RISER MEDIA GROUP WORKSHOP

HOLIDAY MARKETING PLAYBOOK

WITH CHARLOTTE CARSON

RISER MEDIA GROUP

Q4 2026

THE Q4 RUNWAY

PHASE ONE

BUILD

Aug – Sep

Decide the offers. Grow the list. Fix the tracking.

PHASE TWO

WARM

October

Tease. Build the VIP list. Run cheap prospecting.

PHASE THREE

PEAK

Nov 23 – 30

BFCM. Highest volume, highest cost, everything pre-built.

PHASE FOUR

PUSH

Dec 1 – 24

Gifting, deadlines, last-minute. Urgency does the work.

PHASE FIVE

RECOVER

Dec 26 – Jan

Redemption, retention, clearance. The quietly profitable part.

Phases one and five are where the margin is. Phases three and four are where the noise is.

PHASE ONE · AUGUST – SEPTEMBER

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

01 Lock your offers and your margin floor

02 Grow email and SMS lists while clicks are cheap

03 Fix tracking, pixels and conversion events now

04 Shoot holiday creative before you need it

05 Order inventory, gift cards and packaging

LIVE WELL AESTHETICS & WELLNESS

Price the buy-3-get-1 package against treatment cost.
Adds a front-desk iPad signup and a “holiday list” tag in Mailchimp.
Books the photographer for gift-card and treatment-room stills.

Goal by Oct 1:
1,200 email contacts, 400 SMS opt-ins.

Retail & restaurant: same work, swap gift cards for pre-fixed menus and catering slots.

PHASE TWO · OCTOBER

WARM THE AUDIENCE

01 Open a VIP early-access list - the single best Q4 asset

02 Run cheap prospecting to build retargeting pools

03 Tease the offer without announcing the discount

04 Build and test every Mailchimp segment and journey

05 Warm the list with two sends so November isn’t a cold start

LIVE WELL AESTHETICS & WELLNESS

Emails past clients: “Our holiday packages open to the VIP list first, reply YES to be on it.” No price, no date.
Runs $15/day on a Reels ad to a 10-mile radius.

Result: 260 VIPs tagged before a single offer goes out.

A reply-to-join VIP list works in every vertical and costs nothing to run.

PHASE THREE · NOVEMBER 23 – 30

PEAK WEEK

MON NOV 23

VIP EARLY ACCESS

Offer live for tagged VIPs only. Email + SMS.

FRI NOV 27

BLACK FRIDAY

Public launch. Two emails, one SMS.

SAT NOV 28

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

Local story, owner on camera, in-person incentive.

MON NOV 30

CYBER MONDAY

Final call. Last-chance SMS at 6pm converts hardest.

Everything ships on a schedule built by Friday, November 20 . Peak week is for answering the phone, not writing emails.

Service businesses: sell the appointment for January, not the treatment for December.

PHASE FOUR · DECEMBER 1 – 24

PUSH TO THE DEADLINE

01 Switch the message from deals to gifting

02 Green Monday (known as Cyber Monday 2), Dec 14 - mid-month volume spike

03 Publish shipping cutoffs loudly and everywhere

04 After the cutoff, sell gift cards, they never miss a shipping date

05 Dec 22 - 24 is the highest-urgency window of the year

TYPICAL SHIP CUTOFFS

Ground	Fri Dec 18
Two-day	Tue Dec 22
Overnight	Wed Dec 23
Digital gift card	Dec 25, 11:59pm

Cutoffs are typical for recent years — confirm with your carriers each season.

PHASE FIVE · DECEMBER 26 – JANUARY

RECOVER THE MARGIN

01 Chase gift card redemptions - book it, don’t bank it

02 Convert December one-timers into January members

03 Run New Year clearance on what didn’t move

04 Ask for reviews and referrals while goodwill is high

05 Write the debrief in January, not next August

LIVE WELL AESTHETICS& WELLNESS

Every gift-card buyer gets a Jan 2 email: “Book before Jan 31 and add a free add-on.” Package buyers get a membership offer priced at their fourth visit.

January becomes the second-best month, not the hangover.

Unredeemed gift cards are a liability on your books and a lost relationship in your CRM.

KEY DATES Q4 2026

SEP 1 – 30	Offers locked, creative shot, tracking verified
OCT 1	VIP early-access list opens
FRI NOV 20	All peak-week sends built and scheduled
MON NOV 23	VIP early access goes live
FRI NOV 27	Black Friday - public launch
SAT NOV 28	Small Business Saturday - the local anchor
MON NOV 30	Cyber Monday - final call, 6pm SMS
MON DEC 14	Green Monday & Free Shipping Day
FRI DEC 18	Ground shipping cutoff - switch to gift cards
THU DEC 24	Digital gift card push - highest urgency of the year
SAT JAN 2	Redemption & membership campaign opens
SUN JAN 31	Redemption deadline, clearance closes, debrief written

