

The 6 Q5 Strategies Nobody Else is Talking About Yet



Where most brands hit pause—smart
marketers connect.

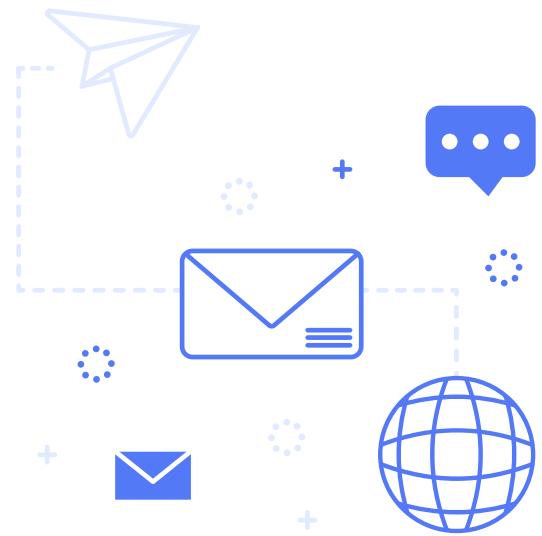
The lull after the holiday email marketing storm isn't as tranquil as it seems. Customers are still shopping, but they have down-shifted from their pre-holiday rush and have other goals to meet.

You need an email marketing strategy that matches their motivations and capitalizes on them to deliver incremental revenue, build stronger customer connections, and transition seamlessly to 2026.

This period has even acquired its own official name: Q5, as in the Fifth Quarter. Yes, we know quarters come in fours, but just go with us on this one.

Q5 lasts from the day after Christmas to roughly the middle of January, or before the Valentine's Day machine starts to crank up. Think of it as the big post-party, the quarter within the quarter, the bonus round, or even your last chance to pull in enough sales to meet or beat your email goal.

Luckily for you and your workload, you don't have to invent a brand-new Q5 campaign. Some strategic repositioning and refocusing can help you create emails that stand out in post-holiday inboxes and appeal to your customers' new priorities.



Topics in this guide:

Why a Q5 email marketing strategy makes sense

Meet your 4 kinds of Q5 shoppers

6 Q5 campaigns to reach loyal shoppers and engage new customers

Next steps to shape your Q5 email marketing strategy

Why a Q5 email marketing strategy makes sense

Google said it best in its recent consumer trends report:

"The two-week period from December 26 to January 8 ... is one of the most profitable windows of the year.



"Throughout this window, people aren't just casual browsers; they're high-intent shoppers actively searching for deals and seeking to treat themselves. During Q5, shoppers are using more resources and taking more actions than at any other point in the season.



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After the holidays, shoppers are most likely to buy: 87% of their shopping occasions result in a purchase. For retailers, this is the most critical time to be present, to reengage shoppers who may have been too busy during the holiday rush and to reconnect with loyal customers.”

Who are these shoppers visiting your site, reading your emails, or visiting your socials? People who have gift cards and cash to spend. Others want to process returns. Or they’re gift-givers who have time to reward themselves now that the pressure is off.

They might also be new customers who received your products as gifts and went to your website to seek help for using them. They’re intrigued enough to sign up for your emails, and maybe even your loyalty program, but they aren’t into you enough yet to tolerate your firehose of undifferentiated promotions.

No matter what they’re looking for, you can be there to help them with fresh, purpose-driven emails that do more than sell. And, yes, you can still sell. But you do that with purpose and flair, with messages that center on value-added content over hard sell.

