

INSENSE

eBook

**THE DEFINITIVE Q4 SURVIVAL
GUIDE FOR DTC BRANDS**

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Which situation has more pressure?

- The fourth quarter of Game 7 of the NBA finals
- The fourth quarter of the fiscal year for DTC brands

If you're reading this as a DTC marketer, it's likely the second option...

Q4 typically brings in more revenue than any other business quarter for most DTC brands. For many eCommerce brands, Q4 is the time of the year when they first 'go into the black,' and for others, Q4 revenue surpasses all other business quarters combined.

And that doesn't happen by accident — given the proliferation of DTC brands and the immense choice consumers have in 2022, marketers can no longer rely on increased consumer spending to meet their revenue goals. DTC marketers will need a sophisticated strategy to outperform their competitors.

But Q4 2022 is... different.

It's not just competitors and consumer trends DTC brands have to contend with. We are in incredibly turbulent times in terms of global health and safety, political discourse, and of course, the economy. The stakes are higher than ever, and it's impossible for us to ignore what effect these external factors may have on our marketing strategies.

But this is no time to shrink into the shadows, throw in the towel, or fold up your business and take some cushy job in human resources. It's time to dig in and capitalize on the entrepreneurial spirit that DTC brands are famous for!

And while you're at it, we're here to help guide you through some of the difficult challenges you're likely to encounter in the next few months.

In this eBook, we're going to dissect the current market conditions, examine the data, identify opportunities, and provide new DTC marketing strategies and tactics to help you close out 2022 as strong (and profitable!) as possible.

Let's get started.

The External Economic Conditions of Q4 2022

To put it mildly, the last few years for DTC brands have been rough, and that will undoubtedly continue into Q4 2022. To close out the year, we'll be dealing with an ongoing global pandemic, international conflict, supply chain disruptions, record inflation, and continuing challenges with ad targeting and tracking.

But you've seen the news, and we're not here to recap it. We're here to help clearly identify the challenges you're about to face so you can be better prepared to overcome them and have extraordinary Q4 sales.

GDP slows and CPI predicted to grow in Q4

We'll save you the technical jargon, but here's a brief overview of the economic situation heading into Q4.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts that global economic growth will slow from 6.1% last year to 3.2% in 2022. The causes of this slowdown include tighter monetary policy and reduced household purchasing power.

Contrast this with the 'stimmy spending' boom of 2021, and we're looking at flat spending at best and a downward revision at worst. Whatever your opinions are on monetary policy, there is no doubt consumers will feel the economic consequences in their wallets.

In consumer markets, one of the primary effects retailers are feeling is churn. In fact, here are the churn increases for select categories in 2022 thus far:



Source: ProfitWell

It's going to be harder to keep customers, thus DTC marketers will need to be able to replace them with new customers at an efficient cost per acquisition. And with rising inflation, brands will likely be spending less on advertising, and therein lies your opportunity.

Cheap CPMs could mean lower CPAs

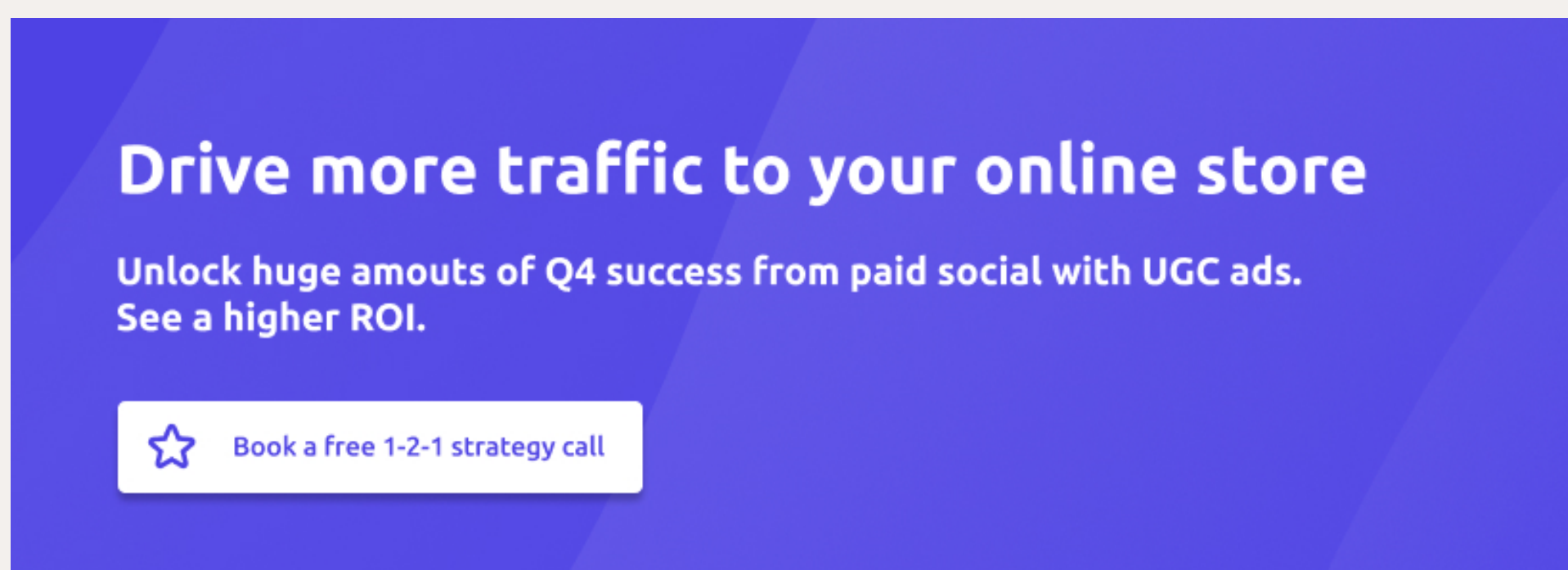
Simply put, smart DTC brands are likely about to enjoy a sale on advertising costs. We know that economic conditions have no negative effect on social media use, so there will be plenty of ad inventory for sale.

But fewer brands buying the inventory will likely drive the CPM down, and brands that are poised to run smart ad campaigns have the opportunity to add new customers at affordable acquisition costs.

Make the most of less data with more branding


Third-party cookies are basically a thing of the past, meaning advertisers can no longer count on precise targeting and retargeting methods they enjoyed. Increasingly, advertisers are exploring how to accumulate and use zero party data; **data that a customer intentionally and proactively shares with a brand.**

In a study from Forrester, 97% of marketers believe that personalized digital experiences are vitally important to their marketing programs. An additional 70% reported that growing privacy restrictions have made it more difficult to track customer journeys across channels and touchpoints.