YOUR Q4 CALENDAR

WORKSHEET · EXAMPLE

PHASE	DATES	WHAT I'M DOING	CHANNEL
BUILD	Aug 15 – Sep 30	Price the buy-3-get-1, shoot creative, iPad signup at front desk	In-clinic, Mailchimp forms
WARM	Oct 1 – Nov 20	Open VIP list, two warm sends, $15/day local Reels ad	Email, Meta, Reels
PEAK	Nov 23 – 30	VIP access Mon, public Fri, local story Sat, final call Mon 6pm	Email, SMS, Meta
PUSH	Dec 1 – 24	Gift-card gifting story, Dec 14 spike, Dec 22–24 digital cards	Email, SMS, Reels
RECOVER	Dec 26 – Jan 31	Redemption chase, membership offer, referral credit	Email, SMS

YOUR Q4 CALENDAR

WORKSHEET · YOUR TURN

PHASE	DATES	WHAT I'M DOING	CHANNEL
BUILD			
WARM			
PEAK			
PUSH			
RECOVER			

DISCOUNT OR VALUE-ADD

DISCOUNT

20% off · BOGO · tiered spend thresholds

Moves volume fast and needs no explanation

Clears slow inventory before year end

Competes head-on when everyone is discounting

Costs margin every single time and teaches your list to wait for the sale.

VALUE-ADD

Free add-on · bonus session · upgraded tier · gift with purchase

Holds your price and your positioning

Bonus costs you wholesale, not retail

Gives a reason to buy now without a countdown clock

Needs better copy and better creative, the value isn’t a number on a sticker.

Whichever you choose, decide your margin floor before November and write it down.

YOUR OFFER LADDER

WORKSHEET · EXAMPLE

GOOD · ENTRY

$150 gift card

Add $25 bonus credit when purchased before Dec 14.

New names into the list

BETTER · ANCHOR

Buy 3, get 1 free

Four-treatment package, prepaid. Bonus session redeemable through March.

Books Q1 and protects price

BEST · PREMIUM

Annual membership

Monthly treatment, member pricing on retail, one free guest pass to gift.

Makes the anchor look easy

Referral credit runs across all three: $50 to the client, $50 to the friend, no discount on the service itself.

YOUR OFFER LADDER

WORKSHEET · YOUR TURN

GOOD · ENTRY

ITS JOB:

BETTER · ANCHOR

ITS JOB:

BEST · PREMIUM

ITS JOB:

My margin floor (lowest acceptable profit % or $) this season: _____

TEN CAMPAIGNS TO RUN

01	VIP early-access window	Email + SMS · Nov 23
02	Twelve days of offers	Email + Reels · Dec 1–12
03	Gift guide by recipient	Email + landing page · Nov
04	Small Business Saturday local story	Organic + email · Nov 28
05	Shipping-deadline countdown	Email + site banner · Dec
06	Local pop-up or sip-and-shop night	In person · early Dec
07	Refer-a-friend holiday credit	Email · all season
08	Staff picks, one face per day	Reels + Stories · Dec
09	Last-minute digital gift card blitz	SMS + email · Dec 22–24
10	New Year booking & membership push	Email + SMS · Jan 2

Circle two you could run this year with the team and creative you already have.

VIP EARLY ACCESS

01 **Open the list in October**

Reply-to-join, form, or a checkbox at checkout. Tag them in Mailchimp.

02 **Give them 48 hours of real advantage**

Same offer, earlier. Or a bonus that disappears at public launch.

03 **Sell out the limited tier before Friday**

Public launch then has genuine scarcity to announce.

04 **Keep the segment for next year**

A VIP list compounds. It is the one asset that gets cheaper every season.

If you do one thing from today, do this one.

WHY IT WORKS

You move revenue out of the most expensive week of the year into a week when media costs nothing, because you are mailing people who already know you.

Cost to run: two emails and one text.

THE Q4 SEND CALENDAR

OCTOBER

VIP list invitation

Gift guide teaser

Re-engagement to lapsed

3 emails · 0 SMS

NOVEMBER

Offer announcement

VIP early access (+ SMS)

Black Friday launch × 2

Small Business Saturday

Cyber Monday final call (+ SMS)

6 emails · 2 SMS

DECEMBER

Gifting guide, full list

Green Monday, Dec 14

Ship deadline warning, Dec 17

Gift cards, Dec 22 (+ SMS)

Last chance, Dec 24 (+ SMS)

5 emails · 2 SMS

JANUARY

Redemption reminder, Jan 2

Membership / booking offer

Clearance to engaged

Redemption deadline, Jan 28

4 emails · 1 SMS

Eighteen emails, five texts - but every send is segmented, so no one receives all of them.

Benchmark reference: Mailchimp all-industry email averages. Compare against your own account, not the industry.