Q5 looks and feels different

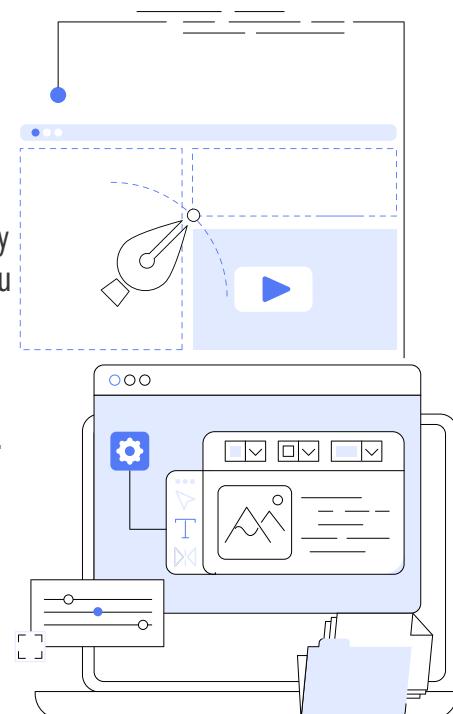
You can take your foot off the gas in Q5, but you won’t coast across the year-end finish line without a good plan. Email frequency and promotional tone will shift from “go-go-go” to “lean back but stay engaged.” Good-bye, three- and four-email days! So long, FOMO, exploding offers, and low-stock alerts. See ya next year!

This kinder, gentler approach has a tactical side, too. People are burned out. They just survived the annual holiday email onslaught and the stress and strain of the holidays themselves. They might have gone way over their holiday budgets, too. But even though their credit cards need a cooling-off period, you can stay on their radar if you send thoughtful and useful content.

If this idea gives your brand manager the jitters, assure them that Q5 emails can coexist with your standard deep-discount, inventory clean-out campaigns. People want those, too! After all, that’s what they’re looking for when they retreat to their phones on Christmas Day to escape the holiday hubbub.



But you can offer more to these determined shoppers. All of that can be part of your Q5 email marketing strategy.



Meet your 4 kinds of Q5 shoppers

Not everyone has the same post-holiday goals. This is important to remember as you map out your Q5 email strategy. **Your customer base might vary, but these are the broad categories that you can find online:**

1. Goal-oriented bargain hunters

This group is made up of three distinct shopper groups, each of which has its own motivations:

Bargain-hunters expect to find deep discounts, but they are shopping for specific products or visiting specific categories, like clothing, housewares, appliances, or sports equipment. These could be products they browsed earlier, popular items they liked but didn't want to pay the prices at the time, or things they put in a cart, planning to come back and buy after the holidays.

Planners are starting to plan for 2026, such as home renovations or personal improvements, major travel, or life events like births, marriages, or a move.

Returners want to send their purchases back for refunds or exchanges. Although many retailers launch the return/exchange process with a dedicated link or QR code in the original package invoice, you can send a general email soon after Dec. 25 that explains return and exchange policies.

If you require these shoppers to start the process at the website, you can use their visit to trigger an email with a special offer to bring them back.

2. Self-gifters

These include your gift-card redeemers. Some received them as gifts, while others earned cards from your brand as a gift-with-purchase. Also part of this group are shoppers who are interested in your brand or categories but aren't as focused as the goal-oriented bargain hunters.

They're curious to see what you're offering at 75 percent off, for example. A gift guide format could direct them to things they might not discover.

3. Resolution-setters

Q5 crosses paths with the New Year in Western countries, so it's not a surprise to find that you can retrofit a New Year campaign for personal refreshes, resets, or goal-setting. A Q5 campaign would work immediately after the holiday, while a longer refresh-reset strategy could launch after Jan. 1.

4. Information-seekers

These people either received your products as gifts or purchased them during a major holiday promotion. They are coming to your website to read how-to manuals and FAQs, look for related products, or learn more about your company.

Having a solid welcome program is a start, but you could reach out to these information-seekers with a targeted welcome invitation that launches when visitors click to specific pages on your site. See Campaign #6 below for an idea to get your newcomers shopping around on your site.