Drive more traffic to your online store

Unlock huge amounts of Q4 success from paid social with UGC ads.
See a higher ROI.

 [Book a free 1-2-1 strategy call](#)

So how does a DTC marketer go about acquiring zero-party data? Easy, with better marketing:



Because zero-party data is entirely opt-in, brands need to open their minds to the multitude of ways they can inspire consumers to provide them with high-quality data

— stated Jake Weatherly, CEO of SheerID.

The days of pop-up boxes on your homepage converting new customers with a 10% coupon and generic abandoned cart emails are gone. It's your job to break through the digital clutter with fresh, authentic content that actually resonates with your audience.

Sure, discounts and conversion-oriented technology will still play a role in your overall strategy, but if you want to hook new customers amidst all your competition, you're going to have to find a way to connect with your audience in an original and meaningful way. We'll discuss this in depth later in this guide.

But there's one external factor that had such a direct and outsized effect on ad performance that we thought we'd discuss it in depth. That said, let's pivot to iOS 14.5...

A True YOY Comparison of iOS 14.5

iOS 14.5 launched on April 26, 2021 and wreaked havoc on the direct response advertisers.

Marketers were — quite suddenly — left in the dark in terms of conversion tracking and targeting options from Apple devices. The advertising community was in uproar on Twitter voicing their frustrations, and Facebook even took out a full page ad in the New York Times to lament the decision by Apple.

But nonetheless, Apple stuck to its decision and we've all had to deal with the following issues for over a year now:

- **Conversion tracking:** Apple users who opt out of tracking on iOS 14.5 will not be measured when they convert from your ads.
- **Delayed reporting:** No more real-time reporting on user activity, and data may be delayed for up to 3 days.
- **Event limits:** Advertisers can only use eight conversion events per domain.
- **Demographic data:** Conversion data will no longer have delivery and action breakdowns of iOS 14.5 users — age, gender, region, ad placement, etc.
- **Less retargeting:** The conversion window for iOS 14.5 is now seven days instead of 28.
- **Purchase value optimization:** 100 purchases in 7 days are now required for value optimization.

But like we said, you've already been dealing with these challenges for a year. What's interesting is that we now have a *true* year-over-year comparison of performance.

Common Thread Collective, a digital ad agency specializing in eCommerce, reports several key findings using their own YoY data for iOS 14.5. Here are a few benchmarks to consider when analyzing and forecasting your own data:

(Keep in mind this data set is a 28-day window May-June on the Facebook ad platform across many eCommerce brands)

ROAS is down -1.69%

While ROAS is not the end-all and be-all metric for paid social performance, many brands use it as a North Star for a quick check of overall campaign effectiveness. And while 1.69% isn't a huge drop, you still have to account for other CPA costs beyond just the ad spend so any drop will have downstream effects on overall ROI.

Conversion rates are down -5.87%

This insight stands out as a significant decrease in performance. While conversion rates are also driven by factors such as landing page quality, creative, etc., it's hard not to see this and suspect that less sophisticated targeting and optimization due to iOS 14.5 didn't play a substantial role in the decline.

CPMs are up +21.94%

As most experienced advertisers know, higher CPMs have negative downstream effects — the more you pay for impressions, the more you pay for conversions.

Generally, there are two causes for high CPMs:

- 1 . Sending ads to relevant yet highly competitive audience
- 2 . Sending ads to an irrelevant audience

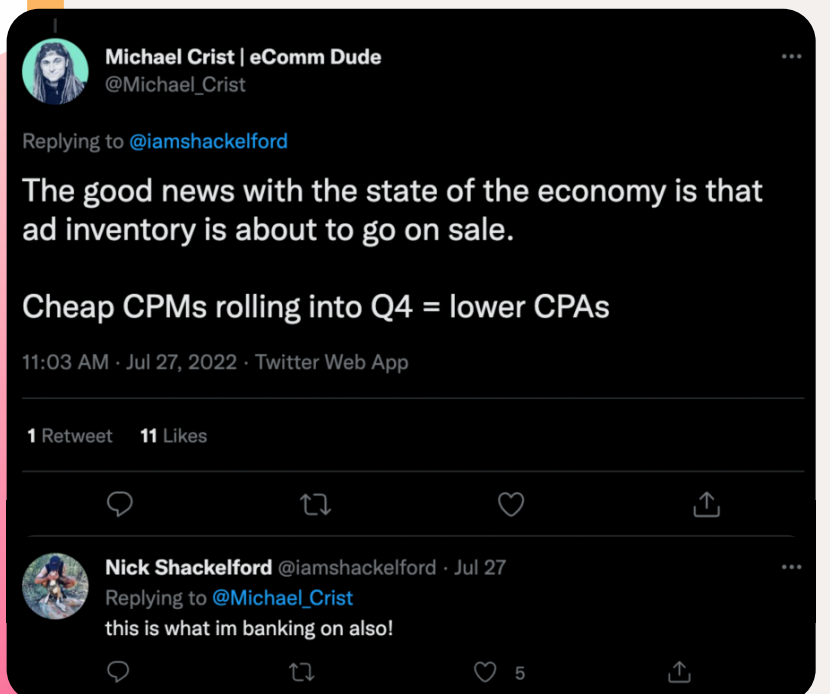
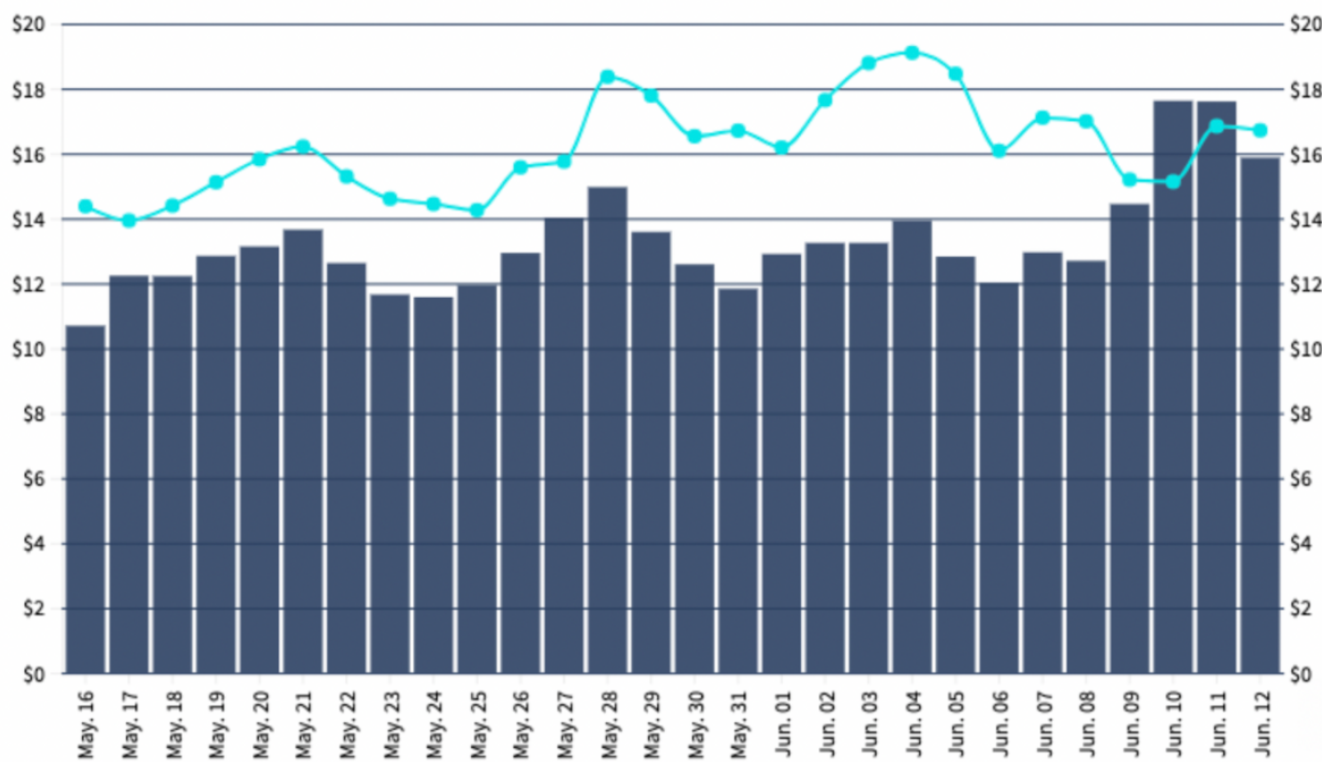
Given that Common Thread's data is spread out over multiple clients, it's almost certain the second option. Anytime there is a major change to the algorithm — such as iOS 14.5 has wrought — you can expect your targeting to be off, and therefore your CPMs to be higher. This is likely a symptom of that change.

