THIS FORTNIGHT IN ECOMMERCE AI

Any AI agent can now buy from your store

Plus: Google's new image default for Performance Max, caps for partner-network spend, and a US returns tax change.

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Black Friday is 31 days away. How many of the settings that will shape it did anyone on your team actually choose?

EcomifyAI tracks one shift: ad and commerce platforms are moving decisions from people to their own AI, then handing back controls afterwards. This fortnight the defaults reached past the campaign build and into the raw material. Shopify opened its product catalogue and checkout to any AI agent. Google told developers that, from 4 December, new Performance Max campaigns will lift images from your landing pages whatever your account setting says. Meta's new business terms, which cover crawling your website, take effect on 30 October. For anyone setting or running a Q4 plan, the decisions that matter now sit in product data, landing pages and budget rules, because the machines read those directly.

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2. **Performance Max image extraction.** From 4 December, new campaigns can put your landing-page photos in ads. For marketing and ecommerce leads.
3. **Channel priority and budget caps in Google Ads.** New limits on Search partners and Display spend. For marketing leads and founders.
4. **Tax on US return shipping fees.** Live in Shopify since 23 October. For operations and finance leads, and retention and CX leads.
5. **Quick hit: Meta's new business terms.** In force from 30 October. For founders and operations and finance leads.
6. **Quick hit: a combined AI Max search terms report.** Reportedly in some accounts. For marketing leads.

UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

- **Conversion Lift has moved (Issue #03).** Marketing leads: our menu path is out of date. Google's setup page, checked on 26 October, now starts from Campaigns › Experiments › Lift studies. It lists Search and Performance Max with the same 1,000-conversion and $5,000 thresholds, but still opens by telling advertisers to contact their rep, so treat self-serve as rolling out.
- **Direct Offers: a correction (Issue #03).** Marketing leads: we said Google hadn't published a page on the "Direct offer" asset. True of the asset, but we missed that Google announced Direct Offers as an AI Mode pilot in January, as Search Engine Journal's write-up of Google's ads letter notes. *Our read: the asset is that pilot reaching the Google Ads interface.*
- **Demand Gen text overlays (Issue #03).** Marketing leads: Search Engine Land now reports the same "Overlay on videos" setting, apparently on by default. We still haven't found a Google help page, so it stays "reported". Check Asset optimization before peak creative goes live.

THE SIGNAL · 1

Any AI agent can now find, and buy, your Shopify products

FOR **Ecommerce lead** **Founder / MD** **Operations & finance lead**

Ecommerce leads whose Shopify products ship to the US or Canada, founders deciding how much revenue to take through channels they can't see, and operations and finance leads who sign off pricing claims.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Site revenue and conversion moving into sessions you never see, and price claims agents repeat on your behalf. Nobody has published agent order volumes, so this is a direction, not a size.

WHAT CHANGED

On 13 October, Shopify launched Shop MCP, a public server that lets any AI agent search Shopify Catalog (over a billion products, by Shopify's count), build carts and complete Shop Pay checkout. Orders land in your admin like any other. Four days earlier, the Catalog API began returning compare-at prices, so agents can show markdowns. Issue #01 covered browser agents and Issue #02 one partner, Meta's Muse. This is anyone who builds an agent.

WHY THEY DID IT

Shopify says agents used to send shoppers to the store's site to pay, which "often caused drop-off".

> *Our read: while Amazon blocks agents, Shopify wants its catalogue to be every agent's default supply and Shop Pay the default way to pay.*

HOW IT WORKS

The agent completes checkout once a signed-in shopper confirms the total and payment method. Merchants install nothing. Qualifying products join Catalog automatically; Shopify's Catalog help page says you can block individual agentic storefronts but can't opt out of Catalog itself, and no merchant page we checked mentions a Shop MCP switch. To qualify, products must ship to the US or Canada and can't be Unlisted or hidden from search engines. Compare-at sharing is on by default for most stores in Catalog Mapping, and isn't sent to EEA buyers if you hide compare-at prices from them. For EU and UK brands, this reaches only products you ship to North America.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

- *Ecommerce leads*: the product record, not the theme, is now the shop window. Stale stock becomes a cancelled order; a vague title, no match.
- *Founders*: there's no partner to negotiate with and no channel to switch off. *Our read: these orders may not appear under the named AI channels in your Agentic reports, and GA4 never sees them.*
- *Operations and finance leads*: an agent showing your compare-at price makes a reference-price claim for you; an old supplier RRP gets repeated. Selling into the EU? Ask your advisor how price-reduction rules apply (not legal advice).