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6 Q5 campaigns to reach loyal shoppers and engage new customers

1. Help customers redeem gift cards

About \$23 billion in gift cards never get redeemed, despite efforts like [National Use Your Gift Card Day](#) (coming up on January 18, 2026). Maybe it's because not enough brands send reminders like this one from Shinola, which lures cardholders with the promise that they can get what Santa didn't bring.

Take time now to create a compelling gift card campaign. **You have two reasons to give this more than a cursory redemption reminder:**

- You're helping customers find things they really want. So make sure your redemption instructions are clear and easy to follow, and the process works. Review it now to make sure you have removed as much friction as possible.
- People usually spend more than the card's value. Capital One Shopping Research says [61% of shoppers spend more](#), at an average of \$31.75 over face value.

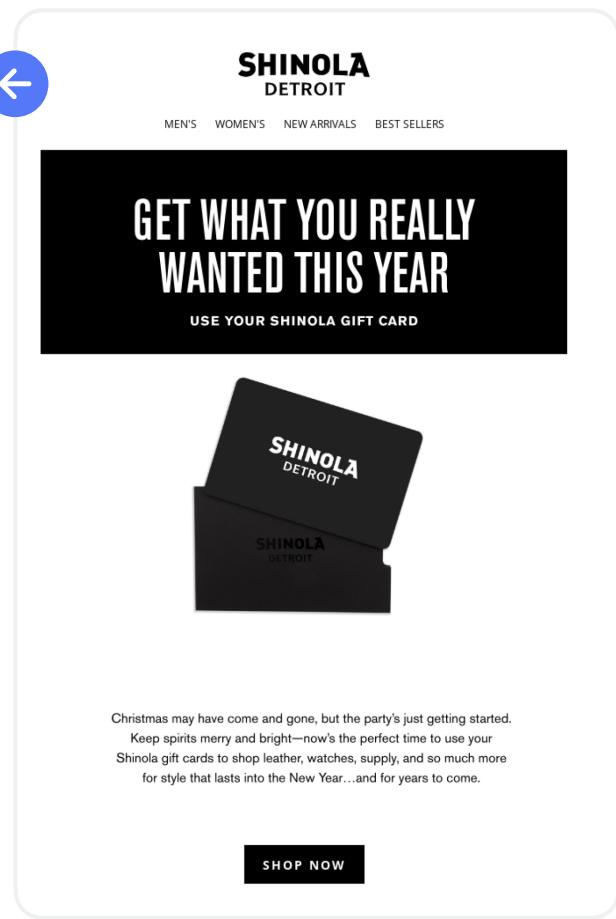
Good idea: Your data will determine whether you send a reminder in a broadcast email campaign or try to target card-buyers or recipients. If you can target card buyers but not recipients, send an email with your redemption process and ask the buyers to send it on to their recipients.

In your message, include links to your store site, complete redemption rules, an expiration date if you have one, and an offer such as a discount or shipping promotion for shoppers who spend above face value.

2. Reach out through your loyalty program

By the time the holiday rush ends, you should have collected a sleigh-load of new customers. Now's a great time to strengthen your ties with your newcomers. Send a standalone email that invites your new customers to join your VIP program or add it to your welcome journey. Or you can do both if you can segment out these new customers. The email below from ULTA lets newcomers know what to expect and sets expectations for content and tone.

Good ideas: As with a welcome email program, timing is everything. Send your loyalty welcome as soon as possible after your customer signs up. Focus on the benefits, and use a template, content tone, and colors that reflect your brand voice and loyalty focus.



A screenshot of a Shinola Detroit gift card campaign. The top navigation bar includes a back arrow, the Shinola Detroit logo, and links for MEN'S, WOMEN'S, NEW ARRIVALS, and BEST SELLERS. The main headline reads "GET WHAT YOU REALLY WANTED THIS YEAR" with the subtext "USE YOUR SHINOLA GIFT CARD". Below the headline are two black Shinola gift cards. The bottom text reads: "Christmas may have come and gone, but the party's just getting started. Keep spirits merry and bright—now's the perfect time to use your Shinola gift cards to shop leather, watches, supply, and so much more for style that lasts into the New Year...and for years to come." A "SHOP NOW" button is at the bottom.