Facebook CPM: Daily Average

+21.94% Last 28 Days YoY



2022 Avg. Facebook CPM
2021 Avg. Facebook CPM

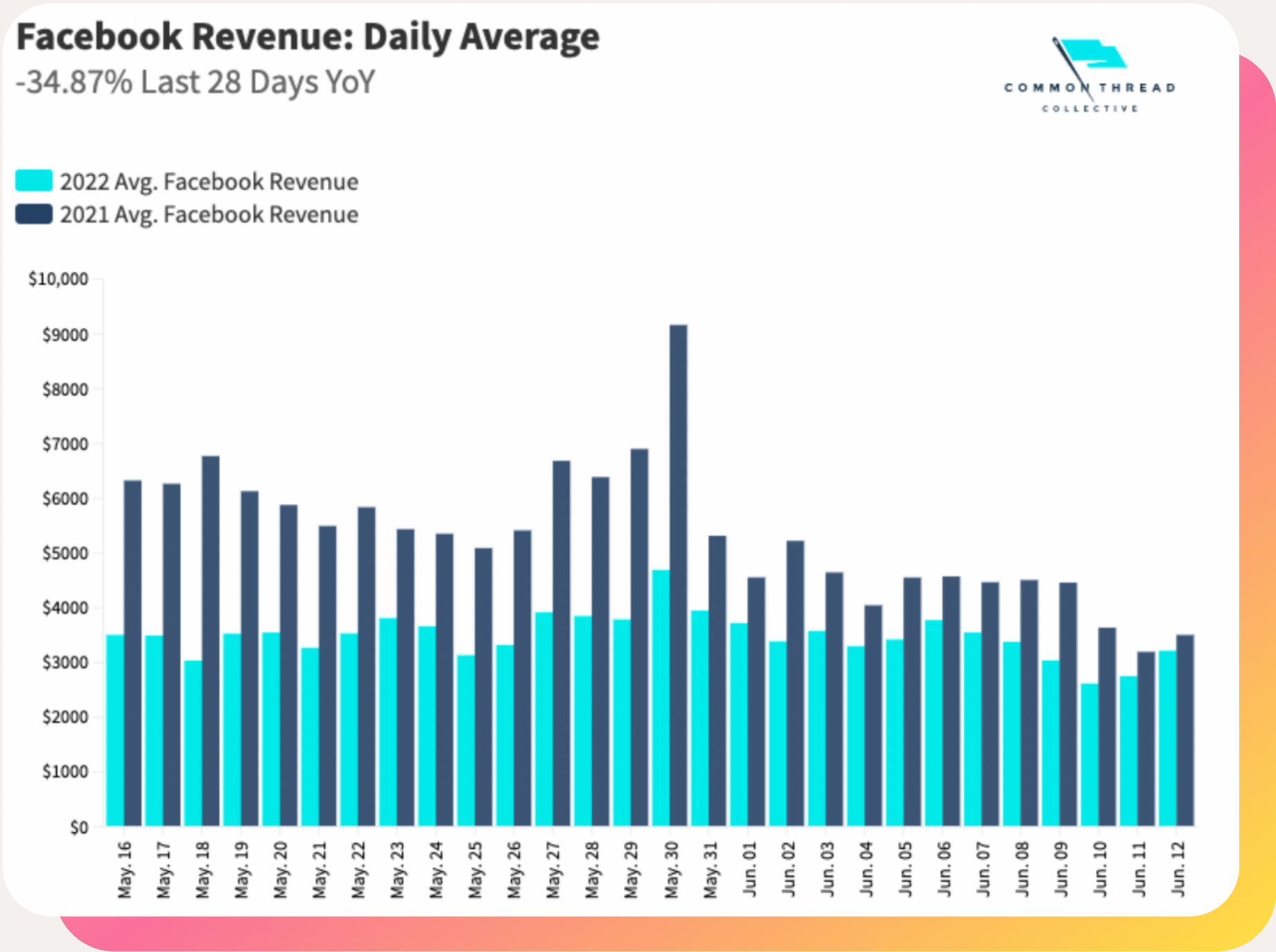


Based on what happened after IOS14, it's believed that cheap CPMs could mean lower CPAs. Essentially many industry experts are predicting that less businesses are going into survival mode which means less competition = lower CPAs.

Facebook revenue is down -34.87%

Again, another figure that stands out. While brands are likely making a lot less money due to the iOS 14.5 update, this number is likely skewed even further by the fact that there are widespread issues with revenue *attribution*.

