

THE EMAIL PERSONALISATION COOKBOOK FOR

RETAIL



Introduction

Welcome to the email personalisation cookbook for retail.

When I started in email marketing way back in the early 2000s, personalisation was usually nothing more than merging the customer's name into the body of the email.

Since then, we have seen personalisation evolve from creating several variants of 'dynamic content' tailored to different customer types through to seeing more of what is termed 'individualisation' – where each element of the email is chosen specifically for the individual recipient.

The growth of email personalisation has been driven largely by the results it has proven to generate time and again, with research suggesting that it can generate 6x the revenue than 'batch and blast' messaging.

Yet there is a shortage of email personalisation best practice material that helps marketers overcome the pitfalls, come up with fresh ideas, or simply to separate the buzz words from the realities.

This is the reason I decided to write this book and share our decades of experience in email personalisation.

When I ran my first email personalisation campaigns, we seemed to be breaking new ground not covered by other email marketers. Harder still, there wasn't any 'best practices' or experts to fall back on either. As a result, we took many wrong turns along the way.

With this book, we hope to put you and your business on the right track from the start of your email personalisation projects by:

- Understanding the unique requirements of email for personalisation
- Planning your email personalisation projects and where to start
- Fresh ideas of what is possible with email personalisation

We hope you enjoy the cookbook and wish you all the success in your email personalisation projects.

Sean Duffy
Founder & CEO Reignite

How to use the cookbook

The primary purpose of the cookbook is to help email marketers with the planning of email personalisation strategies as well as provide you with concepts, inspiration, an idea of the data and technology required, along with an understanding of how to make basic forecasts of potential returns, aiding prioritisation.

When we talk about personalisation in this cookbook, we primarily refer to the selection of what product content to display to each individual customer. However, we also cover tailoring promotions, additional customer touchpoints, using contextual data such as location and weather, and how to retain creativity while adding personalisation.

Who is this cookbook for?

If you send a lot of marketing emails and are looking for fresh ideas and inspiration, or you are struggling with personalisation projects, or simply unsure of where to start, then this cookbook is a great starting point.

While we provide recipes to follow, this is not a technical guide. Rather, it will assist you with thinking about what to prioritise, the standards you should be aiming for, and the logic behind the personalisation.

Using the cookbook with Reignite

Reignite is our email personalisation solution that integrates with every email-sending solution. The recipes within this cookbook are easily implemented within Reignite using the 'Recipe Builder' to create bespoke personalisation algorithms to meet the requirements of the campaign. Additionally, they will help you to overcome many specific challenges of personalisation for email including: creating your own merchandising rules; ensuring you inspire customers with a diverse set of products; controlling how often customers see the same items, and; seeing in advance what the product listings will look like for different customers.

If you would like to see how Reignite can help improve your email personalisation, visit our website (www.reignitehq.com) to request a demo.

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Why Personalisation?

I doubt there are many of you reading this who don't believe that personalisation is a good thing, especially for email marketing. That said, it's worth spending a few minutes restating why it's so important.

First of all, consumers are starting to demand it. Here is just a small portion of the statistics that back this up:

55% Unsubscribe because of irrelevant information



DMA Consumer Email Tracker 2019¹

In the same report consumers were asked to describe what they like about brands that do emails well. Here is the word cloud:



35% want content related to items they purchased in the past

31% want content based upon their location
(Email Addiction Research Report 2019, zettasphere/emailmonday²)

62% of consumers feel “happy” and “excited” to respond to a personalised message from a retailer
(Dynamic Yield Research³)

And finally, from my lived experience as a marketer, here is a typical comment I heard when talking to consumers:

“ I always open <retailer name> emails because there is always something of interest to me

- Emailcenter, UK Consumer Views on Email Marketing

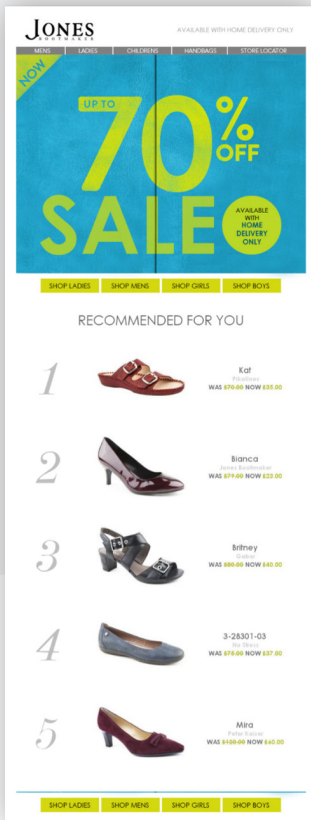
Along with the demand from consumers, we also know marketers see a greater performance when using personalised campaigns. Here are some statistics to support that:

