

How Bombas steps up and handles a 1,633% spike in orders

Good Morning America boosted online orders for web-only sock retailer Bombas, providing a dress rehearsal for Black Friday, the retailer says. Bombas also recently updated its warehouse picking system.

A five-minute segment on the TV show “Good Morning America” resulted in about 16 times the typical number of orders for web-only sock retailer Bombas.

Bombas typically handles 1,500 to 2,000 orders a day, but that number spiked to 26,000 on Oct. 5, the day of the morning show segment, says Drew Morrison, operations manager at Bombas.

Bombas generated \$17 million in online sales in 2016, which was a 400% increase over 2015, Morrison says. In the “Good Morning America” segment, co-founder David Heath says Bombas projects \$50 million in online sales for 2017.

To fulfill orders received on the GMA Deals site, Bombas centralized SKUs in its warehouse to minimize how far employees would have to walk to pick the order and put it on the conveyor belt, Morrison says. Each SKU has a storage location and a pick location in the warehouse. Bombas increased the number of socks in the pick location to avoid a wait as products were moved from storage. For example, if there typically are 100 units of socks in the pick location, Bombas may have increased this to 500 in anticipation of high order volume, she says.

Bombas added a second warehouse staffing shift on the day of the “Good Morning America” segment, while also requiring warehouse staff to work two days over that weekend instead of just one.

The retailer anticipated a spike of 15,000 to 20,000 orders on Oct. 5, but Bombas’ preparations were enough to cover the nearly 25,000 orders that flooded in, Morrison says.

“It was a dress rehearsal for us before Black Friday,” she says. “26,000 orders in one day is a number we don’t see often, so it’s good for the warehouse to go through the motions.”

In 2016, during the five-day period of Thanksgiving through Cyber Monday (Nov. 24-28), Bombas had roughly 10,000 orders per day. This year the retailer says it expects anywhere from 10,000 to 25,000 orders per day.

In addition to the GMA Deals sales on Oct. 5, the retailer had to pay attention to sales via Bombas.com and prioritize those orders if a shopper paid for priority (overnight) shipping, Morrison says.

For the holiday season, Bombas’ one New Jersey warehouse has new voice-picking technology that its third-party logistic provider Amware Fulfillment integrated.

Warehouse pickers now wear headsets and an automated message tells the picker which SKUs they have to pick for each order, and they no longer have to look at a sheet of paper. Amware financed the new technology. The audio picking is supposed to increase efficiency and decrease the number of staff needed in the warehouse, Morrison says. Because the technology just rolled out last week, Morrison says warehouse staffing levels have not been set.