

How to Keep Customers from Abandoning Shopping Carts



Shopping cart abandonment remains a major challenge for merchants, with the average online shopping cart abandonment rate at 75%, according to Listrak's Shopping Cart Abandonment Index.

With Black Friday and the holiday season right around the corner, you will see a dip in cart abandonment rates. That's because ecommerce shoppers are more motivated to complete purchases. However, that does not mean you should not consider investing in or enhancing an already existent abandoned cart recovery program. The recovered sales and increased revenue from a shopping cart abandonment program during the holiday season is huge based on increased shopping volume.

According to MCM Outlook 2013, 35.4% of B2C merchants do not market to

shopping cart abandoners. When you include those merchants that sell primarily to B2B customers, or an even mix of B2B and B2Cs, the number grew to 42%.

Of those B2C merchants that have an abandoned cart program, 51.5% target shopping cart abandoners with emails, while 26.7% retarget with online display ads.

Why Do Consumers Abandon Carts?

Despite all the technological advancements in, and streamlining of, the checkout process, shopping cart abandonment is still a big issue for online merchants. The number-one reason consumers abandon carts is simple: They are not ready to make a purchase.

Other factors lead to cart abandonment

as well. For example, the customer may put items in a cart, and then surf the Web in search of a better deal. Timing of the transaction is a key element, as is pricing and device. It may be the customer does not want to pay for shipping, or, if the transaction begins on a smartphone, the consumer may want to complete it on a different device.

Shoppers also abandon carts because of confused messaging, distracting pop-ups and repetitive forms. And there's also the possibility the customer is just using your ecommerce site to window shop or check prices.

Optimize Product Pages

Ensuring that consumers have the information they need is one way to improve the chances for a completed online pur-

chase. Studies have shown that anything that surprises a consumer during his or her online shopping experience is likely to hinder the purchase. By including all relevant information on the individual product page, the retailer can reduce the chance of surprise for the consumer during the checkout process.

As such, retailers are turning to software and are implementing master data management or product information management solutions to make sure the right information is included with the right product in order to decrease shopping cart abandonment.

Merchants can help decrease the percentage of online shopping cart abandonment by properly addressing and applying improvements to certain product pages and by clearly defining information to consumers.

Include rich product descriptions that contain quality descriptions that accurately describe product attributes and options. Failing to convey detailed product information, retailers not only limit their sales but also hinder the way they are found in searches.

Sizing and measurements should be displayed in a manner that helps the customers understand the context—apparel can have sizing charts, appliances can show graphical representations of size or fit within various environments.

Use multiple product images that detail the various angles or even use of the product. For example, show the product in the package, out of the package, images showing nutrition or allergen information, etc.

Easy product comparisons based on in-depth specification information, rather than just side-by-side listings of free text copy, will also help. This requires breaking down paragraph-based copy into specific elements or attributes that customers would use as a comparison point.

Don't forget to use rich, descriptive text that includes feature and benefit statements that are designed to help sell, convince and persuade.

You also need to include consistent

product details that provides the same level of information regardless of where a person chooses to shop. Retailers need to ensure that they share accurate information with its websites, ecommerce applications, printed media, kiosks, POS systems, sales training materials, customer service applications, etc.

Showcase your customer reviews based on shared ratings, comments, questions, answers and stories about products and brands. Product availability, shipping costs and returns information should also be clearly stated on the product page.

Warranty, service, installation and product guide information should be made available as digital assets. Alternatively, the information could be made available for download or as plain text on various ecommerce channels.

Optimize the Cart

A streamlined and efficient shopping cart funnel that does away with errors, distractions and confusion, allowing visitors to do precisely what they came to do, will help keep those shoppers who intend

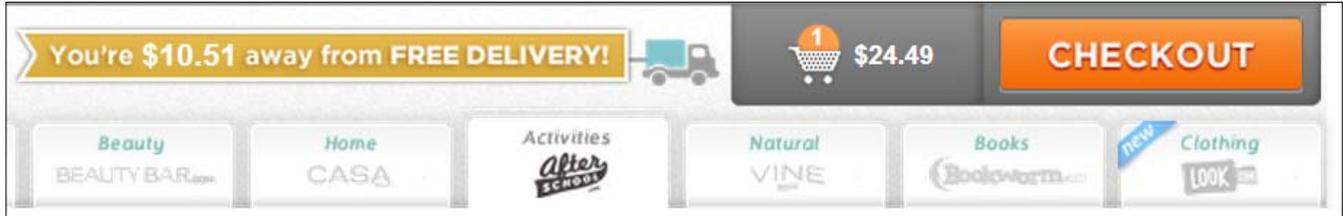
to make a purchase. There are five key elements your shopping cart needs to make the checkout experience easy for your customers.