- 74% of marketers say targeted personalisation increases customer engagement (Econsultancy Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing⁴)
- Personalised emails drive 6x transaction rates (Experian Email Marketing Study⁵)
- Segmented & targeted emails generate 58% of all revenue (DMA National Email Client Report⁶)
- Marketers see an average increase of 20% in sales when using personalised experiences (Monetate⁷)

Real-life email personalisation results

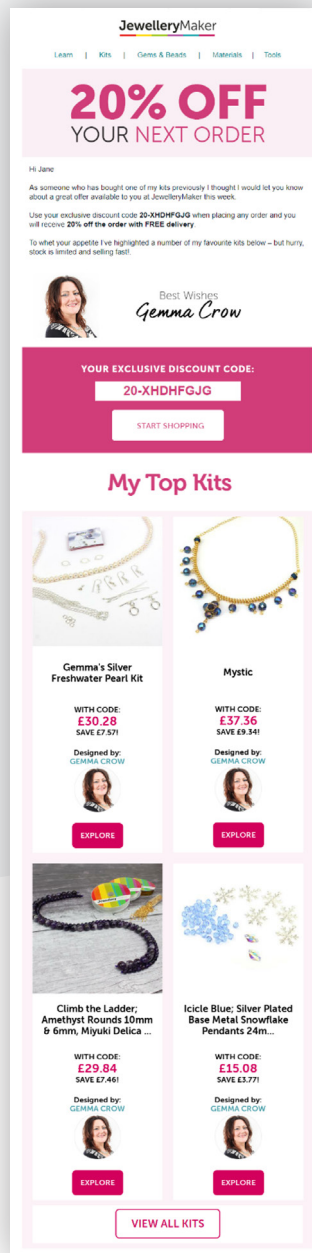
JONES
BOOTMAKER
EST. 1857

62% revenue increase from sale campaigns by adding products personalised to the customer's size and taste.



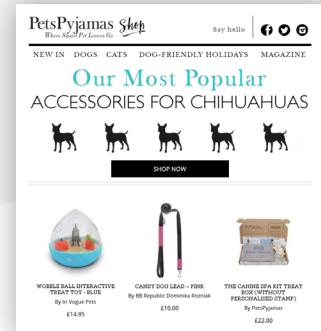
JewelleryMaker
A GEMPORIA PARTNER

A 133% increase in orders by personalising the jewellery making kits shown by the customer's favourite designer.



PetsPyjamas
Where Passionate Pet Lovers Go

Generated 7% click-thru rates when personalising products based upon the breed of the customer's pet.



Why are so few email marketers pursuing personalisation?

73% of marketers say less than half of their emails contain any personalisation.

A study by Pure360 and Holistic Email Marketing⁸ showed that even when personalisation was used, it was of a basic form, with few emails achieving a 1:1 level of personalisation. Some could argue that much of this isn't actually personalisation, but rather segmentation.

