The 12 Days nonth S of Christmas

Year-Round Online Retail Best Practices for a Spectacular Holiday Season



SUMMARY

The Historic Shift to Online Retail

Global macro-economic reality and the convenience of online shopping have transformed the way consumers shop. In 2011, 'Black Friday' in the United States (US) kicked off the largest online shopping period in history. Online sales increased 26% over 2010,¹ as shoppers avoided the stampede at the mall. In the United Kingdom (UK), Boxing Day broke previous records to become the best day ever for online shopping, with UK retail websites receiving 40% more visits than the same day in 2010.² After all, why queue when you can click? Even if customers ultimately bought at a brick-and-mortar retail store, they had researched and planned their purchases online.

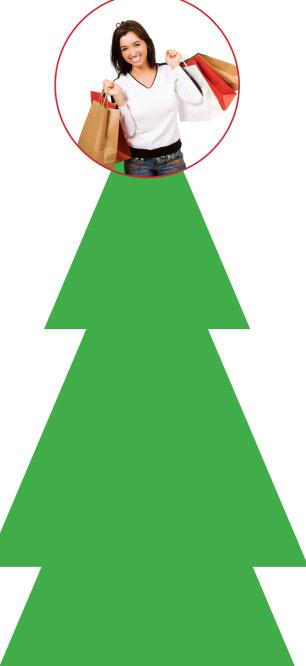
Did your website garner *your* share of this 26% year-over-year increase in online holiday spending? Did you take advantage of the amazing rise of mobile? (A recent RichRelevance study³ analysed 3.4 billion shopping sessions and showed that share of US online retail dollars attributable to mobile doubled in just nine months.) European online shoppers spent €52 billion (\$69.43 billion), almost one fifth more than they did last year, the European credit crisis notwithstanding.⁴

Enabling a Better Shopping Experience ... Year-Round

A robust holiday season entails advance planning, so we've transformed the '12 days of Christmas' into the '12 months of Christmas'—an annual calendar of best practices, culled from what (and how) today's shoppers expect their favorite brands and retailers to deliver. Start strategising now—it's not too early!—by ensuring you have the right tools to secure year-round powerful, personalised and profitable customer engagement.

Powerful, Personalised and Profitable Customer Engagement

If the customer is always right, the 2011 holiday season proved what RichRelevance has counseled for years: put the customer at the center of your marketing strategy, no matter what the touch point. To withstand—and, yes, even profit—during economic downturns, meet your customers where they already are: using multi-channel (in-store, mobile, social media and email) solutions. Personalisation and relevance keep customers sticking to your brand during the most crucial shopping season of the year ... not to mention the other 11 months.



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QUARTER 1

Multi-Channel Messaging/Purchasing



You can't move forward at a trot, because the industry is moving at a gallop. If you move ahead at a steady pace, you will fall behind.5

- Scott Galloway, NYU marketing professor/ co-founder, Luxury Lab think-tank

Helping You Put Customers at the Center, **Regardless of Channel**

Data about your customers—who they are, where they've been and what they want—is everywhere. But this information tends to be siloed across channels. Let's say you track customers in your store with loyalty cards; what about those same customers on your website? Data ties distinct channels together.

Translate Customer Data into Insights

By defining analytics across channels, RichRelevance can give you clear composites of your customers—no matter where or how they're shoppingto let you know how best to reach them. Let us help you institute integrated online, social, mobile and crosschannel messaging and purchasing campaigns ... year-round.

January

{rr} richrelevance

Dear Fence-Sitters:

We know it's sometimes scary to contemplate the huge changes that are sweeping through the retail industry.

But the historic 2011 holiday season means you can no longer afford to say "Hmmm, one of these days, I should really figure out how to take advantage of this [fill in the blank: online, social media, mobile, personalised email] trend everyone's talking about."

You know where you need to be, so what's the opportunity cost for your business—and your brand—of not beginning to take action today?

Best Practice: Your best New Year's resolutions are the ones you keep: Resolve to meet your customers where they are—using multiple channels to discover, research, and purchase your products.

