

Acquire, grow, retain.

How customer lifecycle
marketing can help you
build relationships that last.

Created by RMC for marketing professionals
in search of the perfect email campaign.

Introduction

The days of firing off batch and blast emails are truly over. Today's savviest marketing professionals understand that the best way to convert, keep and grow customers is to make sure you're talking to them about the right things, in the right way, at the right time.

To give this its proper name, it's called customer lifecycle marketing (CLM), and it's the key to building long-term relationships with your customers which will make you, them and your finance director happy.

Sounds simple? Well it is, as long as you know what you're doing – which is why we've created this e-book. It's full of useful, practical information to help you plan, create and execute the six types of email campaign that are essential to any CLM-focused email marketing strategy:

- *Welcome emails*
- *Cart abandonment emails*
- *Browse abandonment emails*
- *Post-purchase emails*
- *Customer retention emails*
- *Win-back emails*

We're passionate about the power of email, and we want to help everyone in the industry use it better. So if you're keen to get more from your email campaigns, this is the e-book for you. From who you should target and what you should include, to tips and tactics that really work, everything you need is here.



What is customer lifecycle marketing?

Customer lifecycle marketing (CLM) is based on the fact that customers tend to go through defined stages in their customer journey, from their initial interest in your product to the very last purchase they make.

So, if you understand your customer lifecycle, and know what stage an individual customer is at, you can make sure you're engaging with them in the most appropriate way. That makes it all the easier to encourage their interest, grow their value, and keep hold of them in the long term.

Your customer lifecycle will be distinct to your business, so you'll need to look at your data and work out what the key stages are. At its most basic level, the general direction of travel is from prospect, to active customer, to at-risk customer, to lapsed customer. But how you manage each stage, and how you differentiate between the subgroups each time, is where CLM gets really interesting.

CLM is powered by four core elements:

Insight

If you don't know who your customers are, you won't be able to give them what they want. So to start with, you'll need to gather insights by collecting data from various sources and using it to build a profile of your customers, their preferences, and where they are in their buying journey. This could include demographic data, such as their age, sex or other lifestyle information, or previous purchase data, such as what they bought when and how much they spent.

These insights aren't only based on what customers do or say. For example, when someone signs up for a newsletter, their email address may be the only direct information they give you. But you can also learn which device, operating system and browser they are using. And you can use cookie tracking to access their previous browsing history, which will help you understand what else they might be interested in.

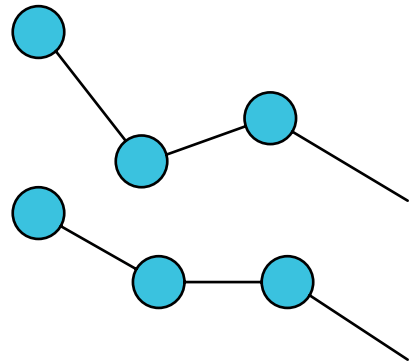
So even if you only have quite basic information, you can start building a picture of your customers that will help you make sure you're telling them what they actually want to hear.

Relevance

Once you have your insights in place, you can segment your customers into groups, and start planning relevant, enticing content which will encourage them to buy, or act, or even just feel warmer towards your brand.

For example, there's no point emailing customers offering a discount on a product they've already bought, or wouldn't need at their particular stage in the lifecycle. Instead, target them with products or services that will enhance or develop what they already have.

And as well as looking forward to what their next step could be, you should also look back at what other, similar customers did at a similar point in their lifecycle. Watching how customers behave at each stage, and how they respond when you contact them, will help you refine future messages and inspire other customers to act.



Timing

Having worked out what you want to say, you need to make sure you're saying it at the right time, and with the right gap between other messages and actions.

For example, when a customer signs up to your newsletter, you might want to send a welcome email straight away. Or, if they've got half way through a purchase without checking out, you might want to remind them to go back to it a few hours later. But if they've bought something, and you'd like to invite them to review it, it would make more sense to wait a week or two.

By responding to your customers' actions at the right time, you're more likely to make them act in the right way. And unlike the offline world, digital channels give you the flexibility, technology and tools to do just that.

Testing

The final piece in the jigsaw is to test what you do, and to use what you learn to inform what you do next. For example, you might discover that offering £5 off if they spend £50 performs better than offering a 10% discount. Or that sending two emails to a cart abandoner produces a higher response rate than just one.