Many brands are turning to a more advanced metric called the Marketing Efficiency Ratio (MER) that paints a more accurate picture of the value your ads are achieving for your business.



So, negative as it may be, this hopefully sheds some light on the evidence-supported effects of iOS 14.5 on Facebook ads.

**New for Q4 2022 —
9 Paid Social Opportunities
for eCommerce Brands
to Thrive**

So far we've covered quite a bit of doom and gloom, but to not raise awareness of the situation would be a disservice to our audience.

But the talk about the negative external factors is over — let's get into the fresh strategies and tactics you need to know to create killer Q4 marketing campaigns this year. Because with a little strategy and high-quality execution, your DTC brand can still have a killer Q4 season.

Let's dig in.

1. Focus your Q4 efforts on retention, not growth

As we mentioned, DTC brands are in for some challenges this Q4 — namely churn and higher-than-normal CPAs. Given this scenario, it will behoove marketers to go into survival mode by focusing their activities and budgets on retaining current customers.

There are a few specific tactics you can plan to employ this strategy:

- Retarget your customers with your promotional offers, not just new potential customers
- Use a portion of your ad budget to build your brand, not just push offers
- Engage existing customer lists with feedback questions and survey opportunities to make them feel seen

While the ROAS of these types of ads might not be as high as offer-based campaigns, extending the life cycle of existing customers is actually the more efficient way to generate revenue and fight churn in turbulent times.

2. Take time to balance your organic to paid traffic ratio

Quick — what's the total percentage of traffic to your store that's not paid? If it's less than 40%, this is likely a good time to invest in growing your organic channels.

Organic traffic (or more specifically, anything not paid such as email, referral, etc.) is much more resilient to change than paid traffic. If you've become over-reliant on paid, as many DTC brands have over the last few years, you will do well to explore the various ways of growing your organic presence.

Here are a few areas you can look for organic traffic opportunities:

- **Communities:** There are communities in every niche, and if you're not currently executing a strategy to both provide and extract value from yours, now is the time. Look for existing communities that are already full of your target market, as opposed to building one from scratch. Find a way for your brand to provide value to that community and you'll receive value in kind.
- **Email capture:** Go beyond the 10% off pop-up on your site and look to quizzes, contests, guides, or workshops to entice your site visitors to become part of your tribe. Additionally, consider using some of your ad budget to gather emails instead of purchases.
- **Treat organic like a business:** If you're unsure of the ROI of your organic channels, it's probably because you're not running it the same way you run your paid campaigns. Take a professional approach to organic traffic by setting revenue goals, measuring, and iterating on the results.

You can buy traffic, but you can also grow it.

3. Rawthenticity

Meta/Facebook believes that the two-year lockdown led to self-reflection and a pivot to ‘realness’ in a “quest for authentic that led to rawthenticity”.

People are demanding “that media and advertising be inclusive, representative and real”

The beauty and fashion industries are using more body positive/ non-binary/ LGBTQ creators to better relate to GenZ + Millenials.



4. Content is a DTC brand’s leading competitive advantage

Winning the hearts, minds, and wallets of your customers is no longer about who has the biggest budget, the largest following, or the most sophisticated targeting.

It’s about who is telling their brand story most effectively.

And by “effectively” we mean two things:

- 1 . Your content provide an experience
- 2 . Your content produce sales

Let’s tackle these one at a time.

In 2022 we have to recognize the shifting consumer habits around video — people are not only consuming more video, they’re using it for *everything*. We watch videos for entertainment, but we also watch videos for shopping, and the line between those two types of content is blurred almost beyond recognition.

Therefore, content that provides an *experience* for your customers is now your biggest competitive advantage.



Great content doesn't sell a product, it sells an opportunity to better an aspect of your life.

— Nik Sharma

Secondly, it’s important that you don't separate your content from your analytics completely. Rather, it’s never been more important to allow both practices to feed into the success of one another.

For more concrete tips and a step-by-step walkthrough of how to do this with video content, see tip #6 below.

5. Use auto-translation



New translation tools with the hope of lowering the language barrier to help bring entertaining global content to more users.

These updates will support an initial batch of languages including English, Portuguese, German, Indonesian, Italian, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish and Turkish and include:

- Auto-generated captions
- Translations for captions and video descriptions
- Translation for text sticker

6. Shoppable video ads

Two words: live commerce.

The goal of ecommerce has always been to provide the ‘full funnel’ experience in one go — brands would like people to go from click to customer in the same sitting. With traditional video ads, there is still plenty of clicks/taps between watching the video and actually purchasing the product.

With shoppable video ads, consumers can go from watching videos about an array of products directly into researching and purchasing products without leaving the video. Amazon Live, Instagram, Buywith, and Popshop Live are all examples of shoppable video platforms.

And this is no longer an emerging market — 49% of brands plan to up their investment in social commerce by the end of 2022.

If you’re already working with video and with content creators, you’ll want to look at how you can unlock this new channel for Q4 right away.

7. Build, test, and scale a UGC ads library

Whether you've been using UGC in your ad playbooks for a while or are just making the decision to start this holiday season, it's important to make a plan for scale. By creating a library of UGC, as opposed to just running a one-off collaboration, brands can enjoy several benefits:

- **Organic traffic:** As we mentioned earlier, if your organic/paid ratio is off, collaborating with content creators is one of the quickest and most efficient ways to correct that. By sourcing content from professional creators, you can 10x your organic content production without adding all the labor onto you or your staff.
- **Find new audiences:** By building a library of content from different creators, you'll be able to expose your brand to each of the different audiences of individual creators. Depending on your level of partnership with the creator, you may even be able to gain deep insights about the demographics of their followers that will help guide your overall marketing strategy.
- **Ad testing:** Ad optimization has shifted from audience to creative—if you're not testing multiple ad formats (video/image), styles (product/lifestyle), and things like color, you're not going to be able to compete with brands that are.

The quickest, easiest, and most effective way to build a massive library of UGC is to build a creator program with a platform like [Insense](#).