Sincerely,

RichRelevance



Juggling Brick-and-Mortar, Online (Website and Social Media) and Mobile

Retailers must now maintain three simultaneous channels: in-store, online and mobile (smartphone or tablet). If this juggling act sounds challenging, remember the pay-off: Consumers who obtain information from more than one channel spent 82% more than customers who only visited a store.⁶

Best Practice: If you don't have a consumer marketing plan that encompasses all these environments, now is the time to create one ... to ensure this year is your best year ever. Consumer marketing should be a year-long strategy. Drive consumers to your e-commerce site through social channels, viral campaigns, deals and contests—to get them to stay and become regular users. Once you've secured a customer base, the key is to measure the lifetime value of those customers by channel. Establish your retail site as the "go-to" resource for pre-store shopping. (You can also take the fear out of online purchasing for those who are not yet total adopters.) When the next holiday season rolls around, you already have faithful consumers following your marketing—and shopping on your site.



March

Web Retail Growth Soars

The US Department of Commerce statistics confirm a burgeoning trend: Store sales grew 2.9% year-over-year for the week ended December 10, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers and Goldman Sachs Weekly Chain Store Sales Index. For the week ending December 9, meanwhile, online sales increased 15.7% compared to the same period last year, per comScore Inc., which tracks web sales. Best Buy exemplified the trend: Though in-store sales of consumer electronics declined 4.8% during the period that ended November 26, its BestBuy.com revenue increased 20% year-over-year during that same period.



Best Practice: To increase your online sales, leverage your market segmentation knowledge. You know you have different audiences (new mothers, techno geeks, small business buyers) shopping your site with different motivations. Companies such as Acxiom allow you to tie your segmentation models as a retailer marketer to cookie data, to deliver the right message to the right consumer at the right time. Use these insights to give consumers meaningful content for their designated segment—regardless of the channel they shop.



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Online Buying Behaviour Shifts

Consumers are approaching online retail in varied ways. For instance, post-recession buying behaviour in the US has shifted. Four shopper types "altered the holiday landscape this season."

- **1. Bargain Timers** pinpoint exactly when retailers offer the biggest discounts, and then shop only at those times, which affects margin.
- 2. Midnight Buyers have adapted to the extended Thanksgiving night hours that stores such as Best Buy, Macy's, and Target have instituted. Unlike the larks who rise at 4 am to shop Black Friday morning, these owls snap up bargains and then sleep in.
- **3. Returners** purchase early but give back, alas, almost a dime on the dollar. (In better—that is, non-recession—times, it's about 7 cents.)
- **4. The Me Shopper** was the object of such self-explanatory campaigns as Ann Taylor's "Perfect Presents: One for You, One for Her" and www.Shopittome.com's "Treat Yourself Tuesday."





'Mega' vs. 'Cyber' vs. 'Green' Monday. 'Black Friday' and 'Free Shipping Day.' The list of significant days for blockbuster online sales continues to expand as retailers woo the make-or-break holiday customer with new concepts.

- **Thanksgiving:** The fourth Thursday in November.
- Black Friday: The Friday after Thanksgiving that begins the brick-and-mortar holiday shopping season.
- **Cyber Monday:** A term coined in 2005 for the Monday after Thanksgiving that begins the online holiday shopping season.
- Mega Monday: The Monday after shoppers receive their final pay packet before Christmas. (UK)
- Green Monday: A term coined in 2007 for the second Monday in December; the last day to purchase items online and have them arrive via standard shipping before Christmas.
- Free Shipping Day: Begun in 2008, a 1-day, onlineshopping event when thousands of merchants offer free shipping with delivery by Christmas Eve.
- Boxing Day (UK and US): December 26 is a busy brickand-mortar and online shopping day when shoppers redeem gift cards, return or exchange gifts, and take advantage of post-holiday sales.

For the 5-day period beginning on Thanksgiving and ending Cyber Monday—the busiest shopping period of the year—over 200 million shopping sessions on US sites delivered 1.07 billion RichRecs, generating 44.4 million clicks—a click-through rate of 4.1%. Sites that have implemented RichRecs across multiple page types see clickthrough rates upwards of 10%.

These sites sold \$853 million in goods (averaging around \$7.1 million an hour, or \$120,000 each minute). Of these total sales, over 13% came directly from our personalised recommendations—averaging over \$900,000 an hour, or about \$15,600 each minute.