So make sure you test at least one element in every email campaign, and that you use what you learn to make your subsequent campaigns work harder.

TL;DR

The 10 second summary

The secret to successful lifecycle marketing is to gather insights about your customers, use these insights to create relevant messages and get your timing spot on. Make sure you test to see if you were right, and feed any learnings back into your strategy.



Welcome emails that work

Don't be fooled by the cosy-sounding name; a welcome email isn't just a friendly hello. It's one of the most critical points in every customer journey, laying the groundwork for long-term loyalty and engagement.

If you get it right, you'll be able to make a great first impression, set out your core brand values and open the door to future purchases, all in one go. But get it wrong, and you risk losing them before the relationship has really started.

A few facts and figures

- **74%** of consumers expect a welcome email when they subscribe.
- Compared to other kinds of email, **open rates** for welcome emails are **four times higher**, and **click through** rates are **five times higher**.
- The average read rate for a welcome email is **34%, compared to 24%** for all other types of emails.
- **75%** of welcome emails are sent the same day.

Who, when why?

Welcome emails should be sent to:

New subscribers and new account creators.

They should be sent:

As quickly as possible after sign-up – the longer the delay, the less likely they are to be opened.

They should aim to:

- create a strong brand impression
- turn leads into first-time purchasers
- entice recipients back to your site
- showcase relevant products or services
- encourage recipients to connect with you on social channels
- ask prospects to provide further details and preferences
- set expectations of the nature and frequency of your emails

Expert tactics and tips

Single vs multiple emails

Some companies choose to send a single welcome email; others prefer a multi-step approach, which spreads the conversation out across a few days.

You'll need to find out what work best for you, by testing different options and analysing which ones trigger the highest levels of conversion and engagement. Of course, what works for one group might not work so well for another, which is why you might also want think about...

Segmentation

The more targeted you can be, the better. So consider segmenting your welcome emails based on whether the recipient is a new customer or a new subscriber, to allow you to create a really relevant welcome message.

Personalisation

Although you might not have a great deal of insight into your customers at this stage, you can still personalise your messages based on what you learned when they signed up. For example, you may be able to personalise by gender or refer to whatever the customer viewed during browsing.

A word of warning – don't make your personalisation too heavy-handed or slip into stereotypes; assuming all women love pink or all men love football is a short-cut to unsubscribes. Make it subtle, and relevant – or

don't do it at all. And if you try it, test it to see if it makes a difference.

Seasonality

If the time of year is relevant to your range of products or services, then it's worth considering different campaigns for different seasons. That way, you can catch the recipient's attention with promotions or product messages which chime directly with what they're up to.

But again, do so with care; inboxes tend to be bombarded with irrelevant messages on occasions like Valentine's Day. At best, they're invisible; at worst, they're downright irritating.

Data collection

Asking for too much information at sign-up can backfire if the potential customer gets bored and moves on. So instead, consider asking some of your questions in the welcome email, when they've already shown real interest and are likely to be at their most enthusiastic.

TL;DR

The 10 second summary

A welcome email isn't just a hello; it's a hard-working piece of communication that helps you establish a relationship and start moving it forwards. Time it efficiently, plan it carefully, then test to see what works and you'll reap the rewards.

10 things to think about before you press send

Have you made it clear who the email is from and asked to be added to your customer's safe senders list?

Have you included links to relevant parts of your site and encouraged the customer to explore it further?

Have you optimised the subject line to encourage opening and avoid being marked as spam?

Have you asked the customer to follow you on social media?

Have you thanked the customer for signing up with you, either verbally or with an offer or discount?

If you're upselling, or converting a lead to a sale, have you set out the offer clearly, with a direct call to action? (such as 'Make sure you use your discount code within two weeks')

Have you asked for any extra information that might be useful?

Is the message optimised for mobile and other devices?

Have you set their expectations about how often you'll be contacting them - or asked them how often they would like to be contacted?

Have you offered the customer the opportunity to unsubscribe?



How to reconnect with a customer who hasn't checked out

There's little more frustrating than guiding a customer through the buying journey, right up to the checkout, and then losing them at the last moment. And unlike with face to face sales, you're not there to ask them why, or to have another stab at closing them down.

But the good news is, an abandoned cart doesn't have to be 1 or two you can turn the sale around - and develop the long term potential and value of your customer.

