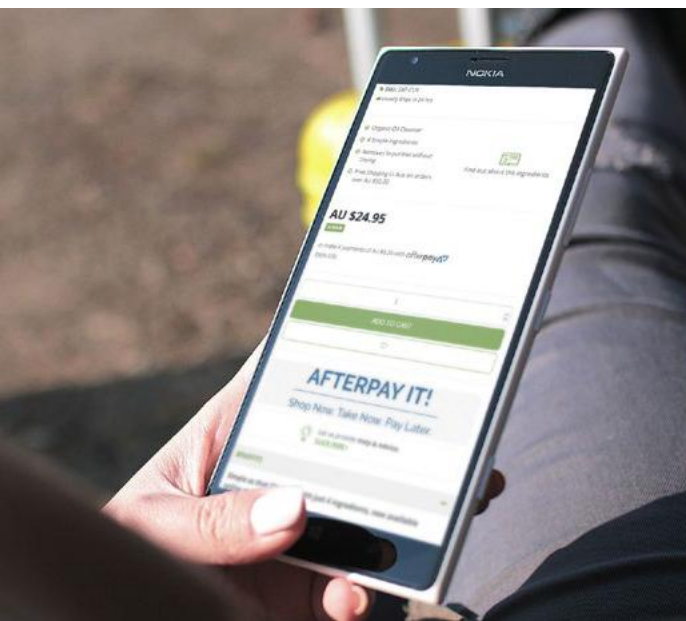
## HELP THEM IF THEY CAN'T CHOOSE WITH GIFT CARDS

Australians spend up to **\$2.5 billion on gift cards** each year, mostly when they're unsure what to buy and don't want to give cash as a gift. They're an attractive option for retailers, too, because they reduce the number of returns and exchanges you need to process, and the income is guaranteed upfront. So if you're not already offering gift cards for sale, check whether your point-of-sale system or ecommerce platform includes **gift vouchers as an add-on feature**.

## LET THEM PAY HOW THEY WANT... NOW OR LATER

Australians tend to spend a lot more over Christmas than at other times of the year, so offering your customers a variety of payment options increases the chance you'll make a sale. Customers may want to make use of interest-free periods on their credit cards, or they might plan ahead and purchase goods with lay-by.

Or give your customers a **buy now, take now, pay later option** from a third-party finance provider like **ZipPay** or **Afterpay**. They offer flexible payments with an interest-free period to your customers, and full upfront settlement for you.