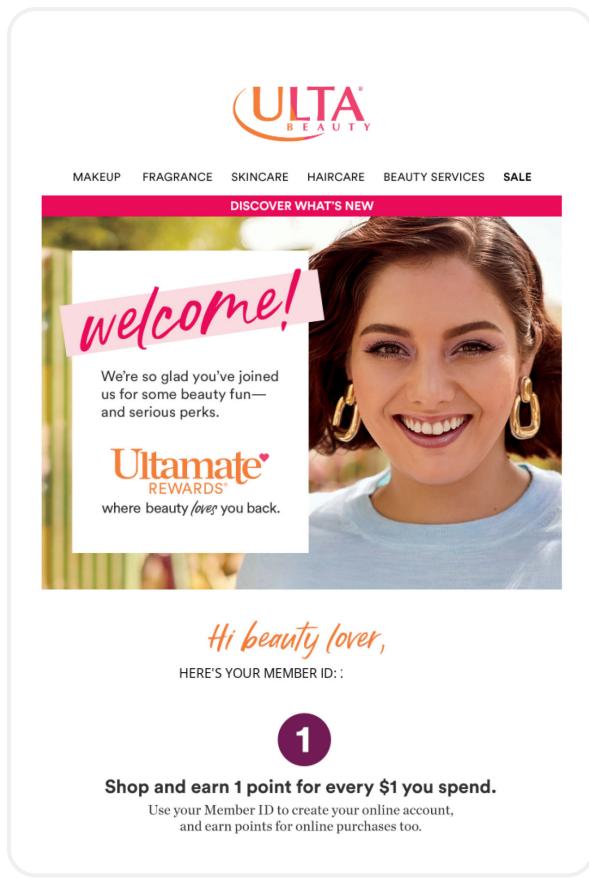
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3. Rise above the clearance cacophony in the inbox

When the after-Christmas sale emails flood customers' inboxes, yours can get attention with a fresh take that promises bargains and value in the same breath. Marine Layer's irreverent email begins with the subject line "Holiday Hangover (!)." The artwork helps it stand out because it doesn't lead off with giant discount numbers.

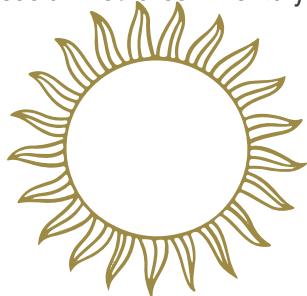


Good ideas: We like this take on post-holiday promotions because it takes a tongue-in-cheek approach to what most of us are feeling

in the moment. It might not work for your brand, but something similar – a sense of humor, or whatever will resonate with your audience – can help your Q4-oriented promotions stand out.

4. Recap the year that was

If you have the data to send personalized recaps to your customers, those are gold. RPE Origin CEO Ryan Phelan has always been a big fan of his annual American Airlines travel report. The Spotify Wrapped report generates news and social media commentary every year.



Personalized recap emails like these are popular because they show your customers how much they spent, flew, or engaged with your brand. The revelations can tell your customers things they don't know about how they purchase from you or use your services, and that news can strengthen your connection.

Good ideas: You can still send a recap worth opening if you don't have that granular data. You just have to work harder to make it relevant to your customers. Crowing about annual sales statistics might make your CEO smile, but your audience won't care that much.

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Instead, do what Health-Ade has done here and tie every part of your recap to your customers. That extra line of copy that says, “Did your fave make the Top 3?” invites the customer to make a mental calculation and draws them into the conversation. Same with naming a couple of customers in the next copy block and wrapping up with a product introduction that asks customers if it should go into the regular rotation.