Persuasive Personalisation—and the RichRelevance Engine That Powers It

Your guest to engage and retain customers necessitates personalised information delivered exactly when and how your customer needs and wants it. You needn't be an IT maven to understand the power of RichRelevance's personalisation solutions. (Though if you'd like to 'check under the hood,' RichRelevance Senior IT Director, Kevin Duffy's detailed blogpost⁹ shows how RichRelevance slayed the 'holiday rush' dragon.)

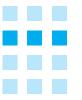
RichRelevance's personalised product recommendations, engineered for screaming speeds (fast page loads for your customer) and absolute reliability (100% uptime), allow your customer to concentrate on shopping. We offer real-time adaptive and dynamic recommendations through a suite of more than 60 smart algorithms. We also provide a variety of other stand-alone as well as complementary services and products to ensure customers stay central to your strategy.

Keeping the IT details so seamless they're invisible is our specialty. For instance, during the peak of US 2011 holiday traffic (between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday), RichRelevance operated at less than one fifth of capacity—despite serving up 1.2 billion product recommendations, with approximately 300 million page views and recommendation clicks. (If RichRelevance's personalisation engine had run close to capacity between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday, it could have offered 6 billion—yes, billion—product recommendations.) Throughout the year, our IT OPs team maintains 100% uptime and delivers over 350 million recommendations each day on more than 100 retail websites.

■ If RichRelevance's personalisation engine had run close to capacity between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday, it could have offered 6 billionyes, billion—product recommendations.







QUARTER 2 Mobile Matters!

This year, the most dramatic changes in digital were in mobile ...



I think the most interesting thing that is happening between the retail and social media worlds is the convergence of technology with bricks and mortar during the purchase process. Shopping alone isn't necessarily a solo sport anymore. For example, it's pretty typical to post a picture from a fitting room to get feedback. Smartphones are so pervasive that it's becoming naive to think a customer won't use some sort of technological assist in the buying process. Much of that technology is serving to connect people—both friends and unbiased third parties—to make the process more of a guaranteed success.¹⁰

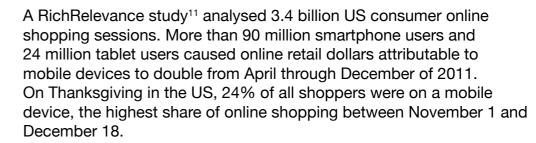
- Express CMO Lisa Gavales



Powered by the enRICH Personalisation
Engine, the RichRecs solution suite offers
customer-specific recommendations—
based on the shopper's unique attributes
and numerous shopping behaviours, such as
past purchases, browsing history, and more.
RichRecs +Mobile delivers personalised
recommendations and alerts directly to
a shopper's mobile device—providing
relevant real-time information
throughout the shopping
cycle.

April

Q2 through Q4: Mobile Retails Doubles



Another RichRelevance study found that more than one in four online shopping excursions in the UK (27%) occurred on a mobile device during the holiday season. Almost four out of five UK shoppers (79%) used an iPad.¹²

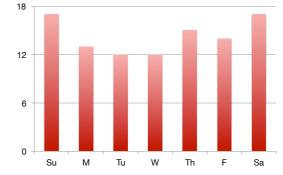
Best Practice: Many consumers use their mobile devices as research and comparison tools while en route to—or in—a store. Is your e-commerce site ready for mobile? Many already have mobile and online versions, but with the flexibility of iPad/tablet and iPhone, consumers can use the full online version anywhere. Help consumers maximize their mobile shopping efforts and stay "sticky" with your brand by enabling their interactivity with your store. For instance, sales people in Apple stores now cash out customers directly from iPads or iPhones and email receipts directly to them. Bar scanning devices allow consumers to interact with all your inventory—what's available on-site as well as in the warehouse. Nordstrom enables shoppers to get an item that is not available in a particular store shipped directly and at no cost to their home from another store that carries it in inventory.





RichRelevance finds an increase in mobile usage on Saturdays and Sundays, suggesting that shoppers tote their mobiles around in stores—or are 'sofa shopping' while watching football or the Food Network.

Percentage of Mobile Shopping by Day of the Week





UK m-Commerce Customers Will Try To Buy Three Times!

