HELLO DIFFERENT — RETENTION LIBRARY · EXPLANATORY EDITION

THE SECOND ORDER

WHY THE CUSTOMER YOU ALREADY HAVE IS THE CHEAPEST MONEY IN YOUR STORE

There are five ideas in this book. They go in order, because each one only makes sense once you have the one before it.

— THE COLD OPEN

Most people who buy from you once never buy from you again.

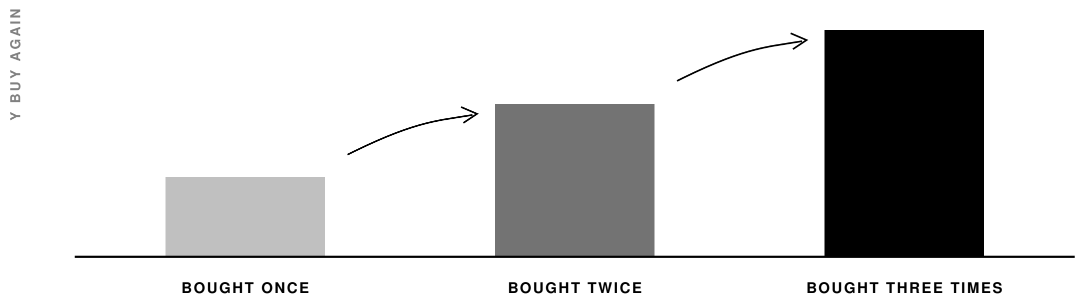
That sentence is worth a second look, because of what it does to your money. You paid to reach that customer, they clicked, they bought, and for most of them that was the end of the relationship. Not because anything went wrong. Usually nothing happened at all: the product ran out, or life moved on, and your store quietly slipped out of their memory. Nobody decides to stop buying from you. They just forget you exist.

Most owners assume this is out of their hands. Some stores seem to have loyal customers and some don't, and it can feel as random as which products take off. It isn't. Whether a customer comes back is mostly decided by a handful of things you control: what you send them after they buy, when you send it, what you offer them, and what that offer costs you. This book walks through those things one at a time.

Why does the second purchase matter this much? Because the first sale usually just covers the cost of getting the customer — the ad spend eats most of it. The second sale is different. You already paid for that customer, so most of that revenue is yours to keep. And customers who buy twice tend to keep going: someone who has bought from you two times is far more likely to buy a third time than a first-time buyer is to buy a second. So the second order is not just one more sale. It is the door to every sale after it.

There are five ideas in this book. They go in order, because each one only makes sense once you have the one before it. Here is the first.

EACH PURCHASE MAKES THE NEXT ONE MORE LIKELY



CUSTOMERS WHO BUY TWICE TEND TO KEEP GOING — THE WHOLE GAME SNOWBALLS FROM ONE EVENT.

I THE DEADLINE

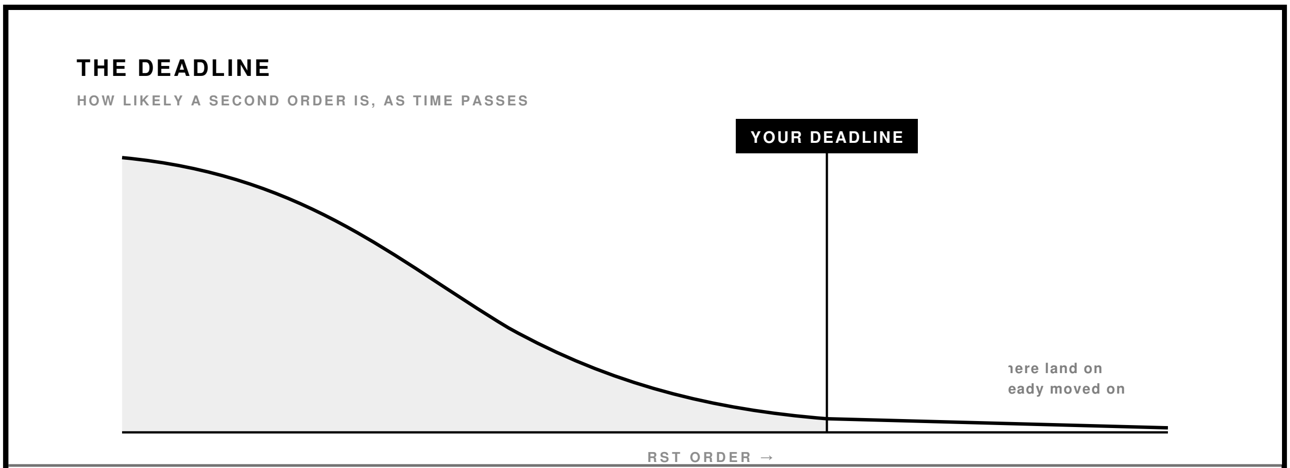
The idea. After someone buys from you for the first time, there is a limited period where a second purchase is realistically going to happen. Inside that period, the customer is still paying attention to you. After it, the chance of a second order drops so far that, for practical purposes, it's gone. The end of that period is what we call your deadline: the date, counted from the first order, after which second purchases mostly stop happening.