Give your customers the instructions and information they need at the very start of the checkout process. A clean, concise progress bar at the top of the page, showing each checkout stage and highlighting which stage the shopper is currently at, is a great way to do this. Calls to action should also be as clear as possible; there should be no question as to what the next step in the process is. Aside from a link to the home page, there should be nothing that distracts or takes shoppers away from the checkout page.

If you offer free or discounted shipping, make sure that's strongly emphasized throughout the site, not just in the shopping cart. You can also set a dollar amount needed in the cart to activate free shipping. If you go this route, include messaging that tells shoppers how much more they'll need to spend in order to qualify. Multiple shipping options and holiday delivery schedules should be prominently dis-

NFL.com uses retargeting ads such as this one to follow customers who placed an item in their cart, but did not follow through with a purchase.





Amazon subsidiary Quidi uses a perpetual cart at the top of its ecommerce sites to remind customers they have items in their carts, and includes a banner to remind them of milestones, such as how much more they need to spend to take advantage of free shipping.

played in the cart as well, so buyers can make sure their gifts arrive on time.

Forms are often a source of customer frustration. If a form is too long, too confusing, too invasive or insists on registration, you're simply going to lose customers at the very point where you could have gained them. Allow for guest checkouts, auto-fill capabilities, or the option to create an account after the order is placed.

Displaying a security logo or seal throughout the checkout process will reassure visitors that your site is trusted. Visual aids such as a lock or a checkmark, as well as words like "safe" and "secure," should be prominently displayed.

Also, allow for other payment methods besides credit cards, such as PayPal, Amazon Payments or Google Checkout. If you use promo codes, keep the information on the checkout page; if customers have to bounce around the site to go hunting for promo codes, they might not come back.

Abandoned Cart Recovery

Act fast and follow up. If a buyer has made it all the way to the cart, she is a high-priority audience to re-engage. On average, abandoned cart messages recover more than 20% of sales and generate a whopping \$17.90 per email sent—much higher than typical non-targeted email promotions.

But 54% of abandoners who end up purchasing do so in the first 24 hours after leaving the site. To capture and convert these shoppers, go beyond simply defaulting to a discount. Stress service and con-

venience, offering customer service assistance options (such as email, phone and live chat) as well as payment alternatives such as PayPal to win sales.

Give shoppers product alternatives. Since many cart abandoners are "window shopping," give them a sampling of alternative products that might better suit their needs. Add a banner across the bottom stating that returns and exchanges are always free to help boost trust in your brand.

Retargeting Ads

Many merchants made adding or expanding retargeting advertising a priority for their digital marketing campaigns in 2013. As this opportunity continues to be a cost-effective means to increase conversions from existing traffic sources, the space will get more competitive and prices will continue to rise.

According to MCM Outlook 2013, 30% of B2C merchants would spend more on retargeting if they had a larger marketing budget. Although 40% of merchants said they were using or planned to use retargeting in 2013, respondents only rated it a 5.5 out of 10 in terms of value to their online strategy.

You can't email a shopping cart abandoner if you don't have the user's email address. But a retargeting program can help those prospects and customers top of mind as they surf the Web. This points to the need for marketers to be more sophisticated in deploying retargeting programs, leveraging stronger strategies than many currently in use.

For example, make sure your ad changes over time. Rather than keep serving one ad, one offer, and one experience to those you are retargeting, mix it up.

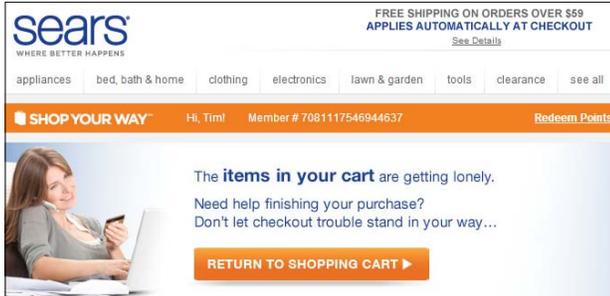
Set multiple cookies with different time parameters for the same event on your site. As each cookie expires, you can change the ad and offer. This way you can keep your ads fresh, and if one offer didn't get a click, the next one might.