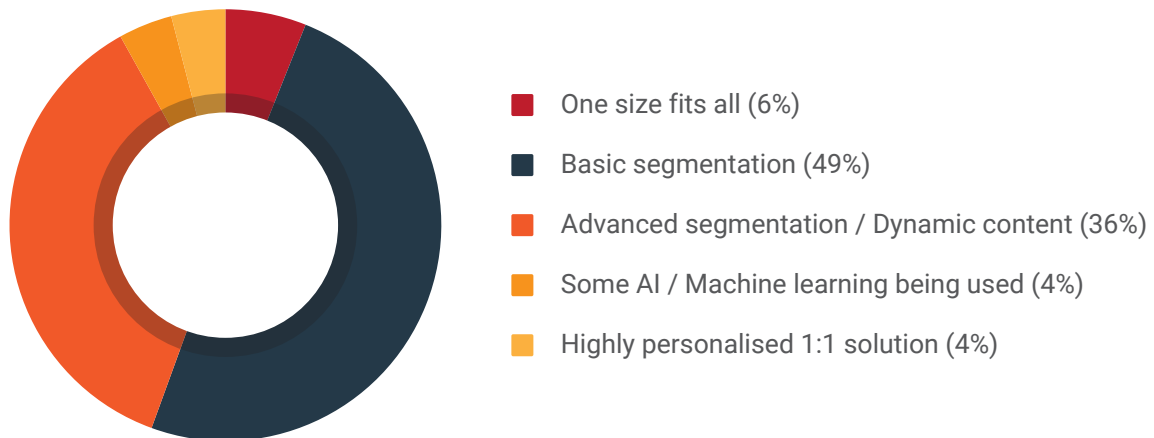


Figure 10: Select your current ability to personalise within email

The same research also highlights some of the reasons for this:

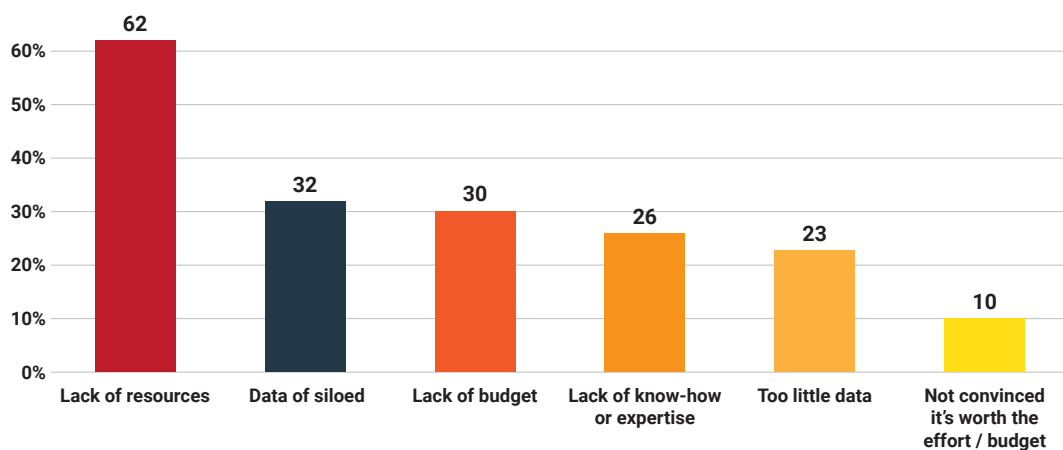


Figure 12: What is preventing you from delivering a more advanced personalisation strategy? (select as many as applicable)

62% state a lack of resources. This is something most email marketers can resonate with as they are so busy fulfilling their current schedule of emails. We liken it to a hamster pedalling on a wheel - no matter how fast you pedal, you stay in the same place.

Adding personalisation does take a lot of effort, however, this is something we believe is changing and our own technology and client experience show it can actually reduce manual production tasks, thus saving time.

The other key reason that isn't generally borne out of research studies, but can be observed wherever you look, is the need for businesses to control what product content goes into the email and what specific promotions are shown, with what frequency in order to meet short-term commercial goals.

Too many personalisation activities are side-lined when a brand has to change focus on simply getting more promotional emails out to the masses.

Email will always be the main push channel that allows fast delivery of short-term revenue gains and to support key business initiatives, whether that is pushing certain brands, product lines, or old stock. While we can dream of a world where all messages are completely customer-centric, the hard, cold, commercial reality is that won't happen.

Instead, to ensure personalisation works, we have to embrace this commercial reality; something that, as you read through the recipes, will become apparent.