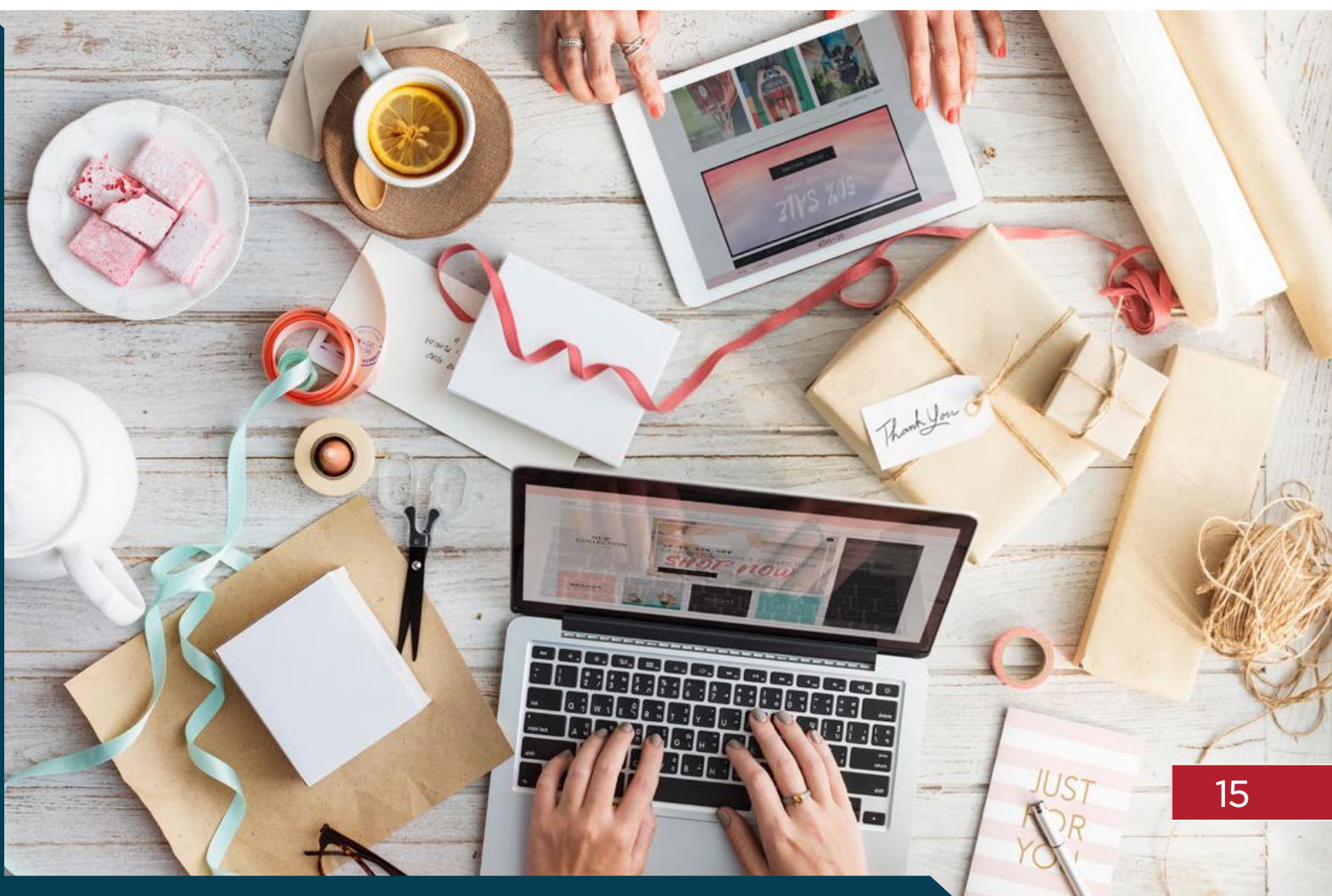


## OFFER FREE OR DISCOUNTED SHIPPING

Shipping charges can be a deciding factor for online shoppers, with **69% of shoppers more likely to buy** from online stores that offer free shipping. Free or discounted shipping is a wonderful extra gift you can offer your customers at this time of year, but if the costs are prohibitive for you, be upfront about your shipping costs. Don't add them as a surprise late in the checkout process, or you'll lose **28% of your shoppers**.

## WRAP IT UP

A complimentary gift-wrapping service will save customers time and is especially convenient if they're delivering a gift directly to the recipient. Even if they plan to deliver the gift in person, the polished look of professional wrapping can add that extra touch of class—and it's an opportunity for you to promote your brand. **Neto's free Product Options add-on** is the best way to add free gift wrapping and messages for recipients as an option in your online store.



# GET READY FOR CHRISTMAS WITH NETO

Christmas is a time of great opportunity for retailer owners and their teams, but it can also be a time of great stress, if you're not prepared. There's more to it than just the fun stuff like decorating your store and your website. You need to stay on top of your stock levels, manage your staff, and most importantly, deliver a consistently great experience for your customers, both online and in store.

## THAT'S WHERE WE CAN HELP.

Neto is the only Australian retail management platform that provides a complete solution for ecommerce, point of sale, inventory, and fulfilment. Our integrated back-end technology enables exceptional and consistent customer experiences via any channel, be it in-store, online or through a marketplace. We automate repetitive tasks and integrate with multiple sales channels to manage orders and shipments.

To see for yourself how Neto can help you prepare for a more profitable Christmas, [start your free trial](#) today.