A third of United Kingdom smartphone owners surveyed by EPiServer made a purchase via a mobile commerce site. ¹³ But they are often buying in spite of their shopping experience: a third find mobile sites hard to navigate, and half find mobile sites slow to load. Still, 64% of consumers surveyed gave an m-commerce site *three tries* before they abandoned it! ¹⁴

RichRelevance found that the mobile share of UK online shopping sessions rose throughout December—from less than a quarter (23%) on December 1 to almost one third (31%) by December 31.¹⁵

Best Practice: Don't frustrate customers who exhibit such willingness to try to buy: make sure your site loads properly on mobile screens, is optimised for mobile navigation and loads FAST. Measure conversion by device type and browser to pinpoint problem areas. (Our own studies show the iOS platform is preferred for online shopping, with nine out of ten mobile purchases coming from Apple devices.)¹⁶



June

The Triple Crown? Mobile Combines with Coupons, QR Codes and Shopper-Friendly Apps

"More than half of us are using our phones to tap into holiday savings. This new technology makes it easier for everyone: customers benefit from it, retailers benefit from it," notes Mike Gatti of the National Retail Federation. QR codes—whether consumers find them in ads or on storefronts—are worth scanning. (Quick Response codes are 2-D bar codes that smartphones can scan, via a downloaded app, to connect to content such as online product pages or videos.) A recent holiday promotion by Gap, for instance, enabled shoppers who scanned a store-front QR code to buy an e-card that could be texted to the recipient; the recipient could use it that same day at a Gap store. Shopping malls may offer applications that feature promotions by various tenants, such as phone coupons that enable shoppers to spend \$60, say, and get a gift card worth \$10.

General consumer apps such as Swagg let customers buy, swap and redeem their gift and reward cards on their phone: merchants can either scan it or enter an authorisation code. Social network Foursquare lets users trade their live location information for discounts and rewards keyed to which retailer they're near right now. Amazon's controversial Price Check app allowed shoppers to leave stores "just at the point of purchase," which small business owners and retail trade groups didn't appreciate ... but a Saturday promotion tripled usage of the app for the next weekend. Look for more innovations in 2012 from companies like Google that will allow you to scan any object just like a QR code.

Best Practice: Use the latest mobile or online promotional techniques. For instance, eBay Inc. offered Delta passengers free online access via a Wi-Fi-enabled flight so they could complete last-minute shopping. Or investigate 'augmented reality' mobile apps such as Ice, which allow retailers to surmount a major Internet retail barrier and let customers try products on ... virtually. When a shopper downloads a retailer's app, that merchant is getting placement on one of the most used and personal places around—a consumer's smartphone desktop." These innovations in mobile shopping help consumers interact with your products or store anytime/anywhere—even while *in* your store!





QUARTER 3

Online Trends



If 2011 was the year of m-commerce, 2012 is sure to be the year of ... F-commerce.21

- wwd.com



The in-store experience is likely to become better as online shopping grows. As it becomes easier to compare prices, stores will be forced to create better physical experiences with more knowledgeable sales staff and proprietary items hard to find anywhere else.22

- Don Davis, Editor of Internet Retailer



RichPromo enables retailers to optimise website real estate to deliver campaign content to targeted customer segments. Powered by the technology of RichRelevancee's enRICH Personalisation Engine, RichPromo allows retailers to gain more effective control over online promotions, increase conversion and scale content personalisation.

July

Search (Google) vs. Social Media (Facebook / Twitter / Google+)



Luxury brands such as Oscar de la Renta, Bulgari and Chanel are enabling their customers to browse, shop and even check out without leaving Facebook. Almost 100% of luxury brands "cite Facebook as a source of upstream traffic," and Burberry, for example, is "getting more traffic from Facebook than Google"23 (presumably meaning Google search, since Burberry was an early adopter of Google+). Some brands use multiple tools: Bergdorf Goodman notes that after the holidays, "Our Google+ page will be more editorial, while our Facebook page will shift to a lighter, more playful tone."24



• F-Commerce works for some small businesses thanks to the simplicity and low-cost, but larger brands are not seeing the same results. According to a Forrester Research study,25 the conversion rates on Facebook are lower than on retail sites, not exceeding 2%. In fact, a RichRelevance study of traffic from social media sites versus search engines²⁶ found that search represents significant opportunities for qualified traffic and conversion, compared to social media sites, but shoppers from Twitter had the highest average order value (US \$121.33) of all shoppers.