Two things to know about your deadline. First, it is almost certainly shorter than you think. Second, it is a real number you can find, not a feeling. Every store's number is different, and yours is sitting in your order history right now.

Why the deadline exists. Why does interest die off like that? Because a first purchase is really a test. In the weeks right after it, one of two things happens. Either the customer uses the product, likes it, and starts building a habit around it. Or the product sits there, the excitement wears off, and your emails turn into just another store asking for money. Habits form in weeks, and attention fades even faster than that. Once enough time passes, you are not their exciting new brand anymore. You are a company they bought something from once.

The reason this idea comes first: every other decision in this book is measured against this date. What you send, when you send it, and when it's worth spending money to win someone back all depend on knowing when the window actually closes.

Here's what it looks like. Take a small coffee roaster. A bag of their coffee lasts a customer about a month. When they looked at every customer who ever ordered a second time, almost all of those second orders came in the first six weeks, and after week ten they basically stopped. So their deadline was around ten weeks. Before they knew that, they sent their "come back" offer whenever someone got around to writing one, which was usually month three. Month three was after the deadline, so they were making offers to people who had already moved on. Once they knew the number, they moved every email into the six weeks that actually decide things. Nothing else about the store changed. They just stopped sending offers to people who were already gone.



REORDER LIKELIHOOD FALLS. YOUR DEADLINE IS WHERE IT'S EFFECTIVELY GONE.

Now watch the same thing in other kinds of stores.

> **A CLOTHING BRAND**
>
> A clothing brand might say: nothing we sell runs out, so this doesn't apply to us. It still does. Their repeat buyers come back while the brand still feels like a new discovery. Give it three months and that brand is one of forty stores the customer has bought from and forgotten. The deadline isn't about the product running out. It's about how long you last in someone's memory.

> **A MATTRESS COMPANY**
>
> A mattress company looks like the clearest case of "no second order." Nobody buys two mattresses. But their customers do buy sheets, pillows, and mattress protectors, and they buy them in the first few weeks after the mattress arrives, while the new bed still feels special. Or they never buy them at all. So the company with the slowest product in retail actually has one of the shortest deadlines.

> **A HOMEWARE STORE**
>
> And a homeware store that sells both candles and dining tables really has two deadlines, not one. Candle buyers who come back do it within a few weeks. Dining table buyers might not need anything for months. If that store used one average number for everyone, it would be wrong about both groups of customers. Your deadline follows the purchase, not the store.

THE PART YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO

You might be wondering how to find your own deadline. The honest answer is that it's already in your order history. You look at your repeat customers and count how long each one took to come back, and the answer is right there. That takes a spreadsheet and about fifteen minutes, and the workbook shows you exactly how to do it. Or we pull it for you. Either way, you are not inventing anything. The number already exists. It has just never been looked at.

THE RULE TO KEEP

IF YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR DEADLINE, EVERYTHING YOU SEND IS A GUESS.

So now you know there's a window, and you know it has an end date. The obvious next question is what to do inside it. What do you send, and when? That's the second idea. And the answer is not "whenever your marketing calendar says." It's set by the product.