A few facts and figures

According to Fresh Relevance Ltd's Realtime Marketing Report from Q1 2016 :

- The current average cart abandonment rate is a staggering **65%**.
- Sending a cart abandonment email uplifts sales by an average of **8.1%**.
- A cart abandonment email makes on average **£21.29**.

Who, when why?

Cart abandonment emails should be sent to:

Shoppers who have placed items in their cart but not checked out.

They should be sent:

While the potential purchase is still fresh in the customer's mind - ideally between 30 minutes and two hours of the cart being abandoned.

They should aim to:

- remind the customer about the product(s) they were planning to buy
- encourage them to reconsider
- direct them to complete their purchase
- entice them away from competitor site browsing
- drive them back to your website
- increase their average order value

Expert tactics and tips

Potential barriers to purchase

Before you start working out how to encourage cart abandoners back, think about why they might have left in the first place. Are your delivery costs or taxes a nasty, last-minute surprise? Have you made the process complicated by insisting that they register to purchase? You may be able to address their

barriers in your cart abandonment email - and while you're at it, you should also go back and refine the purchase process too.

Use of images

The single most important thing to do with a cart abandonment email is to show images of the products the customer was planning to buy. Think of it as wooing them by showing them what they're missing - and help them snap up their selected products by including a link that takes them straight back to the checkout.

Personalised recommendations

As well as reminding the customer about their original choices, you can also try and catch their eye with other products that might encourage them to complete, and even increase, the sale. If you need help with this, our Recommendation Solution can identify what these eye-catching products might be, based on each individual shopper's browsing habits.

Single vs multiple emails

Some companies send more than one email to a customer who's abandoned their cart. You'll need to run some tests to see whether this is effective for you; remember to track negative KPIs like unsubscribes and factor them into your analysis.

If you do go for multiple emails, think nudging, not nagging. Take the approach that you're helping the customer to do something they want to do, not trying to force them into a sale.

Segmented incentives

Companies often offer an incentive, such as free delivery or a one-off discount, to encourage the customer to complete the sale. If you're considering this, look into whether it would be viable to offer different incentives to different customer segments. For example, you might want to offer a bigger incentive to a high-value lapsed customer than you would to an active shopper. And of course, test to see whether it's worth it.

Free delivery threshold

If a customer has to spend a certain amount to get free delivery, and they're not far off, it's worth bringing to their attention. From the customer's perspective, the extra product they add in to qualify can feel as if it's 'free', and it's good news for your average order value figures too.

10 things to think about before you press send

Have you addressed the customer by name, and made the tone suitably warm and encouraging?

Have you optimised the subject line, for example by including the name of the product?

Have you included images of the products in their cart, to remind them of what they would be missing if they don't complete the purchase?

Have you included a punchy and visible call to action - such as a 'Take me to my cart' or 'Checkout now' button?

Could you include reviews or ratings of the products, to reassure them that it's a worthwhile purchase?

Have you added a sense of urgency, such as suggesting that items may not be in stock forever?

Could you offer an incentive - such as free delivery or a product trial - to close the sale?

Have you included a link back to your main website, to allow them to browse further if they have lost interest in the products in their cart?

If you offer free returns, have you reminded them of this, to make buying seem a no-brainer?

Is the message optimised for mobile and other devices?

TL;DR

The 10 second summary

Don't let close-to-buying customers slip through the net. Show them what they're missing, entice them to go for it and make the process as quick and easy as possible.



How to turn an uncommitted browser into a buyer

Sometimes potential buyers don't even get as far as the cart; they have a good look around and then disappear. But just as with customers who abandon their carts, a well-planned email strategy can help you turn window shopping into sales.

You'll need to think carefully about what level of browsing merits an email from you; if you contact every single person who looks at one of your products, you're likely to end up with more unsubscribes than sales. So set some parameters for who to include – such as people who look at an item more than once, or people who have used the search function to find a specific product – and make sure you stick to them.

A few facts and figures

- **74%** of consumers expect a welcome email when they subscribe.
- Compared to other kinds of email, open rates for welcome emails are **four times higher**, and click through rates are **five times higher**.
- The average read rate for a welcome email is **34%, compared to 24%** for all other types of emails.
- **75%** of welcome emails are sent the same day.

Who, when why?

Browser emails should be sent to:

Shoppers who have viewed a product or products on your website without adding anything to their cart.

They should be sent:

While the browsing session is still fresh in the customer's mind – again, ideally between 30 minutes and two hours of them leaving the site.