Some examples of merging commercial reality with personalisation includes:

- ✓ Sale campaigns with products in size

- ✓ Ability to promote 'own brand' or high margin products

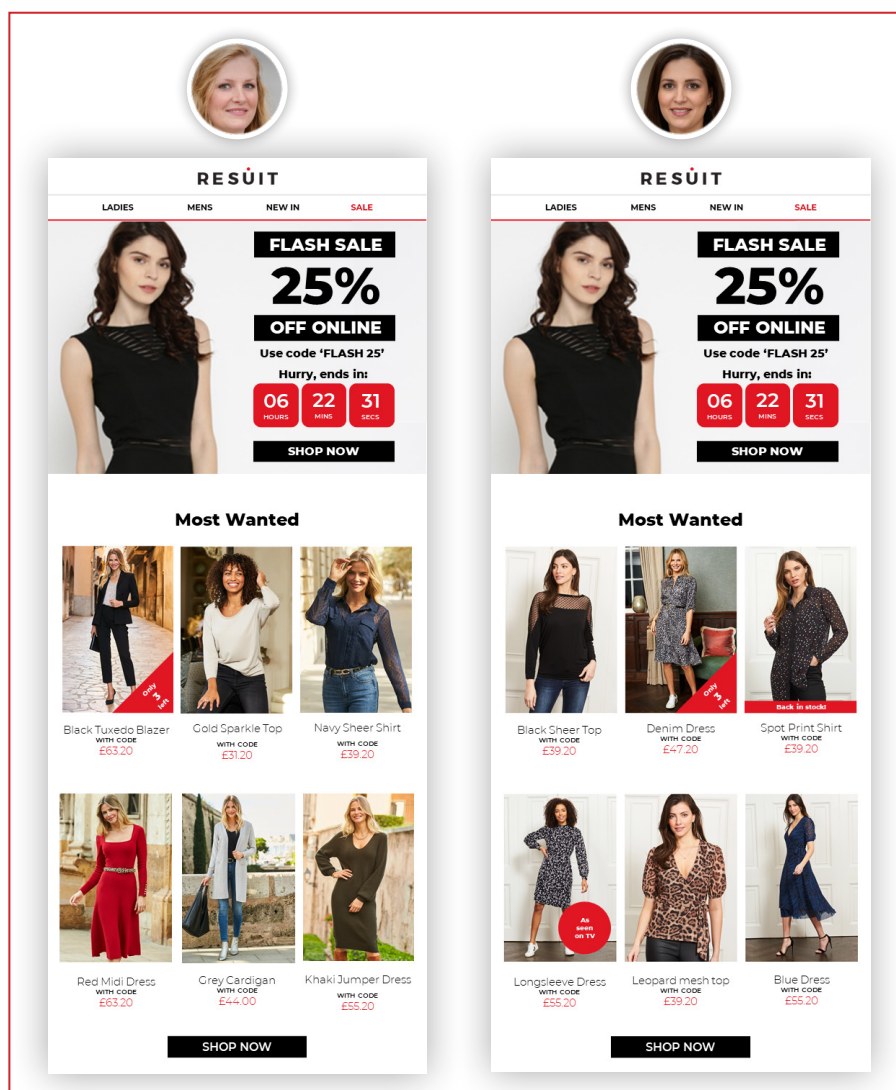
- ✓ Push offers to boost sales, but tailor the promotion by the audience to minimise margin impact

What do we mean by personalisation in email marketing?

With the demand for personalisation from email marketers being so high, it's inevitable that every technological solution under the sun claims to be a personalisation solution when, in reality, it's anything but.

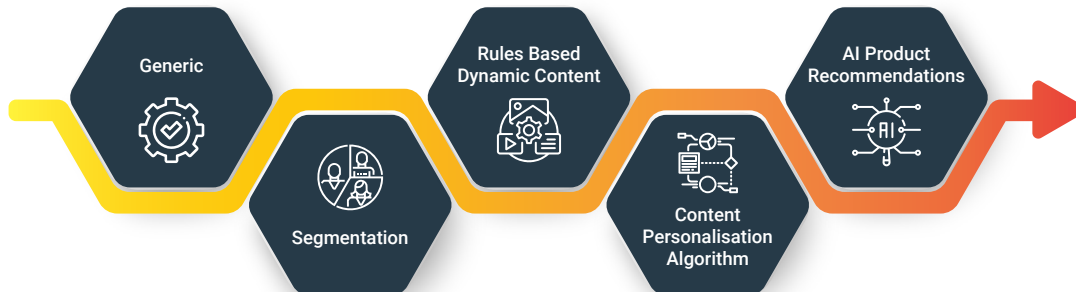
So, we all know that 'Hi <Firstname>' isn't a type of personalisation that is meaningful in the context of this cookbook. But we also see solutions that claim to offer personalised products to every recipient that are also not. Best sellers and new in or 'trending' products are simplistic algorithms that are often claimed to be recommendation flavours but will show the same to all.