II PRODUCT TIME

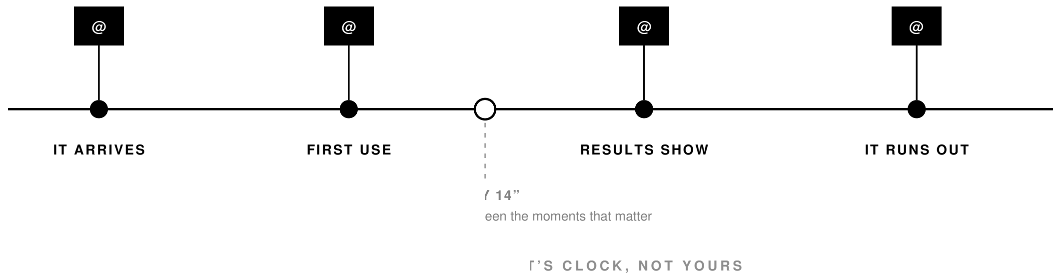
The idea. Most email software answers the "when" question with fixed delays. Three days after purchase, send this. Fourteen days after, send that. The problem is that your customer isn't living on that schedule. They're living on the product's schedule: the day the box arrives, the day they first use it, the day it starts working, and the day it runs out or stops being new. Those are the moments that decide whether they buy again. An email that lands on one of those days feels like attention. An email that lands on "day 14" feels like a machine sent it, because one did.

Why timing decides so much. Two quiet failures cost you more than any badly written subject line. The first is the gap between the box arriving and the product being used. A product that never gets opened never gets reordered, and no discount later can fix that. The second is asking for things at the wrong moment. Ask for a review before the product has had time to work, and you get reviews about the packaging. Ask when the results are showing, and you get reviews about the results, and those are the reviews that convince the next customer to buy.

Here's what it looks like. Take a skincare brand. Their serum arrives around day four, gets used for the first time around day six, starts showing a visible difference near week three, and runs empty around week seven. Their old setup asked for a review on day fourteen, which falls after delivery but before results, so the reviews said things like "arrived quickly, lovely bottle." They moved the review request to week three, when the mirror was doing the selling, and the reviews started saying "three weeks in and my skin is different." Then they added a reorder note at week six, timed to land before the bottle ran empty, so the next one could arrive without a gap. Nothing about the product changed. The timing did.

PRODUCT TIME

THE MOMENTS THAT DECIDE THE SECOND ORDER



FOUR MOMENTS THAT MATTER — AND THE SOFTWARE'S GUESS, LANDING BETWEEN THEM.

Now watch the same thing in other kinds of stores.

A HOT SAUCE BRAND

A hot sauce brand noticed that buyers who didn't open the bottle in the first week almost never reordered. So the most profitable email in their entire setup sells nothing at all. It's a recipe, sent the day the box lands, and its only job is to get the bottle opened.

A ROBOT VACUUM COMPANY

A robot vacuum company found that most of their returns came from units that never left the box. Their day-after-delivery email, which just says "here's how to set it up in ten minutes," looks like customer service. It's actually their retention program, because a machine that runs every day doesn't come back in a returns box. It comes back as an accessories order.

A JEWELLERY BRAND

A jewellery brand sells gifts, so nothing gets "used up" at all. Their timeline isn't about usage. It's the calendar of the recipient's next occasion. The brand that quietly notes the anniversary owns next year's purchase before any competitor even knows it's coming. Sometimes the product's clock points at a date in the future.

THE PART YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO

Working out your own product's real moments — when it arrives, when it gets used, when results show, when it runs out — takes an afternoon of honest thinking, and the workbook lays it out step by step. Or we map it with you.

THE RULE TO KEEP

SEND ON THE PRODUCT'S CLOCK, NOT YOURS.

So you're showing up at the right moments. But showing up isn't enough, because at some point you have to offer them something. Almost every store answers that question the same way, and almost every store answers it wrong. That's the third idea.