They should aim to:

- remind the customer about the product(s) they were looking at
- encourage them to take the next step and add to their cart
- entice them away from competitor site browsing
- cross-sell similar or complementary products
- drive them back to your website
- demonstrate good customer service

Expert tactics and tips

Tone of voice

Although cart abandoners and browsers may appear similar on the surface, their commitment levels are different – and this

should be reflected in how you address them. Generally speaking, browsers should be contacted with a more relaxed, customer-focused approach rather than a direct pitch for a sale.

So you could send an email that thanks the recipient for their interest, asks if they need help with anything and includes your customer service details. Or you could helpfully let them know that you have saved the items they have viewed, without overtly pushing for a sale. These are just two examples of an appropriately relaxed way to talk to this audience.

Minimising crossover

You'll also need to ensure that you have systems in place to weed out email crossover. For example, a browser might leave your site, come back a few hours later, then put some items into their cart but not check them out. If you react to the initial search with a browser email and then swiftly follow up with a cart abandonment email, you could do more harm than good.

Category segmentation

Clearly, a browser hasn't made a firm commitment to a particular product, but you can still make your email relevant to

what they were considering – and even offer suitable alternatives. At its simplest level, this would mean segmenting by category – such as sending an email about an activewear promotion or a new activewear range to someone who was browsing the activewear category.

As with emails to cart abandoners, including enticing images is key. But again, be careful with the tone; a message along the lines of “If you liked these Nike trainers, you might also be interested in these just-released Air Max” would be suitable; “BUY NOW, ONLY 4 PAIRS LEFT” would not.

Personalised recommendations

A more sophisticated way of personalising emails to browsers would be to include products which specifically complement the ones they were looking at, and so might encourage them to go ahead and make the purchase.

For example, if they were browsing dresses, you could suggest some shoes or necklaces that would complete the outfit, again taking care that the tone is helpful rather than salesy. Our Recommendation Solution can help you identify complementary products, based on each individual shopper’s browsing habits.

Lifecycle segmentation

A further way to segment and personalise browser emails is by lifecycle stage. For example, you could include free delivery to try and activate a browser who has subscribed but not yet made a purchase. Or you could cross-promote higher value complementary products to a higher value customer. As always, test to see what works, and take care not to be too pushy.



TL;DR
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The 10 second summary
A browser’s lack of initial commitment doesn’t mean they can’t be converted. Match a relaxed tone with relevant and appropriate products and offers and you should see an uplift in your sales.

10 things to think about before you press send

Have you thanked them for visiting your site and having a look around?

Have you optimised the subject line, for example by mentioning the name of the product or a new release of a similar product?

Have you included images of the products they were considering, to remind them of what they would be missing if they don’t make a purchase?

Could you include reviews or ratings of the products they were looking at, to encourage them to consider them more seriously?

Have you included a clear – but relatively gentle – call to action, such as a ‘Return to website’ or ‘Take another look’ button?

Have you included a customer service element, such as a customer helpline or online chat service?

Have you included a link back to your website – or even a navigation bar – to encourage them to browse further?
Is there a relevant offer or incentive that might tempt them to add the product to their cart?

Have you checked the tone to ensure that it isn’t too pushy for this audience?

Is the message optimised for mobile and other devices?





Why post-purchase emails should be more than just receipts

The period straight after a customer has purchased is golden time, in marketing terms. They're highly likely to be feeling warm towards you, and anticipating getting their hands on whatever they've bought. But if all you send them is a plain-text factual purchase summary, you're missing a trick.

Instead, use this time to encourage further purchases, inspire loyalty and deepen their relationship with your brand. As all good marketers know, it's far more cost effective to retain an existing customer than it is to acquire a new one – and this is the perfect time to start.



A few facts and figures

- Transactional email open rates are **8 times higher** than standard marketing emails.
- They also generate **6 times more revenue**.
- Those which include an element of cross-selling have a **20% higher transaction rate** than those without.

Who, when why?

Post-purchase emails should be sent to:

Customers who have completed a purchase.

They should be sent:

Immediately after the order has been placed.

They should aim to:

- thank the customer for their purchase
- set out the details, including payment made, delivery times and return or refund information
- include customer service information, in case there are any issues with the purchase
- engage them more deeply with your brand
- directly encourage further purchases
- make it easy for them to revisit your website

Expert tactics and tips

Clever cross-selling

The post-purchase feelgood factor makes this the perfect time to cross-sell other products; and if you're smart about what you offer, it's more likely that they'll take the bait. So use your customer data to see what other, similar customers did next, and then use that to guide your suggestions. Or select complementary products – for example, camping accessories, if they've bought a tent.