When you get clicks for a particular ad/offer combo that isn't converting, stop serving that offer. Instead, set a new cookie to get people into a new marketing path with different offers or incentives, or at the very least, a different image.

One of the easiest ways to get quick results is to simply retarget visitors who were so close to a purchase but didn't finish. But don't stop at cherry-picking the easiest prospects. Set longer lists for customers who did purchase and then try to reengage them later.

This will again require two durations in your tagging, one for, say, 60 days and one for 120. That way, once the 60-day tag expires, the 120-day is still active, so you can get in front of your customers again to remind them of your brand at just the right time.

Also, perform a holdout test. Many times an ad campaign is set up to retarget abandoned carts and the sales it generates are attributed to the ads. But how many of those sales may have come in naturally? The ease of setting up segmented lists, especially in Google AdWords, means you should put each ad campaign to the test.



Sears is among the many merchants who send email reminders to customers who have placed an item in a cart, but did not complete a purchase.

It is a simple process to split visitors into two groups using URL-based tagging in AdWords, each group with staggered cookies expiring in seven and 14 days. Then market only to half for the first seven days and watch the overall conversions of both groups.

Ideally, you'll find the right length of time that allows visitors to come back naturally and complete the purchase without costing you needless clicks. And by popping up a few days later for those who don't return, you'll not only be far less wasteful in your budget, but also less annoying to those who planned on coming back anyway.

Email Recovery

The biggest challenge to launching a cart abandonment email series will be coordinating the data needed to trigger the message and populate relevant data. Al-

though this can be seen as a hurdle, this is typically a one-time process and you will quickly recover any costs once the program is up and running. Considering a lot of the up-front work is data related, this could lead to a decreased focus on the content of the email itself.

Make sure you have basics right. Your cart abandonment email should include the products from the basket, and it should link straight back to the saved basket. Also, make sure the email message is personalized.

Use an email template that is similar to your standard promotional emails, but use the body of the message to visually echo the look and feel of the cart. Avoid including information that seems overly technical or machine generated like long SKU numbers or unnecessary order or customer identifiers. Include elements such as a photo of the product, price, shipping costs, payment options and quantity.

Timing is everything. Since the abandoner may be comparison shopping, searching for a coupon code or shopping across devices, you could lose the sale if you wait too long to send your post-abandonment email. Waiting more than 24 hours to send your abandoned cart email

could mean the shopper is less engaged and less likely to complete her purchase.

Cross-sell with an offer and product recommendations when seeking to increase engagement with cart abandonment emails. For example, you may want to mention that you sell a product that would go great with the product that was left in the shopping cart.

You can make your message stronger with a second email notifying the shopper when his or her cart will expire. The second message could also include an incentive or discount to complete the purchase. Follow up approaches like these can lead to closing the sale.

Make sure you limit the recipients of the second message to those who, at a minimum, opened the previous message to avoid the perception that you're badgering the shopper. Savvy shoppers may abandon their carts and wait to see if they get a coupon to complete their order. If you are offering an incentive, make sure you have set parameters that do not allow serial abandoners to receive an offer each time.

Working on the basis that 50% of the recipients won't open the email, and approximately only 5% will purchase, a cleverly crafted follow-up should achieve 40% of the performance of the initial send. Don't repeat the same email to people who have opened. That is the way to turn relevant email into spam. ■

The following articles from MultichannelMerchant.com were sourced for this executive summary report:

- 3 Top Retargeting Strategies for 2013
- 3 Triggers to Boost Your Email Marketing
- 4 Ways to Screw Up Abandoned Cart Messages
- 5 Tips To Improve Shopping Cart Abandonment Emails
- 5 Tips to Optimize Your Shopping Cart
- Get Your Holiday Email Plan in Place
- Giving Data Direction To Minimize Shopping Cart Abandonment
- MCM Outlook 2013: Ecommerce
- Online Shoppers Need to be Nudged