My personal take on what true personalisation really is, is that it's about content that is tailored to each individual's tastes and preferences. It is here that the performance of personalisation can be observed at scale. The following is an example of an email that takes that individualised approach:



Both customers get the same email, but the products are tailored to their different tastes based upon past purchase and browsing activity

How you get to this level of personalisation often takes several steps. Think of an imaginary staircase with each step generating additional benefits, but takes additional thought and resources to achieve:



Let's go through each of these steps, and discuss the pro's and con's of each approach.

► Segmentation

Strictly speaking, this isn't personalisation but we include it here because so many refer to this as such. Segmentation, in the context of email, is sending different emails to different groups of customers based upon a series of rules.

This could be a brand-specific promotion to those that previously bought the brand. The obvious problem with this approach is that it requires a lot of manual creation of email content; something that most email teams don't have the resource for.

Revenue per email will be much higher than 'batch and blast' but it's much harder to reach the same volumes of emails sent to realise this increase.

The other area we might see segmented campaigns is triggered messaging, such as abandon baskets or welcome emails. These are, in reality, a segmented email with the criteria simply being 'abandoned shopping cart today'.

Pro's:

- ✓ Easy & quick to get started
- ✓ Ideal for test cases proving personalisation delivers additional revenue

Cons:

- ✓ Requires significant additional production resources
- ✓ Content still tends to be fairly generic rather than personalised to individuals taste

► Dynamic Content

A step up from segmentation is Dynamic Content. This is where a single email is sent to the whole audience, but the content is varied within the message based upon rules.

If we take the brand promotion further, you might have a rule for those whose last purchases was Adidas, another for Nike and so on.

While an improvement from segmentation, it still lacks scalability as you are limited by the amount of time you have to both create the content for each variation, and the number of rules you can write.

Pro's:

- ✓ Potential for more personalised combinations than segmentation
- ✓ Easy to keep evolving and adding to

Cons:

- ✓ Personalisation is limited to the number of rules and associated content you have time to produce
- ✓ Can require advanced coding skills to implement in many email marketing systems

► Content Personalisation Algorithms

In a small number of email platforms, there is an option to create your own basic algorithms for pulling content in. Rather than writing a rule for each variation, these will pull content based upon data in a customer field.

For example, if we again use the brand example, the algorithm will fetch products that match the customer's 'last brand purchased' field in the platform. This means you can cater for many more variants and not have to manually build each variant. You can do a one-time setup and use it for any campaigns going forward without extra effort.

However, these options tend to prevent marketers from having granular control over what is shown. You might be able to display the products in order of popularity, but very little control after that. This includes the problem of showing the same products in every personalised email you send, so the list of products quickly becomes stale and less effective.

There is also the issue of what data is available for the algorithm to generate results. You might know the brand a customer purchased previously, but they may have only ever purchased it once. Therefore, they can only be used to recommend more of the same than assist with breadth.

Pro's:

- ✔ Can generate content per individual for less effort than manual personalisation rules
 - ✔ Setup once, low ongoing maintenance required
-

Cons:

- ✔ Often lack granular merchandising control over the results shown or repeat the same items each time
- ✔ Only uses known or past behaviour to personalise, leading to a cycle or recommending more of what they have just bought

► **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Product Recommendations**

With the content algorithms, we discussed a weakness that they only return items based upon known past purchases or preferences.

AI Recommendations try to overcome this by using the past purchase data to find similar customers who also bought the same items and then look at what those individuals also bought. It's the same principle you see on Amazon with 'customers who bought this product also bought these items'.

These recommendation systems promise a lot. For little effort beyond dropping a few tags into your template, they enable you to add fresh product content that is tailored to your customer's specific tastes.

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Not all solutions are created equal.

The quality of the results delivered by any AI is down to two factors:

1. The quality of the algorithm
2. The quality and breadth of the data used

Many of these recommendation products are generic black-box algorithms, where the nature of how the algorithm works is hidden in mystery. The exact same algorithm and data inputs are expected to work equally well for every type of business - from luxury fashion retailers to online travel agencies and discount stores. It is absurd to suggest this can work optimally for every business.