However you choose them, remember to use images to make your recommendations more tempting; and include a clear call to action button to make it quick and easy to buy.

Offers and discounts

You may want to include some sort of special offer or discount to nudge them into a follow-up purchase. There's a balance here between wanting to capitalise on the post-purchase glow and not wanting to train them into expecting a discount every time – and of course some people might have bought again without an incentive. So think carefully about how you phrase any offers you make, and make sure you test to see whether the ROI works for you.

Deepening the relationship

Post-purchase is also a good time to build your relationship in ways other than just selling. For example, if they have bought but not registered, you could offer this as an option. Or you could encourage them to connect with you on social media, if they haven't already done so.

A little further down the line, you might want to ask for feedback on the product(s) they have purchased; we'll cover this in more detail in the following chapter.

Lifecycle segmentation

Whatever you decide to include within a post-purchase email, lifecycle segmentation can make it all the more powerful. So you might want to treat a first-time buyer with a low-value cart differently to a lapsed, high-value customer who has come back to buy. Use your lifecycle data to help you make your decisions – and then use testing to see whether they were right.

10 things to think about before you press send

Have you thanked them for their purchase?

Have you optimised the subject line, and personalised the message?

Have you included images of any products you are recommending?

Could you present your recommendations as being selected for them, to make them feel valued and understood?

Have you considered including relevant offers or incentives which might tempt further purchases or other actions?

Have you included a clear call to action that suits your activity, such as a 'Continue shopping' or 'Return to website' button?

Have you considered including a navigation bar to encourage them to shop again?

Have you included a customer service element, such as a customer helpline or online chat service?

Have you made your tone warm and friendly, to suit the post-purchase relationship?

Have you optimised the email for mobile and other devices? This is particularly important for tickets or events.

TL;DR

The 10 second summary

Immediately post-purchase is the perfect time to bond with your customers; so don't waste it with a plain receipt-style email. Instead, take the opportunity to increase their lifetime value by encouraging them to buy more, do more or tell you more.



Retention emails that turn buyers into loyal customers

Common sense suggests – and the figures bear it out – that it's easier and more profitable to keep and develop an existing customer than to find and convert a new one. That's why developing a customer retention email strategy isn't just sensible; it's critical.

The most important word there is strategy. There are many different ways to engage and retain your customers, and we'll set out some of them here. But if you try and do them all at once, or send everything to everyone, you won't be making the most of your opportunities. With a lifecycle marketing plan in place, it's a different story.

A few facts and figures

According to research compiled by conversion optimization company Invesp :

- It costs **five times as much** to attract a new customer as it does to keep an existing one.
- The probability of **selling to an existing customer is 60-70%**, while the probability of selling to a new prospect is 5-20%.
- Existing customers are **50% more likely to try new products**, and spend 31% more, when compared to new customers.

Who, when why?

Customer retention emails should be sent to:

Customers who you consider to be active (ie, not lapsed).

They should be sent:

There's no one-line answer to this: it depends on the content. You'll need to create a detailed campaign plan which schedules the right emails at the right stage in the customer lifecycle.

They should aim to:

- engage your customers more deeply with your brand
- make them feel you understand them and know what they want
- encourage them to spread the word and become brand advocates
- keep your brand front of mind, so you're on their browse list
- offer relevant and timely reasons to buy from you again
- demonstrate exceptional levels of customer service by anticipating their needs

Expert tactics and tips

Segmentation by customer value

There's one key principle that should underpin your retention activity – the potential value of your customers. They won't all spend or stay loyal to you equally, which means they're not all worth the same to your company. So use your lifecycle data; look at recency, frequency and spend; calculate and segment by lifetime value; then target your best efforts to those who you want to keep the most.

Relevant products, offers and content

When you're sending an email that isn't transactional, you need a reason, and it should be a relevant one. So use your data or insights to identify what your customers might like to receive. This could be as simple as a sneak preview of a new product that relates to something they have previously bought, or a 24 hour pre-sale window for customers who have sale-shopping form.