5. Skip the resolutions – for now

A Q4 message looking forward to the new year doesn't have to replace your carefully planned New Year campaign. Instead, you can bridge the gap from Christmas to the New Year with a positive, holiday-tinged message that doesn't rely on the usual “New year, new you” tropes.

Momentous™



Stay Strong
All Season Long

Your immune system is under constant siege, but colder temperatures, packed schedules, and travel add to the stress.

Now is the time to strengthen your defenses before you get sick and give your body what it needs to rebuild faster if you do.

Boost Your Defenses



Good idea: That's what this message from Momentous does: Its seasonally appropriate imagery (even for people who can still lounge by the outdoor pool) is a nod to winter while encouraging customers to take stock of their health for the rugged months to come.

6. Welcome new customers

As we mentioned above, you should end the holiday season with a bunch of new customers. They might find you through receiving a gift card or searching for gifts for others, or they received one of your products as a gift. However they found you,

your job now is to keep them engaged. You can do that with a guided tour of your products, your brand, your values, and anything else that would appeal.

HEALTH-ADE

2024 Wrapped

YOUR TOP KOMBUCHA FLAVORS

Over 8.6 million people drank Health-Ade Kombucha this year! Did your fave make the top 3?

Shop Now

1 GINGER LEMON
2 CAYENNE CLEANSE
3 PINK LADY APPLE



THIS YEAR'S GLOW UP

Jared from Eureka, MO and Madeline from San Jose, CA both bought our Glow Up Variety Pack over 15 times this year. Hey besties, how's it glowing?

Shop Glow Up

WE DEBUTED A NEW SEASONAL FLAVOR: MANGO LEMONADE

And over 14,000 of you tried it! Maybe we should bring this seasonal favorite back for another go? 🍉



SUNSIP LAUNCHED THIS YEAR

Can you believe that over 1.3 million households have tried it already? 🥤 Are you one of them?

Shop SunSip

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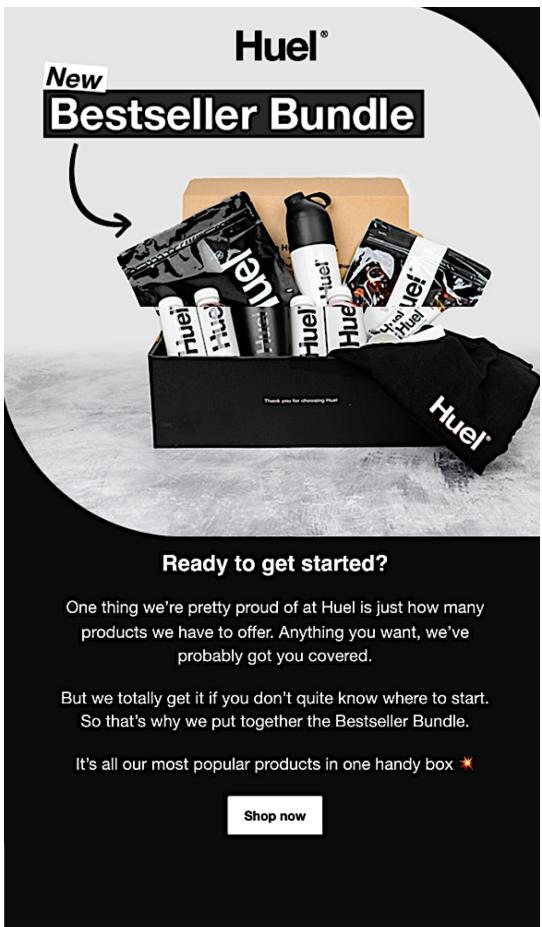
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Huel's approach will work for any brand that sells products as part of a system or group, whether they're wellness, fashion capsules, sports equipment, food and dining, and the like.

Good idea: Go for the bundle and feature it in your email! It should be intriguing enough to persuade customers to click through and investigate without requiring a sales-heavy approach.