III THE NEXT THING

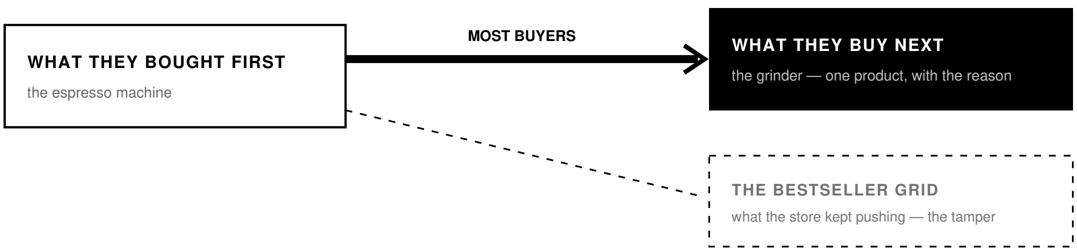
The idea. Open the "you might also like" email from almost any store and you'll find the same thing: a grid of bestsellers, shown to everyone. It feels sensible, but it answers the wrong question. The bestseller grid answers "what do most people buy?" The question that actually matters is "what do people who bought this first usually buy second?" And your order history already holds the answer. In a real sense, the second purchase is already written. You just have to read it, and then sell exactly that: one product, with the reason.

Why the bestseller grid fails. A first purchase isn't random. It tells you why that customer came. The bestseller grid throws that information away and shows everyone the same thing. There's also a bonus you only get by doing this properly: when you sell the observed next thing, your email can honestly say "most people who started where you started go here next." No competitor can copy that sentence, because it's only true in your data.

Here's what it looks like. A home-espresso company learned this one the expensive way. Their bestseller was a tamper, so every post-purchase email pushed the tamper. When they finally looked at their order history, they found that people who bought the machine overwhelmingly bought the grinder next, usually within the first month, once they realised pre-ground coffee was holding their new machine back. So they replaced the grid with one email selling one product, with the honest reason attached. It quietly outsold everything the grid had ever done. The order history knew something the owner didn't.

THE NEXT THING

SELL WHAT BUYERS ACTUALLY BUY NEXT — NOT THE BESTSELLER



EADY HOLDS THE ANSWER

THE HEAVY LINE IS YOUR ORDER HISTORY. THE DASHED ONE IS THE GUESS.

Now watch the same thing in other kinds of stores.

A SKINCARE BRAND

A skincare brand was sure that cleanser buyers would want the hyped serum next. The order history said they bought the plain moisturizer, almost every time. They stopped arguing with their own customers and sold the moisturizer instead.

A FASHION LABEL

A fashion label found that buyers of the statement dress didn't buy another statement dress. They bought the quiet layering pieces that made the first one wearable. The next purchase often completes the last one rather than repeating it.

A KIDS' TOY BRAND

A kids' toy brand found the next purchase wasn't another puzzle for a two-year-old. It was the three-year-old set, months later, because the customer's child had grown. Sometimes the "next thing" is the same person at a later point in their life, and your order history shows that too.

WHEN THE MAP SHOWS A DEAD END

Sometimes the exercise turns up something harder: a first product whose buyers almost never come back, no matter what you send them. That's not an email problem. It means nothing in your catalog naturally follows that product, and no email can fix a catalog gap. Knowing which problem you actually have can save you a year of blaming the wrong thing.

THE PART YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO

Reading those first-to-second purchase patterns out of your order history is tedious but mechanical, and the workbook walks through it. Or we do it and hand you the finished map.

THE RULE TO KEEP

THE NEXT SALE IS ALREADY IN YOUR DATA. SELL THAT — ONE THING, NOT A GRID.