- Harness the power of F-commerce:
 - Use Facebook's database of millions of consumer profiles to effectively target your marketing efforts both on Facebook as well as on your own site. For instance, Amazon leverages Facebook's data to help develop custom pages according to each visitor's profile (friends, likes).
 - Use Facebook Connect to allow shoppers to 'connect' their Facebook identity, friends and privacy preferences to your site.
 - Most brands use Facebook to provide personalised experiences on their websites.

Best Practice: Make sure your campaign budgets are apportioned correctly for where your customer base actually researches and purchases. Recognise that there's more than one entrance to your site and customise accordingly: Don't make the mistake of landing customers at your front door and forcing them to back-track! Where does your customer base begin their path to purchase? Ensure that the referring links from those campaigns take the customer *directly* to the relevant page on your site.







Every Channel Has a Purpose

Coca-Cola is the biggest brand on Facebook, with 36 million 'likes.'²⁷ Should you be there, too? That all depends on your motivation—or rather your customers' motivations. Recognise that every channel has a purpose. People don't go to FaceBook to buy, for instance,

but to socialise. Coke knows that: It isn't trying to sell a product on its FB page, it's promoting its most recent campaign. Mattel conducted an online voting campaign via Twitter and Facebook to select Barbie's 125th career. (The winner? Computer Engineer Barbie, aka Tech Geek Barbie.)²⁸ The point was to get customers to engage and have fun.



Best Practice: Leverage a channel's purpose most effectively by being clear about what your customers use a particular channel to do. Then you can support their interests appropriately. Since social media is such a huge influencer, one way to 'marry' worlds for consumers is to promulgate video engagement—no matter your campaign's content or original channel. UK retailer John Lewis, for instance, had a viral success on YouTube (4 million hits and counting) with its engaging holiday video-with-a-twist. The social strategy clearly paid off for John Lewis, which posted sales of £133.1 million for the week ending December 17, a more than 10% year-over-year increase, and year-over-year online sales at Johnlewis.com were up a staggering 42.2%.²⁹



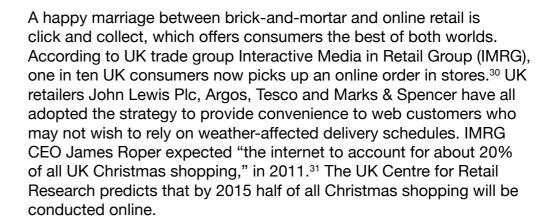
Click to watch, or visit http://bit.ly/JL-holiday

16



September

UK Shoppers Increasingly Choose "Click and Collect"



Best Practice: Shoppers who purchase online and pick up in-store tend to spend more per order than if they only shopped in the store. Offer your customers coupons or incentives to shop the store when they come in to pick up their merchandise. Your order-confirmation email can include these coupons or incentives to peruse a recommended up-sell or cross-sell (complementary item) to what was originally purchased. Or, right onsite, the clerk at the pick-up point can hand consumers their merchandise as well as these coupons or incentives.





QUARTER 4 'Humble' email is (still) a work-horse



There are always shiny things. A company shouldn't get addicted to being shiny, because shiny doesn't last. You really want something that's much deeperkeeled. You want your customers to value your service.³²

- Jeff Bezos, CEO, Amazon.com

Amidst the flashiness of the next shiny object for online retail, don't forget the valiant work-horse: email. Email is central to building customer loyalty and sales during the holiday shopping season. Personalisation technology such as customer loyalty and transaction-completion emails are cost-effective opportunities to generate real retail dollars.

Amazon.com, 1-800-Flowers, Zappos and Lands' End, for instance, send shipping confirmation emails which include personalised "extras" such as words of thanks, clickable link to package-tracking information and incentives to click through to visit the company's webpage and shop again.³³



Powered by the enRICH
Personalisation Engine, RichRecs
+Email turns every email into a
personalised experience with the
addition of personalised product
recommendations based on
the customer's onsite
activity and profile.

October

80% of Major Retailers Send at Least One Holiday Season Email ... Did You?