Next steps to shape your Q5 email marketing strategy

Not everyone has the same post-holiday goals. This is important to remember as you map out your Q5 email strategy.

These strategies have one thing in common. You can achieve them all using the data you should be able to call up right now. But each one can also be made more compelling and click-worthy when you layer in personalized data so that each message you send relates directly to your customers' individual interests, motivations, and behavior.

Here are five examples:

or preference data, and redemption alerts.

2. Motivated bargain hunters can receive emails with products geared to their browse sessions, along with complementary or upsell ideas, in a coordinated format like a gift guide.
3. Business-oriented shoppers can receive special status updates letting them know when their exchange purchases ship out or when you pay their refunds.
4. Personal-improvement customers could get goal-tracking content, like a week-by-week or month-by-month guide.
5. Invite information-seekers to join your loyalty or VIP program (separately from your regular promotions) or user communities.

1 Personalized

Send gift card balances, tailored recommendations, and redemption alerts.

2 Upsell

Provide bargain-focused shoppers with curated product suggestions based on their browsing, paired with complementary or upsell items in a gift-guide style format.

3 Status

Keep business-oriented shoppers informed with clear status updates about their shipments, exchanges, and refund payments.

4 Tracking

Share goal-tracking content that supports personal-improvement customers with weekly or monthly progress guides.

5 Loyalty

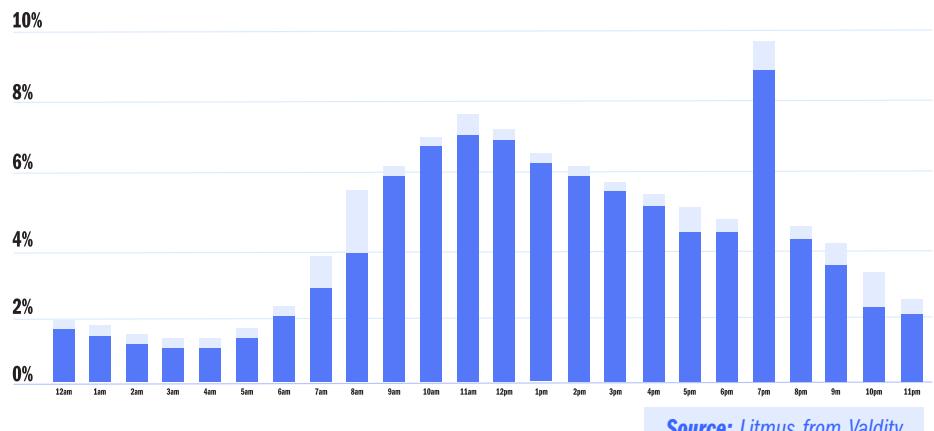
Invite information-seeking customers to join your loyalty or VIP programs or participate in user communities for deeper engagement.

One final tip: Consider a time shift

Data from Litmus shows [people change their email habits](#) during the holidays, including the Q5 period. The new optimum sending time? It's 7 p.m., when 9.45% of all opens occur.

We're not telling you to revamp your entire email schedule. Instead, take this data tidbit as a reason to check your sending data to see if your customers also change their engagement habits during the holidays.

If you notice a consistent shift, test a campaign to see if you get higher engagement and conversions from the new send time.



Source: Litmus from Validity

About RPE Origin

We are the industry's only vendor-agnostic, email-centric agency serving enterprise companies throughout their digital journey. We aim to be an indispensable partner for enterprise and agency clients who rely on email for success. Whether you need help choosing a new ESP, enhancing automated B2C or B2B customer journeys, or connecting data points across your tech stack, we help you move from simple to sophisticated to drive more revenue through email marketing.

Our team lives email every day, and that includes both email marketing and maximizing the connective tissue across all digital channels. With our customized approach and flexible services, we can do everything from one piece of the puzzle to the entire picture.



Need help with using AI to better target marketing emails?

Contact our team to get the conversation started.



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