The lack of control over results can create practical issues, too. Will the recommendations show the same products in every email the customer opens? How do you stop the results from being filled with one type of product? Can you control what gets shown with merchandising rules? There is no point in sending a sale email with products recommended that aren't in the sale.

Then there are those AI Recommendations that aren't really personalisation solutions at all, but offer flavours like 'Best Sellers' or 'New Products' - they are simply generic lists of products that everyone will see.

You might at this point be thinking why is this at the top of the email personalisation ladder if there are so many issues? We have highlighted the potential pitfalls because there is such a range of hyped solutions being offered to email marketers in this area that it's vital to separate the good from not-so-good.

The better solutions give the marketer greater control over the nature of the algorithm and the results are shown to provide the ultimate level of personalisation (all while saving them significant email production time).

Pro's:

- ✔ The greatest potential for matching product content to customer tastes
- ✔ Can assist with promoting a breadth of relevant items, even when a customer has purchased only one or two items previously

Cons:

- ✔ Buyer beware: AI solutions are only as good as the algorithm and the data that is used in the algorithm
- ✔ Solutions often lack the granular level of control to use at scale across a range of email campaigns

► **A Note on 'Real-time Email' Solutions**

Growing in popularity are real-time email content solutions. These work by inserting image tags in the email that adapt the moment they are opened. This allows the content to be personalised based upon contextual factors such as the current time, weather in the location, or the customer's proximity to their nearest store.

Critics would argue that without additional data and logic to make decisions on the right content for each individual, their value is limited.

However, these play a welcome part in email personalisation and can have other benefits. One such way includes having a simplified and agile approach to integrating personalised content into the email without having to worry about the restrictions of the email-sending platform's personalisation suite.

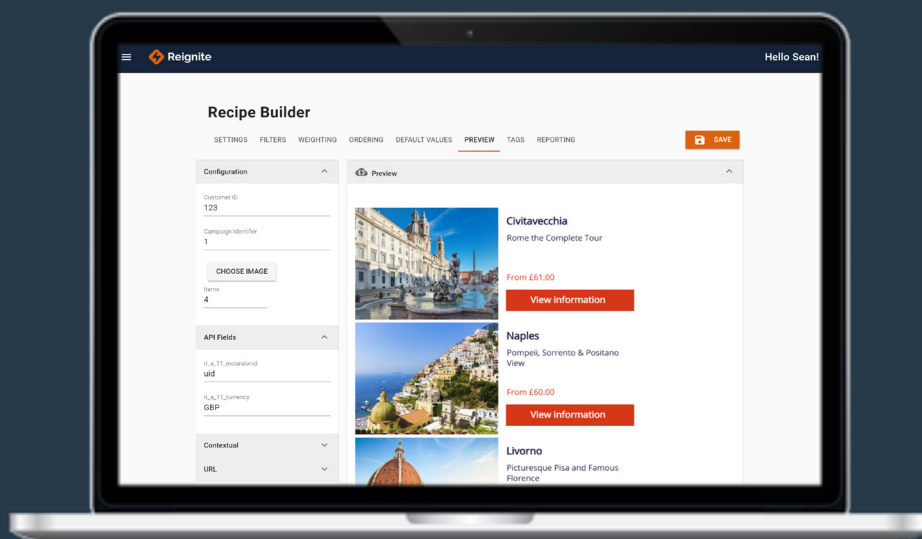
Some of the more innovative creative emails over the last few years have been developed with real-time email content platforms due to the ability to produce personalised images with no restrictions on styles or fonts like traditional HTML emails suffer from.



The Email Personalisation Platform

Reignite is an industry-first email personalisation platform that works with **every** email marketing sending service.

Designed for the specific challenges of email personalisation, Reignite can both create new revenue opportunities for brands while helping email teams reduce email production time with content automation.



- ✓ Unique 'Recipe Builder' for crafting personalised content
- ✓ Create your own AI Product Recommendations
- ✓ Real-time email content & dynamic content tools with Photoshop like editor
- ✓ Expert team of personalisation specialists support you at every stage

Learn more and request a demo at

www.reignitehq.com

Personalisation and **the specific needs of email**

We've discussed the different levels of personalisation, from manually created segments and dynamic content rules through to 1-2-1 personalisation.