WHAT TO DO

IF YOU'RE HANDS-ON

In Catalog Mapping, switch off Compare-at sharing if those prices aren't defensible. Install Shopify's `shop` command-line tool and run `shop search` on your ten best-sellers to see the price and stock an agent receives. Use Unlisted only for products you won't sell through agents at all; it also hides them from your own collections.

IF YOU OWN THE OUTCOME

Decide on purpose that agents may sell your catalogue; there's no default to change. Ask your ecommerce lead: "If an agent bought our top ten products tonight, would the price, stock and returns policy it saw be right, and how would we spot the order?" A good answer names who checked the records, the compare-at decision, and the order-source field that identifies agent orders.

HOW YOU'LL KNOW IT WORKED

By 6 November, your top 20 products show correct price and stock in `shop search`. Weekly through Black Friday: zero orders cancelled for stock that showed as available.

DEEP DIVE · 2

From 4 December, new Performance Max campaigns can put your website photos in ads

FOR Marketing lead · Ecommerce lead

Marketing leads who build Performance Max campaigns, or whose agency does, and ecommerce leads who own the landing pages behind them.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Brand control and image rights on Christmas and January campaigns, and spend on creative you'd never approve.

WHAT CHANGED

Google told developers on 21 October that from 4 December, new Performance Max campaigns will have image extraction on by default in the API, interface and Editor, even where dynamic images are off at account level (Google's developer post, as reported by PPC Land). Existing campaigns keep their settings.

WHY THEY DID IT

Google gives no reason beyond enriching creative and expanding reach.

> *Our read: like automated promotions on 12 October (Issue #03), Google defaults to more automation and leaves the opt-out to you.*

HOW IT WORKS

Google's AI takes high-resolution landing-page images for use across Search, YouTube, Display, Discover, Gmail and Maps. New campaigns will ignore the account's Dynamic images switch (Campaigns › Assets › three-dot menu › Account-level automated assets › three-dot menu › Advanced settings) unless each opts out. In the API the setting sits in a list replaced wholesale on update, so a tool sending only the image entry can wipe text automation settings. Google asks you to confirm commercial rights to every image on those pages. No country is excluded, so EU and UK accounts are covered.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

A website licence for stock or creator photography may not cover ad use (our read; not legal advice), and last season's offer banner can become an ad. Black Friday campaigns built before 4 December are unaffected; Christmas and January launches aren't.

WHAT TO DO

IF YOU'RE HANDS-ON

Run Google's audit query on `campaign.asset_automation_settings` and list PMax campaigns with no image extraction entry. Before 4 December, make templates and scripts send an explicit choice, reading the full list first. Remove licensed or outdated images from pages PMax can reach.

IF YOU OWN THE OUTCOME

Decide whether Google may use your site imagery in ads at all. Ask your agency: "What will every PMax campaign created after 4 December send for image extraction, and who checked our image rights?" A good answer is a named setting per template and a list of cleared pages.

HOW YOU'LL KNOW IT WORKED

By 3 December, every PMax campaign shows an explicit entry in the audit. Weekly to mid-January, new campaigns' asset reports show no landing-page images you didn't approve.

DEEP DIVE · 3

Google now lets you rank, and cap, Search partners and Display spend

FOR Marketing lead · Founder / MD

Marketing leads running Search, Shopping or Performance Max with Search partners or Display on, and founders approving the Q4 Google budget.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

ROAS, and with it MER, at peak, when budget-limited campaigns decide where the marginal euro goes.

WHAT CHANGED

On 14 October, Google announced two optional controls, rolling out globally over the coming months: channel prioritization (High or Low priority) and budget allocation (a percentage-of-daily-budget cap on Low priority channels). From February 2027, Search campaigns with the Display Network on lose their current spend setup.

WHY THEY DID IT

Google says marketers want transparency and choice over budgets, and pitches the controls as a way to test partner networks rather than switch them off.

> *Our read: a capped test is Google's route back to spend advertisers had opted out of.*

HOW IT WORKS

Campaigns fully fund High priority channels, within any tCPA or tROAS target, before Low priority ones. Search tiers Google Search, Search partners and Display separately; PMax groups Search, YouTube, Maps, Gmail and Discover as "Google channels". Caps are best-effort. Google says prioritization alone generally won't move spend on target-bid campaigns that aren't budget-limited; there, only the cap matters. Controls sit at account and campaign level, including shared budgets, and reach EU and UK accounts as the global rollout arrives. To keep today's Display behaviour in Search after February, Google says set Display to Low with a 50% allocation.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

This bites in campaigns that run out of budget at peak, the ones behind Issue #01's Signal. Never bought partner traffic? A small cap is a cheap test. Suspect PMax spends on partners? Now you have a lever.