A more sophisticated version of this would be to offer bespoke content relevant to their purchasing history. For example, if they've bought a pair of expensive trainers, you could send them a training plan calculator; if they've

bought a designer outfit, a blog previewing the forthcoming catwalk collections. Any sharing of content is also an opportunity to cross-sell; if the ROI allows it, test including incentives such as free delivery or discounts.

Opinions and feedback

We all like to feel heard, so as a way of showing that you value your customers' opinions, you could ask for feedback on a product they have recently bought, or see if they will rate their purchasing experience, or even ask their views on new product development. This can not only increase their engagement with your brand, but also give you useful insights and information into your products and processes.

Anniversaries and seasonal activity

Although some activities, like product reviews or service feedback, may be more relevant to the post-purchase period, there are other retention opportunities that you can take advantage of further down the line. For example, if they've booked a skiing holiday at a similar time for the last three years, it makes sense to prompt them, before they start browsing and find this year's trip elsewhere. Similarly, if the product you have sold them has a typical life-span, such as BBQ gas canisters, you could email to invite them to buy their replacements before they run out. As always, an incentive might help you close the sale, but test to see whether the return merits the investment.

Loyalty programmes

For your higher value customers, it may be worth offering a separate tier of benefits and rewards, such as an invite-only members' club or loyalty scheme. This could include invites to product launches, or special events, or perks like free delivery. If you already have a loyalty programme in place, integrate it with your email campaign to make it all the more powerful.

10 things to think about before you press send

Have you made your tone warm and friendly, to match your developing relationship?

Have you optimised the subject line to make your core message clear from the outset?

Have you included images of any products you are recommending?

Have you considered including relevant offers or incentives to support your message?

Have you segmented your audience, to make sure you're offering the right messages or incentives to the right customers?

Are you testing at least one element, to gain insights into what works best?

Have you included a clear call to action that suits your activity, such as a 'Reorder now' or 'Start survey' button?

Have you considered including a navigation bar to encourage them back to your website?

Have you included a customer service element, such as a customer helpline or online chat service?

Have you optimised the email for mobile and other devices?

TL;DR

The 10 second summary

Getting retention right can have a big impact on your bottom line, as existing customers are easier to sell to and more profitable than new ones. Build a coherent strategy based on data-driven segmentation and execute it with care.





How to get lapsed customers back on board

There are many reasons why a customer might stop buying from you. Some are universally true (a change in circumstances, or of email address) and some specific to your company (a bad service experience, or problems with your products). But going off the radar doesn't mean they've gone for good – they might just need a bit of extra encouragement to come back.

Luckily, smart email marketing based on solid customer lifecycle data can give you the tools you need to try and win your lapsed customers over. You won't win them all – though even if they don't respond directly to your emails, you may still have succeeded in re-engaging them with your brand across other channels. But it's still more cost effective to win back a former customer than to find a new one.

A few facts and figures

In a recent study carried out by Return Path:

- Win-back emails had an **average read rate of 12%**.
- Those with **positive subject lines** tended to follow this pattern, such as 'We miss you' (13%) or 'Come back' (12.7%)
- In contrast, re-permission emails (in which the company asks the lapsed customer to opt back in to receiving emails from them) had an average read rate of just 1.8%

Who, when why?

Win-back emails should be sent to:

Lapsed customers.

They should be sent:

There isn't a one-line answer to this; it depends on your business. As a benchmark, a customer who hasn't shopped with you for 12 months or more might typically count as lapsed, but you'll need to dig into your customer lifecycle data to decide what timeframe makes sense for you.

And don't just send one email and think your work is done; as with customer retention, win-back marketing should be a carefully planned campaign involving a series of emails and a robust testing and refining process.

They should aim to:

re-engage your customers with your brand show them what they've been missing encourage them to buy from you again give them the opportunity to explain why they haven't engaged with you recently.

Expert tactics and tips

Segmentation by lifetime value

Deciding which customers you would count as lapsed is just the beginning; you need to

refine your targeting further for a successful win-back campaign. So analyse the recency, frequency and monetary value of these customers' previous purchases and segment them into different, well-defined groups.

This will allow you to work out who your most valuable customers are, and target your efforts accordingly. The chances are, you'll want to include an incentive to persuade them back (though of course, you'll need to test it), so it's really important to know which customers merit what amount of investment.