Four out of five major retailers sent at least one promotional email on 'Black Friday,'³⁴ even though the Friday after Thanksgiving has (in the US) traditionally been a huge day for shoppers to stampede through actual brick-and-mortar stores. In fact, email volume for 2011 was up almost a fifth from 2010 according to Experian's email marketing provider, CheetahMail.³⁵ But these "emails drive traffic to retail sites. More than 9% of all email traffic on Thanksgiving Day and Black Friday ... went to the top 500 retail sites—a share of traffic just shy of that coming from online search."

RichRelevance Analytics results for post-purchase transactional email engagement reveal a 10+% click-thru rate. The data show that using RichRecs +Email increases the likelihood of purchase eleven times (compared to manually merchandised items—that is, static images placed into emails).

Best Practice: Use personalisation technology to enable personalised product recommendations in the context of customers' confirmation and shipping emails, so you can up-sell and cross-sell complementary products.

Major retailers are utilising both transactional and promotional emails. The benefits of delivering product recommendations via email are obvious:

- Better user identification in email recommendations
- The ability to filter recommendations by category, price, brand, etc.
- Flexibility in campaign management/layouts
- Increased reporting capabilities



Improve Your Email Marketing Campaigns So Customers Buy Again and Again

Gleanster's research report indicated that email marketing's top performers are harnessing the power of one-to-one targeting, event-based triggers and other capabilities to improve the performance of their email marketing campaigns.³⁶

A simple but powerful way to improve customer experience and build loyalty is to convert 'vanilla' order-confirmation emails into opportunities for your customers to get the most from their orders—and ultimately buy again. These emails might offer links to your website where customers can download coupons, buy related supplies, or leave feedback. Additional opportunities are ship confirmation emails and rate-and-review emails.

Best Practice: Build customer loyalty by including these nine features³⁷ in your email confirmations:

- Thank the customer for the order.
- 2 Include an order number.
- Include shipping information including carrier name, expected delivery date and order tracking.
- 4 Confirm exactly what was ordered (along with product and shipping costs).
- 5 Provide a toll-free number and an email address.
- 6 Summarise payment method (sans details; for instance, "your Visa card ending in XXXX").
- Furnish links to product manuals or help files.
- Stress ease of return, and provide a link to your return policy.
- 9 Encourage product rate-and-review emails.

December

Shopping Cart Abandonment: Your Opportunity for Massive Conversion Rates—and Revenue

Only one fifth of the largest e-tailers are doing anything about shopping cart abandonment—an \$18-billion-a-year epidemic.³⁸ Even e-tailers who attempt to grapple with the problem often neglect to personalise a follow-up email, get the timing wrong (waiting much too long before they send the follow-up email), or may stop at just the one message.

According to Ross Kramer, CEO of email marketing firm, Listrak, personalising messages (via a simple, automated process) within 24 hours brings customers who might have been comparison shopping back into the fold. And retailers who reach customers within three hours after abandonment can double their campaign ROI!³⁹ Your tactic can be to do this via email, or you can employ display retargeting ads.

Best Practice: Don't lose them with a click! Keep customers sticking with your brand during the most vital season of the year. Reminding customers about products that remain in their carts is a powerful tool to incorporate into your email arsenal. Send a prompt and personalised series of messages (utilising a customer's name to personalise and shopping cart contents to cross-sell) that escalate discounts, based on the number of attempts necessary to achieve conversion.



The 12 months of Christmas

The 12 months of Christmas

CONCLUSION

Economies wax and wane. New technologies emerge. Current trends transform themselves into 'business as usual.'

We don't know what shiny object will be the Next Big Thing.

But we do know the holiday season will endure as retail's biggest opportunity to connect with customers.

And we know your customer's need for respect and engagement with your brands and products will never change.

Personalisation and relevance are evergreen. As is our commitment to enabling a better shopping experience for your customers.

Here's to another successful customer-centred year!

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RichRelevance powers personalised shopping experiences for the world's largest and most innovative retail brands, including Walmart, Sears, Target and others. Founded and led by the e-commerce expert who helped pioneer personalisation at Amazon.com, RichRelevance helps retailers increase sales and customer engagement by recommending the most relevant products to consumers regardless of the channel they are shopping. RichRelevance has delivered more than £2 billion in attributable sales for its retail clients to date, and is accelerating these results with the introduction of a new form of digital advertising called Shopping Media which allows manufacturers to engage shoppers where it matters most—in the digital aisles on the largest retail sites in the world. RichRelevance is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in London, New York, Seattle and Boston.

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