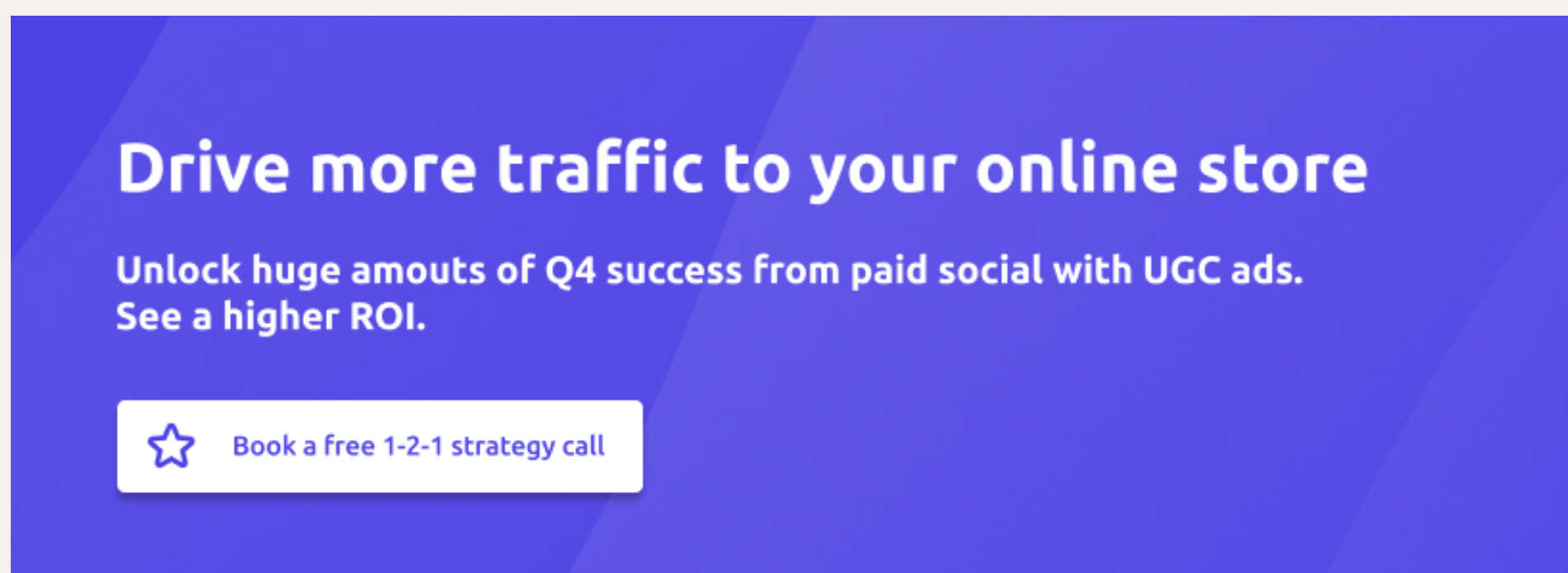
8. Use iterative creative to understand purchase behavior

Most people understand the overarching concept of optimizing creative to attain better results for your ad campaigns, but few have an actual playbook for how to rapidly conduct this process in a short amount of time on a shoestring budget. Luckily, one of our customers, The Snow Agency, shared their method with us.

It goes like this:

- 1 . Find a handful of creators and hire them for a brand collaboration. Give them a creative brief, but allow for freedom of expression.
- 2 . Turn the content into ads and release them onto a platform like TikTok with the **same ad budget and the same targeting**. The Snow Agency used \$150 budgets for each ad.
- 3 . While you're unlikely to see tons of sales on this first batch, the data is what you're looking for. Dissect each video frame-by-frame to understand which parts of the story resonated with the audience by their view and engagement metrics.
- 4 . **Conduct Creative Iteration #1:** Using the data from the first campaigns, re-arrange the elements in the videos and write new creative briefs. Send those briefs out to your creators and watch the new, optimized content roll in. Tip — use existing creators but also a new batch of creators. Now that you know the story structure that works
- 5 . **Conduct Creative Iteration #2:** Don't throw out your first batch of creative! Consider putting together 'mash-up' edits of the video content based on the viewership/engagement data you received. You can use various clips and still images from different creators and stitch them together along your new storyline.

There you have it — a simple method you can run in under a week with less than \$500 to find the exact storyline that creates purchases.



9. TikTok vs Facebook

Unless you've been under a rock for the last year, you've already seen the explosive growth TikTok has seen as a platform. And while the growth of its user base alone should give advertisers plenty of reason to run Q4 campaigns on the platform, there is plenty of ad performance data to solidify its use case.

But before you abandon your Facebook plans to go all in on TikTok, there are several key points you need to understand:

- **The algorithm:** Experienced DTC marketers know the chance of your ad campaigns 'going viral' on Facebook are slim to none. There's so much competition for ad space and organic content that the more mature algorithm of Facebook tends to balance out even the best-performing campaigns before they go viral. No so on TikTok — the algorithm is still in its early stages and provides a massive opportunity for truly unique and resonant content (organic or paid) to spread like wildfire.
- **Lower CPA on TikTok:** According to data from Triple Whale, brands tend to achieve lower CPAs than they do on Facebook.
- **Higher ROAS and AOV on Facebook:** From the same Triple Whale source, advertisers generally report higher ROAS and basket size on Facebook. This might be an issue with TikTok attribution, which is far less sophisticated than Facebook. But more likely, this is due to the fact that TikTok users seem to gravitate to lower cost, spur-of-the-moment purchases.
- **Content style:** Most importantly, it's vital to recognize that the style of content on each platform is vastly different. While Facebook content tends to have a more polished look, TikTok thrives off more raw and authentic-looking content — basically, the content looks like it's been recorded on a phone and edited using the platform's own features. Pro tip — *do not* simply re-purpose your existing Facebook content for TikTok. Spend some time on the platform and create content that matches its unique tone and style.

Additionally, TikTok Spark Ads provide a seamless way for advertisers to test organic content before scaling it into successful ad campaigns, but we'll cover that in-depth in the next section.

10. Making your eCommerce business antifragile

As a DTC brand, it's no fun being slapped around by seasonal highs and lows like a tiny boat in rough seas. At some point, you'd like to have stability for your brand so that you're not always in fight or flight mode.

The solution is to make your brand antifragile — able to withstand economic volatility while continuing to deliver solid profit. And while it's certainly no easy task and it's not going to happen overnight, here are a few business areas you can bolster to help your brand achieve antifragility.

Get clarity on your gross profit margin: ROAS, MER, and CLTV are great metrics to track, but if you want to solidify the financial foundation for your brand, you need to start looking at (and optimizing) your gross profit margin.

The formula for gross profit margin is:

$$(\text{Sales Revenue} - \text{Cost of Delivery}) / \text{Sales Revenue} = \text{Gross Margin}$$

The greater your gross margin, the more money you make each time you acquire a new customer. For reference, you're looking for a gross margin that's at least 65%.

One way to increase gross margin is to orient your marketing efforts around customer ascension. To do this, analyze your ecommerce data and find orders that happen most often within a given price range. Track their journey through the marketing funnel and implement tactics to drive them toward higher-margin products at your store.