Personalised recommendations

From new product launches and press reviews to sale announcements, there are many hooks that you could hang your win-back emails on. But it goes without saying that the more relevant your recommendations are to the customer, the more likely they are to trigger a response. So if you're trying to tempt them back with a new product, use their previous purchase data to help you choose what to promote. If you know they've been browsing but not buying, you could highlight the products they were looking at. And even if they haven't been to your site for a while, that's something you can build on; you could showcase a selection of recent arrivals to show them what they've been missing.

Feedback and opt-ins

Another tactic frequently used in win-back communications is to ask the customer why they haven't bought for a while. As well as giving you useful customer service insights, this is another, different excuse to highlight a product or two; and if you incentivise the feedback with an offer such as free delivery, it all hangs together. If you've tried multiple times to re-engage a lapsed customer with no success, you could consider asking them to opt back in or be taken off your list. As figures above show, these emails tend to have very low read rates, which isn't surprising given they tend to be sent as a last resort. But it's a valid reason to contact them, and with the right, light-hearted tone and a tempting offer you might just win a few back; if not, you've at least cleaned up your list.

Testing and refining

Of course, any email marketing campaign should have testing built in from the start, but you might be surprised by what you can learn during a win-back campaign. For example, Return Path's research highlighted the killer fact that a subject line with a discount expressed in cash terms was twice as effective as one with the discount expressed as a percentage. So be ambitious; test, test test, then implement your learnings and test again.

TL;DR

The 10 second summary

Don't let your former customers disappear without a fight. Plan a coherent win-back campaign, using accurate lifecycle segmentation and carefully targeted incentives to tempt as many as possible back to your business.

10 things to think about before you press send

Have you made your tone sufficiently lighthearted, to match the win-back message?

Have you optimised the subject line using high-response copy?

Have you included images of any products you are recommending?

Have you considered including relevant offers or incentives to encourage them back?

Have you segmented your audience to make sure you're offering the best incentives to your highest value customers?

Are you testing at least one element, to gain insights into what works best?

Have you included a clear call to action that suits your activity, such as a 'Buy now' or 'Give feedback' button?

Have you considered including a navigation bar to encourage them back to your website?

Have you included a customer service element, such as a customer helpline or online chat service?

Have you optimised the email for mobile and other devices?



CONCLUSION

There's no doubt that customer lifecycle marketing can take your email communications to a whole new level. Use it to plan your campaigns carefully, and execute them intelligently, and it will make an incredible difference to your response rates, as well as helping you build profitable, long-term relationships with your customers.

To wrap it all up, here are the top five things you should have in mind whenever you're planning a campaign:

Identification

Are you clear about which customer group or groups you are targeting with this campaign? Have you identified where they fit into your customer lifecycle?

Segmentation

Have you segmented the relevant customers into different subgroups based on their lifetime value, and targeted your offers, content and tone accordingly?

Timing

Have you identified the best time to send the emails, based on factors such as the recipients' place in your customer lifecycle, results from previous campaigns or other insights?

And have you checked that there isn't any crossover with another campaign which could lead to them feeling overwhelmed or annoyed?

Testing

Are you using the campaign to refine future activity by testing an element such as: which products you promote; how you display them; offers or discounts; timing; the number of emails within the campaign?

Refining

Do you have plans in place to analyse the results from your testing and feed the insights they give you into future campaigns?

And if you need support implementing, testing or reporting on your email campaigns, or any aspect of lifecycle marketing, the team at RMC would be happy to help. You can contact us as reachus@relateddigital.com, or visit www.relateddigital.com to find out more.

About Related Digital

Related Digital is the leading email marketing and cross-channel campaign management solution provider; offering a wide-range of best-in-class digital marketing technologies and services for many of the world's leading brands. Related Digital was originally founded in 1999 as an email marketing provider and has evolved to provide an easy-to-use, integrated data-driven marketing automation platform called Related Marketing Cloud (RMC).

RMC provides marketers with the ability to form a single view of each customer, enabling true 1:1 personalisation - reaching the right customer, at the right time, through the right channel on the right device. RMC is fully integrated and allows marketers to launch and automate revenue-generating lifecycle marketing campaigns - increasing conversions and customer lifetime value. By connecting and unifying data from a variety of sources - both online and offline - marketers can fully understand the best way to reach each customer

Related Digital serves more than 1500 clients of all sizes across various industries - including brands like Estee Lauder, Morhipo, Audi, Gap, Mama Shelter, Apart Fashion, Turkish Airlines and Ikea. We are proud to support our clients internationally from our offices in Istanbul, Hamburg, Dubai and London.

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