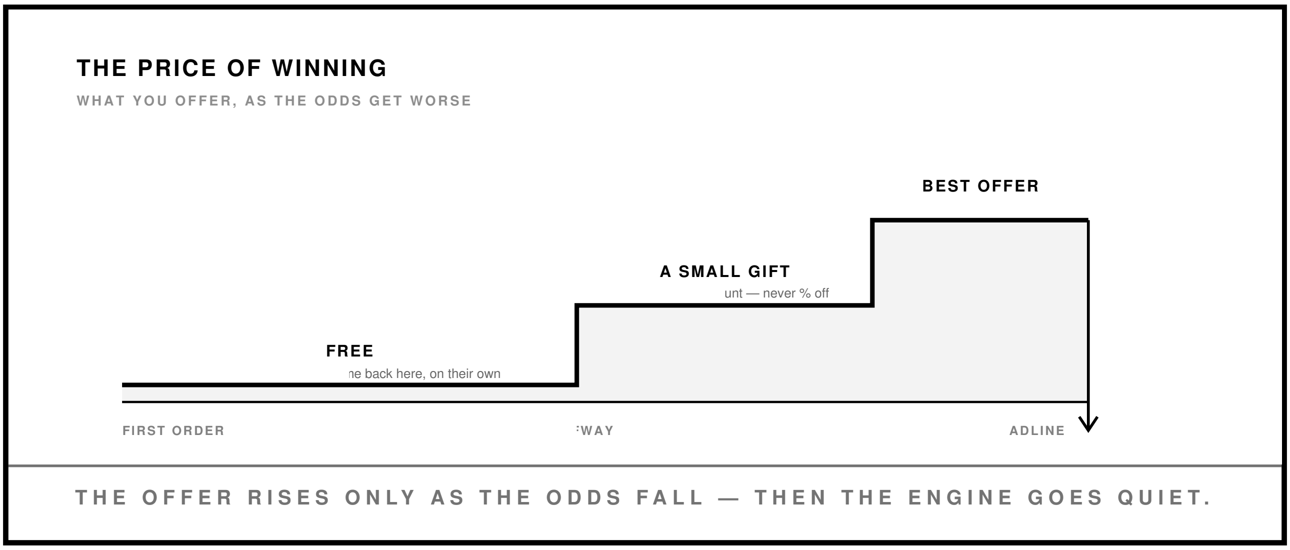
Right moment, right product. That leaves one question, and it's the one that decides whether all of this makes you money or quietly costs you: what should winning the second order cost?

IV THE PRICE OF WINNING

The idea. Here's the fact that changes how you think about discounts: in most stores, about half of the customers who ever come back do it early, on their own, without being offered anything. A discount sent to those people isn't marketing. It's a donation. So the price you pay to win a second order should start at zero and rise only as the odds get worse. Nothing early. A small gift in the middle of the window. Your best offer near the deadline. And silence after it.

Why early discounts cost more than they appear to. Two reasons. The first is the donation problem: you're paying people to do something they were already going to do, and you can't see it happening, because the order arrives and the coupon takes the credit. The second is what a percentage does to your pricing. A discount doesn't just cut the price of one order. It teaches the customer what your products are really worth, and if it shows up in the shipping confirmation, you've taught your newest customer on day one that the list price is fiction. Gifts don't carry that problem. A free item on orders over a set amount costs you a few dollars, feels generous, and nudges the order size up at the same time. That's why gifts come before discounts, always.

Here's what it looks like. Picture a fashion label with "15% off your next order" sitting in the shipping confirmation. It had been there so long that nobody remembered adding it. They removed it, stayed quiet until halfway to their deadline, then offered a small gift on orders over a set amount, and saved the real offer for the deadline itself. Repeat purchases barely moved. Margin went up. Most of the customers they had been paying to come back had been coming back anyway, and this was the first time they could see it.



Now watch the same thing in other kinds of stores.

A SUPPLEMENTS BRAND

A supplements brand chooses its halfway gift carefully: a travel tin. It costs them a couple of dollars and clears the spend threshold, and because it travels with the product, it's quietly setting up the third order while it captures the second. A good gift does two jobs at once.

A FURNITURE COMPANY

A furniture company never discounts after the sale at all, because a considered brand that discounts afterwards teaches buyers to distrust the price beforehand. Their best offer at the deadline isn't money. It's the care kit included with the accessory order, and a real person who answers when you reply. For big purchases, the strongest offer is often certainty, not a number.

THE ONE-IN-TEN TEST

And the bravest version: a candle brand sends one in ten of its customers the exact same final email with no offer in it at all. Those people buy at nearly the same rate as everyone else. The discount wasn't changing anyone's mind — it was just money handed to people who were coming back anyway. So they shrink it, and nothing breaks. Almost nobody runs this test. The stores that do end up keeping money the others quietly give away.

THE PART YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO

Choosing your gift, setting the spend threshold, sizing the final offer, and wiring up that one-in-ten test are all sequenced in the workbook. Or we set it up and prove what's working with your own numbers.