Another way to increase gross margin is to raise prices (duh), but this must be done with care because raising your prices too high is a guaranteed way to kill your conversion rates. Test price increases throughout your site while keeping a close eye on conversion rates. You can use a Shopify app like Dexter to help you set up A/B tests that isolate the pricing variable and give you useful insights.

Balancing organic vs. paid traffic: We've already mentioned this earlier, but we want to underscore the importance of building your organic traffic. A steady stream of growing organic traffic can help you become less reliant on ads, and therefore less likely to see massive revenue drop offs when the next external factor like iOS 14.5 comes along...

You're shooting to have more than half of your total traffic coming from non-paid channels.

Raise your 60-Day Customer Lifetime Value: Earlier in this guide we mentioned that this year you should be focusing on retention, not acquisition. But because we know you're still going to acquire new customers during Q4, one of the best ways to solidify your business is to increase incremental revenue after their first purchase. The metric you're looking to track is 60-day customer lifetime value, and the formula is as follows:

$$\text{60-Day LTV \%} = \frac{\text{Average 60-Day Additional Customer Revenue}}{\text{Average First Order Value}}$$

This represents the Additional revenue you can generate from customers within 60 days after purchase, which is expressed as a percent increase over first-purchase AOV.

The quickest way to increase your 60-day CLTV is through cross-sells and up-sells. Since we know that almost everyone opens transactional emails, this is a great place to slip in these tactics.

Pro tip — your upsells will work much better if you can use your sales data to pick supplemental products that have a natural fit. Additionally, if your product is historically a one-time purchase, like a yo-yo, consider creating new products that have a shorter shelf life. In the yo-yo example, this might be a pack of strings or a maintenance kit.

Aim for a 60-day CLTV of at least 30%.

Use multiple distribution channels: If you haven't already, it's time to truly embrace omnichannel as a reality of eCommerce purchase. Even if consumers discover your brand on your website, they may still check Amazon for availability because they are familiar with the platform — their credit card is saved there, they have a Prime membership, etc.

You should have at least two established distribution channels for your brand.

That said, here are a few channels you'll want to explore for Q4 of this year.

- **Amazon:** Perhaps an obvious statement, but if you've been waiting to sell on Amazon, now is the time. Become familiar with conducting business on Amazon and don't be afraid to point your PPC ads to an Amazon listing for search queries that specifically list "amazon" in the keyword.
- **Wholesale:** While you won't have as much control or as much data as you would with an owned retail channel, wholesale opportunities can help you build volume, expand reach, and increase brand recognition.
- **Corporate:** Some of your shoppers might also work at large corporations and might view your product as a good fit for their holiday gift programs. For these people, create a page on your website that allows them to reach out to a salesperson on your team to negotiate terms for bulk orders.

As we said, Q4 of 2022 is just different, and you'll need to embrace some new strategies and tactics in order to survive. We hope this list sheds some light on some lesser-known ways to create a stronger and more resilient DTC brand.

Black Friday + Cyber Monday: Best Practices for 2022

We all know that overall Q4 performance is heavily dependent on how well your brand does during the promotional period known as Black Friday / Cyber Monday (BFCM).

We've spent a lot of time talking about customer retention and upsell, but we understand that it's vital for DTC brands to acquire new customers and drive sales volume during this period of increased consumer spending. That said, let's take a closer look at some strategies you can use on the major social networks — TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook.

12 ad types to test for BFCM

Before we get into platform-specific best practices, take a look at this list of different ad types you can test for inspiration. Do you see any that could work for your brand?

- 1. Before & After** - Use your video to show how your product transforms the user. **Be especially careful with this video format because Facebook's ad policies prohibit its use around personal health such as weight loss, exercise, etc.*
- 2. Hybrid** - Cut your video to include still images for added effect. You can combine this tactic with others on the list.
- 3. Mashup** - Combine several different video clips to cover an area of topics. You can often see this type of video using multiple testimonials.
- 4. Reaction** - A crowd favorite, reaction videos work really well with well-known influencers and content creators. If your product can elicit an exciting reaction, all the better!
- 5. Review** - Generally more informative than a reaction video, a review will give skeptical consumers hard evidence that your product lives up to your claims.
- 6. Screen Record** - Some things are just better on mobile, and screen record videos allow you to contextualize your ads to mobile. Plus, you can even use Zoom to record them.
- 7. Testimonial** - Social proof makes a huge impact upon consumer decision-making so you should definitely include some testimonials from your best customers. The more specific, the better.
- 8. Text Overlay** - Some videos are completely driven by the story that's told in text. You can see examples of these types of videos on TikTok and Instagram Reels regularly.
- 9. Unboxing** - It's like Christmas! For somebody else... However peculiar the trend might be, unboxing videos can be particularly effective UGC, especially when combined with reaction or testimonial videos.
- 10. How-to** - Sometimes it's better to show, not tell. How-to videos are a great way to show how your product actually solves the problem that the audience has.
- 11. Us vs. Them** - Feel free to use a little friendly competition between you and rival brands while pointing out the various differences (hopefully in your favor!) between the two products. Split screens work great here.

Best practices for TikTok during BFCM

Here are a few fresh strategies to ensure your TikTok ads are optimized for sales.

Spark Ads: While not necessarily new, Spark Ads from TikTok continue to be one of our favorite features for DTC brands on the platform.

Spark Ads are a native ad format on TikTok that enables brands to leverage organic posts that are already trending. It gives brands 2 choices when publishing ads:

- Using their brand's own TikTok account's content
- Using organic posts by other content creators on TikTok (with their authorization)

There are a few key reasons why Spark Ads are perfect for the BFCM promotional period:

1. **Your brand will generate better performance results.** Spark Ads are native and blend in easily with the TikTok vibe. So they also perform better than other ad types. Data from TikTok shows that when Spark ads are used, there is a boost in video views, engagement, and conversion metrics.
2. **Spark Ads help you balance organic performance.** When an organic post gets turned into a Spark ad, the paid video views are added on top of the organic video views. This makes the video even more popular in reach and visibility. Plus, a Spark Ad drives users to the poster's profile instead of a landing page. This is a great opportunity to grow your brand's community and fanbase on TikTok, which is the kickoff point for stronger relationships and succeeding touchpoints.
3. **You're using proven content.** Boosting popular content is a fast and great way to maximize the potential of your brand's reach. This will also be a great tool for marketers who are not yet familiar with TikTok ads or startups who may not have the resources to produce original material.

TikTok Shopping: As we mentioned earlier, live commerce is the future of eCommerce, and TikTok has recently released a new feature called TikTok Shopping to bring this to life in the U.S. market, having already done so successfully in China.