SMS COMPLIANCE

01 Explicit opt-in - a separate checkbox, never bundled with email

02 State who you are, what you'll send, and how often at signup

03 STOP to opt out in the first message and honor it immediately

04 Send between 9am and 7pm in the recipient's time zone

05 Keep your consent records - Mailchimp timestamps them for you

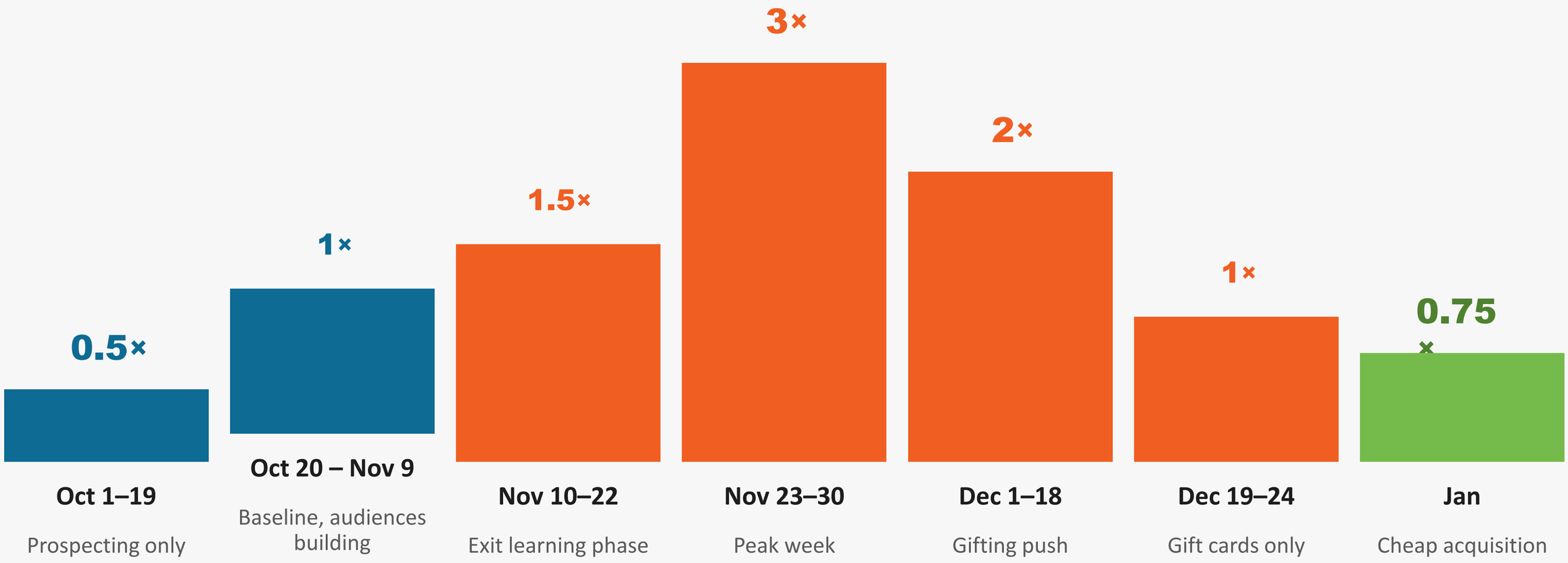
RULE OF THUMB

Two to four texts per month, maximum. SMS is a tap on the shoulder, use it for deadlines and early access, not for newsletters.

Not legal advice. Check current requirements for your state and industry before launch.

A clean, consented list of 400 beats a risky list of 4,000.

THE RAMP-UP



Multiples of your baseline weekly spend, works at $500 a week or $5,000 a week.

YOUR Q4 BUDGET

WORKSHEET · EXAMPLE

CHANNEL	SHARE	NOVEMBER
Paid social	40%	$3,200
Creative & production	20%	$1,600
Email & SMS (Mailchimp)	15%	$1,200
Local & events	15%	$1,200
January reserve	10%	$800
TOTAL	100%	$8,000

LIVE WELL'S TWO NUMBERS

Break-even ROAS (return on ad spend)	1.7×
Max cost per package sale	$720
Baseline weekly spend	$650
Peak week (3×)	$1,950

YOUR Q4 BUDGET

WORKSHEET · YOUR TURN

CHANNEL	SHARE	NOVEMBER
Paid social		
Creative & production		
Email & SMS (Mailchimp)		
Local & events		
January reserve		
TOTAL		

MY TWO NUMBERS

My gross margin %

Break-even ROAS (1 ÷ margin)

Max cost per sale

Baseline weekly spend

Peak week (baseline × 3)

YOUR Q4 CHECKLIST

- [ ] Two offers chosen, margin floor written down
- [ ] Offer ladder priced: good, better, best
- [ ] VIP list open, tag live in Mailchimp
- [ ] Five segments built and tested
- [ ] Four automations live: cart, VIP, post-purchase, redemption
- [ ] SMS consent collected separately and documented
- [ ] Creative shot: four to six variants per campaign
- [ ] Peak-week sends built and scheduled by Nov 20
- [ ] Shipping cutoffs confirmed and published on site
- [ ] Gift cards available and easy to buy in two taps
- [ ] January reserve protected, not spent in November
- [ ] Redemption campaign scheduled for Jan 2
- [ ] Debrief booked for the last week of January
- [ ] Break-even ROAS and max cost per sale known

THANK YOU

FOR COMING

Schedule a time with me to review your three worksheets and I'll walk through them with you.

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