THE RULE TO KEEP

NEVER PAY FOR A CUSTOMER WHO WAS ALREADY COMING BACK.

And with that, the machine is complete: a deadline, messages timed to the product, the right next product, at the right price. Which brings up the last question, and it's the one this book has been building to. Who should own this machine?

V THE MACHINE YOU KEEP

The idea. Everything in this book gets built from your data. Your deadline comes out of your orders. Your next-thing map is made of your customers' actual paths. Your offer levels are set against your own margins and proven by your own tests. That makes this something unusual in marketing: not a campaign that runs and expires, but a machine that gets more valuable every month you run it, the way a skill does, and not the way a coupon does. Every order that passes through makes it a little more accurate. And anything that grows in value raises a question that campaigns never raise: who owns it?

Why ownership decides everything. If this machine lives in an agency's heads and an agency's logins, then you're a tenant in your own store. Rent keeps the roof over your head this month, but the day you stop paying, you walk away owning nothing, and every dollar you paid helped build someone else's house. When the retainer ends, the thinking leaves with it, and what's left is a folder of old campaigns and a login you've never opened. The alternative isn't doing everything yourself. It's a standard you hold everyone to, including us: whoever builds it, the machine stays with you. The numbers, the map, the reasoning, written down, in your accounts, readable by whoever comes next.

Here's what it looks like. Two stores, roughly the same size, spending roughly the same money. The first had an agency run its email for two years. Good numbers, glowing reports. Then the agency and the brand parted ways, which happens, and what remained was nothing but templates. No deadline, no map, no record of why anything was timed the way it was. Year three started from zero. The second store insisted from day one that everything live in its own accounts with the reasoning written down. When their marketer left, the new hire read the notes and had the machine running again inside a week. Both stores paid about the same. One was building a house. One was paying rent.

THE MACHINE YOU KEEP

RENTED

Lives in the agency's heads and logins.
The retainer ends, and the thinking
leaves with it. Year three starts from zero.

EVERY DOLLAR BUILT SOMEONE ELSE'S HOUSE

OWNED

Lives in your accounts, written down.
People change, and the machine stays.
It gets sharper with every order.

WHOEVER BUILDS IT, IT STAYS WITH YOU

SAME SPEND, TWO ENDINGS. THE DIFFERENCE IS WHERE THE MACHINE LIVES.

And notice who this leaves the decision with: you. Some founders take the workbook and build the machine themselves over a few weekends. That's genuinely doable, and the machine you build yourself is the one you understand best. Some want a guide, so we coach them through it and the machine grows in their hands. And some just want it done, so we build the whole engine, prove it with their numbers, and hand over the keys. All three paths end in the same place: the machine, working, and yours.

The rule to keep:

THE RULE TO KEEP

OWN THE MACHINE. RENT NOTHING THAT GROWS.

THE CLOSE — AND NOTICE WHO THIS LEAVES THE DECISION WITH

The first order pays for the ad.
The second order pays for the business.

You now know the five things most of your competitors don't. There's a deadline, and it's a real date. The product keeps the clock, not your calendar. The next sale is already written in your order history. Most second orders should cost you nothing to win. And all of it together is a machine that gets more valuable every month you own it.

1 **BUILD IT YOURSELF**

The workbook — a few weekends, and the machine you build yourself is the one you understand best.

2 **BUILD IT WITH US**

We coach you through it, and the machine grows in your hands.

3 **HAVE US BUILD IT**

We build the whole engine, prove it with your numbers, and hand you the keys.

BUILD THE ENGINE. KEEP THE KEYS.

THE FIVE RULES

I **IF YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR DEADLINE, EVERYTHING YOU SEND IS A GUESS.**

II **SEND ON THE PRODUCT'S CLOCK, NOT YOURS.**

III **THE NEXT SALE IS ALREADY IN YOUR DATA. SELL THAT — ONE THING, NOT A GRID.**

IV **NEVER PAY FOR A CUSTOMER WHO WAS ALREADY COMING BACK.**

V **OWN THE MACHINE. RENT NOTHING THAT GROWS.**