TikTok Shopping is still in pilot form, but if you're one of the brands with access, there are some interesting opportunities.

DTC brands looking to sell directly on TikTok have two options:

- Direct Integration
- Partner Integration

With the direct integration, TikTok offers a truly native shopping experience — product discovery, detail pages, management, shipping, billing, purchases, and returns all happen directly on TikTok. Brands and sellers can manage their accounts through the TikTok Seller Center and Affiliate Center.

Shoppers will discover products from brands' or creators' accounts via their Livestream, feed content, and Showcase. And when users decide to purchase, their entire checkout flow will happen on TikTok.

With the partner integration, DTC brand owners will use their existing eCommerce platforms (Shopify, etc.) and create product catalogs that sync with their TikTok Business account. While the discovery experience will remain the same as the direct integration, the checkout process will happen off TikTok on the brand's eCommerce platform.

For brands and sellers who have access to TikTok Shopping, it's definitely worth testing to see if a native checkout process has an effect on conversion rates and sales.

Auto-generated captions and translation: In 2021, TikTok launched their auto-caption feature in order to make their video content accessible to a wider audience. In July of 2022, it added the ability to translate these captions into multiple different languages with artificial intelligence. The languages that are available are:

- English
- Portuguese
- German
- Indonesian
- Italian
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Spanish
- Turkish

If your brand is global, consider pairing this new auto-translation feature with targeted ad sets in their respective countries. By organizing your campaigns in this manner, you will be able to see if you're able to drive volume or attain a lower CPA based on the region you're targeting, and because of the translation, your ads should be more effective in their native language.

Best practices for Instagram during BFCM

Most DTC marketers have plenty of experience with Instagram, so we're not here to rehash the basics. In 2022, however, there are some new angles that you need to be aware of in order to compete at the highest level.

Let's jump into several fresh ideas about how to squeeze more value out of your Instagram accounts in Q4.

Reel 'em in: It's no secret that Instagram has seen the success of TikTok and basically made a competitive feature that is... essentially a clone. Of course, we're talking about reels.

Recently, Instagram has released a few key updates to Reels:

- Any video post under 15 minutes will now automatically become a reel
- Users can now use Remix to edit public content by adding reactions, audio, etc.
- Reels now have templates to make it easier for creators to create content in line with viral trends
- Reels can now be boosted* like other content formats

***Note** — To be eligible for advertising, reels must be shorter than 60 seconds and have a 9:16 aspect ratio. Reels that use third party IP — such as copyrighted music, GIFs, interactive stickers or camera filters in a reel — are ineligible to become ads.

The fact that all of these updates happened over the summer in 2022 is a signal that Instagram is going all in on reels, and you should, too. This is because brands that adopt the preferred method of using the platform will likely be rewarded by the algorithm, as they have in the past with other product updates like Stories.

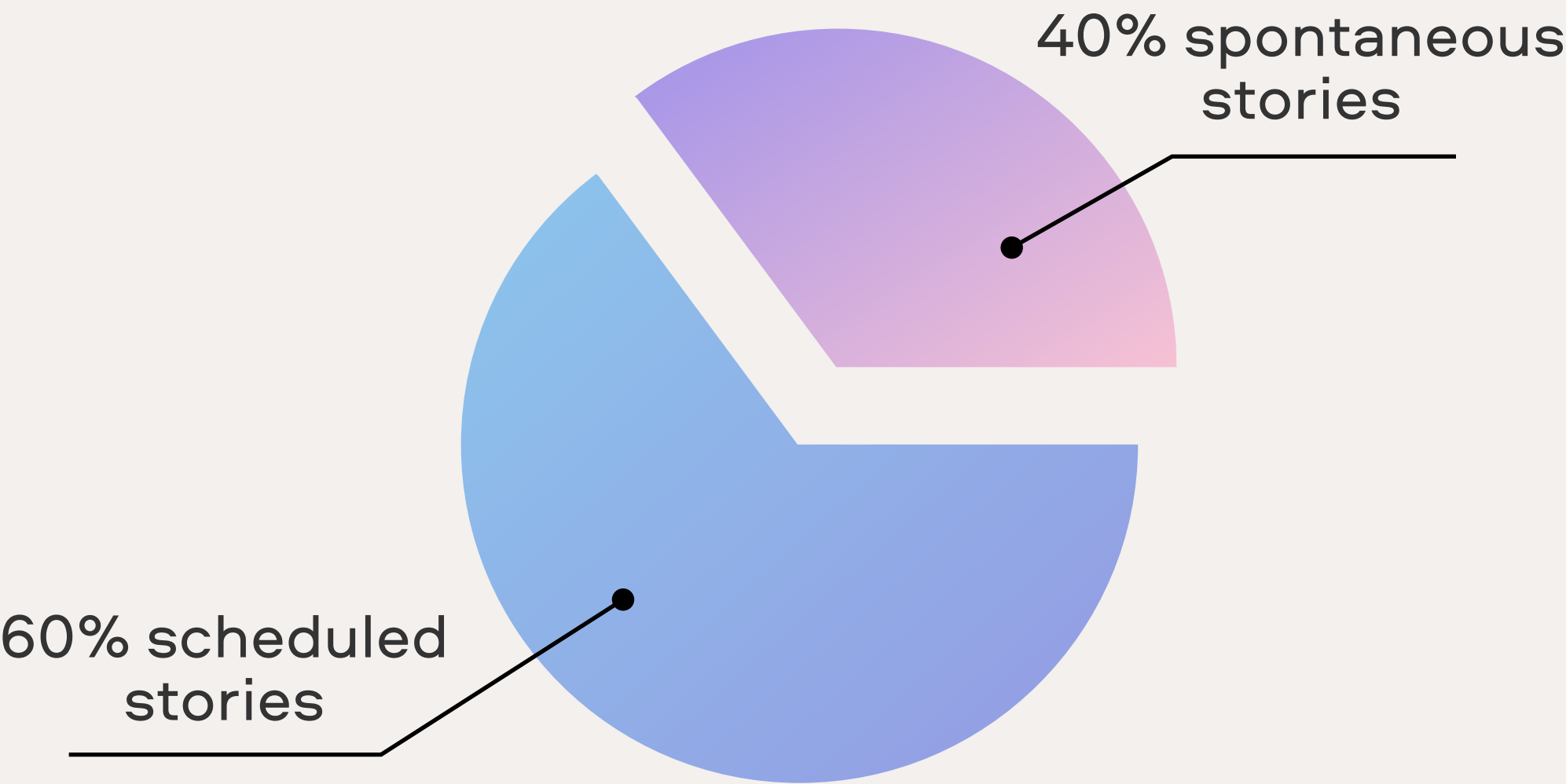
Make absolutely sure that reels are a part of your creative strategy going into Q4.