WHAT TO DO

IF YOU'RE HANDS-ON

Segment the last 90 days by network. Leave Search partners or Display High where they met target; elsewhere set them Low with a cap you could lose without missing plan. Diary February 2027 for every Search campaign with Display on.

IF YOU OWN THE OUTCOME

Ask: "What share of last Q4's Google spend went to Search partners and Display, and what ROAS did each return?" A good answer is two numbers per channel and a proposed cap for each, agreed before November.

HOW YOU'LL KNOW IT WORKED

Weekly to Cyber Monday, partner and Display spend stays inside the caps at or above target ROAS. If either misses two weeks running, lower the cap.

DEEP DIVE · 4

US return shipping fees are now taxed in Shopify

FOR Operations & finance lead | Retention & CX lead

Operations and finance leads whose brands ship to US addresses through Shopify Tax or Tax Platform and charge for return labels, and retention and CX leads who set return fees and answer refund queries.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Tax accuracy and clean reconciliation through the holiday returns window, and refunds customers will query.

WHAT CHANGED

Since 23 October, Shopify calculates tax on return shipping fees for US-bound orders on stores using Shopify Tax or Tax Platform. It was announced on 25 September and runs here because it took effect this fortnight.

WHY THEY DID IT

Shopify's merchant changelog says return shipping fees will be taxed like any other shipping charge.

> *Our read: returns had lagged behind outbound shipping.*

HOW IT WORKS

Shopify estimates the tax when a return is created and locks the final amount when it's processed; the two can differ. Coverage of Shopify's announcement says it follows your state shipping tax settings and excludes restocking fees, handling fees and international returns. No action is needed unless you already add this tax elsewhere. EU and UK sales and VAT are unaffected.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

If your bookkeeper, accounting rules or returns app already add this tax, you could now count it twice. Customers in states that tax shipping may see a slightly bigger refund deduction, and ask your helpdesk why.

WHAT TO DO

IF YOU'RE HANDS-ON

Operations and finance: ask whoever owns sales tax whether return-fee tax is added anywhere outside Shopify, and stop it for returns from 23 October; ask your returns-app vendor in writing whether its fees flow into Shopify's return fee field; process one test return to a state that taxes shipping. *Retention and CX*: add a line on return-shipping tax to your refund macros.

IF YOU OWN THE OUTCOME

Ask: "Do we add tax to return shipping fees anywhere outside Shopify?" A good answer is "no", or "yes, and it stopped on 23 October", backed by a test return.

HOW YOU'LL KNOW IT WORKED

Your November tax report shows return-fee tax once, not twice, and refund-amount tickets don't rise as December returns start. This is not tax advice.

QUICK HITS

5. FOUNDERS · OPERATIONS & FINANCE LEADS

Meta's new business terms take effect on 30 October. Search Engine Journal reports that continued business use of Meta's apps means accepting a clause letting Meta crawl websites associated with your business; Meta has dropped "train" from the listed uses and says robots.txt is respected. Before Friday, have whoever runs your site check robots.txt for Meta's crawlers, and put the clause to your advisor (not legal advice).

6. MARKETING LEADS

A combined AI Max search terms report is reportedly appearing. Search Engine Roundtable reports a "Search terms and ad combinations" view in some accounts, pairing each search term with the headline and landing page served, as Google's API documentation describes. It may be the unified report Google promised (Issue #02); if you have it, review your top 50 terms by spend for mismatches before Black Friday.

ONE THING TO DO THIS FORTNIGHT

Owned by the founder or MD; done by the ecommerce lead.

Before 6 November, check your 20 best-selling products as an agent sees them (price, stock and compare-at price) and fix or unlist whatever is wrong. Agents will shop the record you have, not the one you meant to have, and there's no switch to hide behind.

That's the fortnight. Ecommerce leads, I'd especially like to hear from you: have you seen an order you suspect came from an AI agent, and what did its order source say? Reply and tell me. I read every reply, and the answers decide what we chase next.

P.S. If this issue has you mapping every place a shopper can now reach you, from agents through checkout to returns, The AI-Powered Customer Journey Audit (€79) is built for that job. It's at ecomifyai.ie.

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Every claim in this issue links to one of these. Click any URL to open it.

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