Post in the moment: As social content continues to move toward a more authentic style, content that is created in a brand vacuum no longer performs as well as content based on real-time trends. Brands that are able to flex their campaigns to include both real-time and planned advertising campaigns will be rewarded, especially when it comes to organic content. Natália Camargo of @ESTILO4OLHOS says it best:



A key to success with stories is to see what’s trending THAT day. You need to look out into the world and see what’s happening so you don’t fall behind on your message or say something insensitive. A split of 60% scheduled and 40% spontaneous stories is a good balance.

— Natália Camargo of @ESTILO4OLHOS



Ask your audience: Another great way to find out what type of content to create is simply to ask your audience. Instagram Stories provide tools like polls and stickers that allow brands to find out exactly what type of content their followers want to see more of.

There is an added effect to this technique in that the posts where you poll your audience will not only generate insight you can use, but also engagement that the Instagram algorithm will look upon favorably when assessing your profile.

Use Instagram Direct: We haven't spent much time on customer service in this guide, but if you've been in the DTC space more than a day you know exactly how important it is to your success — especially when you're still growing.

By creating more organic content via Stories and Reels and increasing your advertising efforts, you will no doubt increase your user engagements. This is a good thing, of course, but it can also lead to increased questions and customer support. Ignore these at your peril!

Instagram Direct gives you a great way to streamline these engagements by housing all your Instagram post comments and story interactions into a single inbox. Additionally, you can create automated responses for your FAQs so your followers and potential customers can get answers even faster, while also saving your team some time.

Don't forget that a positive customer experience can create additional sales opportunities in the future.

Instagram Shopping: As we mentioned earlier, shoppable video ads provide another potentially extremely valuable variable to test with your ad campaigns:

Does allowing your customers to buy without leaving Instagram have an effect on conversion rates or sales volume?

Since Q4 of 2022 is all about survival, we feel brands would be remiss not to take advantage of the platforms offer to make the purchase process easier for customers. You can further optimize Instagram shopping by setting up collections that will help your shoppers discover similar and related products, thus increasing the chances of converting a sale.

If you haven't already, make sure to upload your Product Catalogs (natively or via an integration with your ecommerce platform) and use Product Tags so that the items in your feed contain the pertinent info (price, size, availability, etc.) that consumers will want to know anyway.

Conclusion

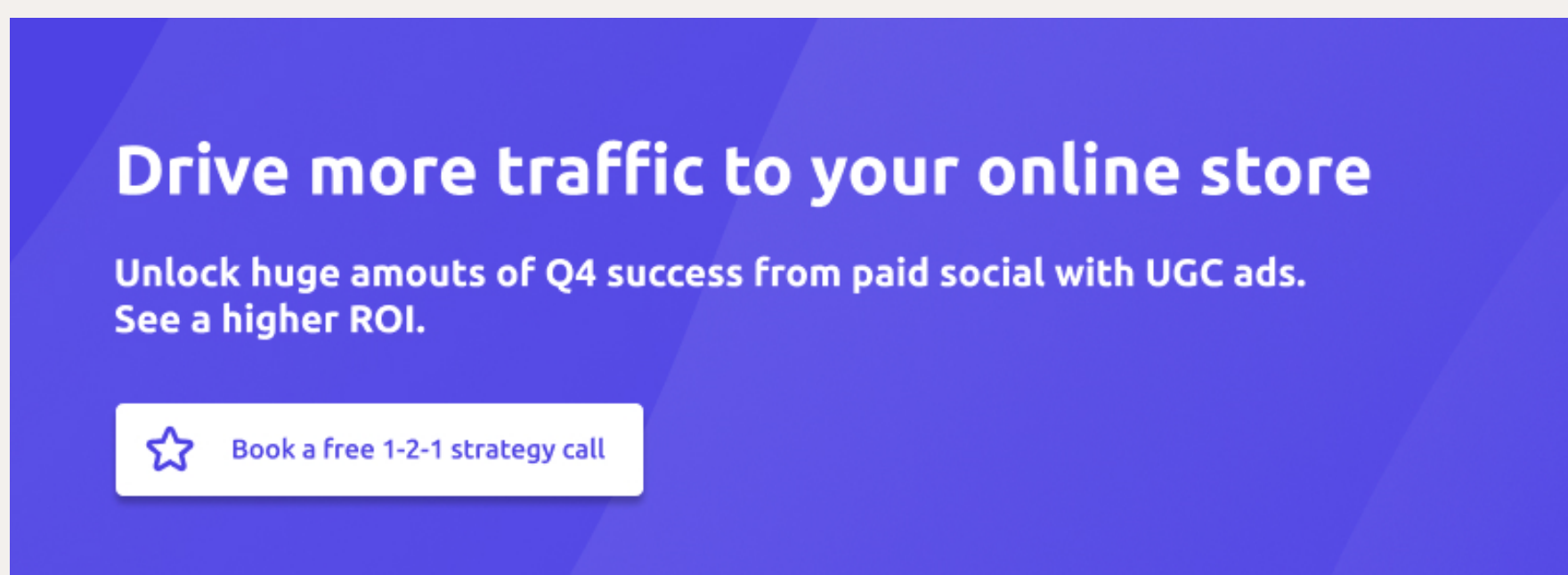
So there you have it — extraordinary marketing opportunities to match extraordinary times!

We hope you enjoyed this guide to surviving Q4 of 2022 with paid and organic social, but more importantly, we hope you do something with it. We wish you tons of success and all the ROAS you can handle!

If you're looking for ways to connect with vetted, experienced content creators to obtain a variety of UGC for use in your paid social campaigns, we invite you to check out Insense.

Insense is a creator marketing platform helping brands scale their authentic, mobile-first video and image production through their network of influential and vetted content creators. If you're a DTC marketer or just looking to bring in new customers, Insense can be your one-stop-shop to source testimonials, unboxings, product demonstrations, and other content, while providing its full digital copyright, so you can leverage it via paid ads to reach wider audiences

And if you're looking for an extra spark in your ad performance, Insense has a one-click influencer whitelisting solution, enabling you to run ads that appear as if they are coming directly from an influencer.

A promotional banner for Insense with a blue background and white text. The main headline is 'Drive more traffic to your online store'. Below it is a sub-headline: 'Unlock huge amounts of Q4 success from paid social with UGC ads. See a higher ROI.' At the bottom is a white button with a star icon and the text 'Book a free 1-2-1 strategy call'.

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