Yet what are the specific considerations for the email channel in particular?

► **Email's Role is to Inspire The Next Purchase**

Most personalisation outside of email, such as on-site recommendations, work by calculating what the customer's intent is in their current browsing session through the searches and product pages they have viewed. The objective here is to attempt to convert the customer to buy those items right now.

Email is different - the customer hasn't visited our site; it's us who have chosen to send them a message. Some of these customers might not have visited your site in over a year and are not currently in buying mode. Our email is there to inspire that next purchase; to encourage them to click to visit and find something to buy.

Instead of trying to be as close as possible to their last intent, you need to show a variety of items across different categories.

► **Shop Window**

In a similar vein to inspiration, it's useful to think about email as your shop window.

I was once told the merchandising strategy for the footwear retailer I worked for. They would only buy a very small amount of more colourful shoes. I'd get frustrated as we had wonderful photography of these items, but we would never have enough stock online to push them in email.

The reason I was given is they are used for dressing the shop window; to attract people knowing that they will all end up buying the black or brown version of the shoe!

Visual merchandising of the shop window needs to intrigue customers, but also create the entire ambience for the store. The goal is to attract attention quickly inside 3 seconds and hold it long enough to encourage them to walk through the door.

The exact same rules apply to your email campaigns.

If you were to look at what people bought after they clicked on your email, it's always surprising how many people buy something different to what they click on. And we know most people will open the message only for a few seconds.

Personalisation for email isn't about predicting exactly what specific item someone will buy, but rather about delivering them a variety of items that are within their taste in a format that captures and holds that attention.

This means upweighting more attractive or intriguing items like those with extra colour.

► **Freshness**

With most brands sending several email campaigns a week to their lists, marketers who choose product content generally ensure they don't pick the same items each time. If you're using an automated solution to personalise, there is a danger that you can fatigue your database if the results are always the same. Therefore, once an item is seen by an individual in an email, you need to ideally hide the item from further emails for several days.

► **Campaign Themes**

Every campaign calendar will have a variety of themes to follow. Some of them will be key calendar events like Christmas and Mother's Day, others will be product-centric around new season styles and more again will be tied to specific promotions.

Email has the challenge of matching personalisation to each of these themes. There is no point in including items outside of the theme, so control is needed on what gets selected each time.

► **Business Priorities**

As previously discussed, email is used as a means of delivering short-term sales uplifts as it's the only channel that can deliver the scale of sales for the cost.

This also means personalisation has to adapt to these requirements with the ability to include older stock that needs to be cleared, higher-margin items, or items from partner brands.

That is not to say personalisation should be moved to one side, but we need to layer in these requirements. For example, if you are clearing old stock, we can still highlight the items in the sale within each individual's taste.

Or maybe it's simply having a merchandising rule within your recommendations that pushes items higher in the results if they generate a better margin.

The Ingredients of **Email** **Personalisation**

Before we move into the recipes within this cookbook, we need to talk a little about the 'ingredients' you'll be using.

► **Planning & Analysis**

What does effective personalisation look like for your brand? You can probably take an educated stab at what means you would choose different products for different customers. But a better way is simply to look at the existing data you have.

A great starting point for this is to look at those customers who have made it to two purchases. What are the patterns between the first and second purchases? Is there a strong correlation between brand, styles, categories or price point?

Focussing just on first to second purchase cuts out a lot of the noise from your very best customers that are more likely to buy across many product ranges, while still giving you a significant volume of data without the bias of seasonal influences.

This will then give you a starting point to base your first few initiatives from with confidence these patterns already exist, and, therefore, you can help accelerate them.

Yes, over time you'll want to look way beyond the second purchase as you encourage breadth of spending across multiple categories, but it's always better to start simple and build upon these learnings.

Here is an example showing the category of the first purchase versus the category from the second purchase (we have hidden category names to protect the identity of the brand). The percentage shown in each cell is the proportion from the first purchase category that buy in the second product category.

	2nd Purchase								
First Purchase	Category A	Category B	Category C	Category D	Category E	Category F	Category G	Category H	Category I
Category A	15.57%	6.37%	3.75%	6.91%	3.08%	31.04%	4.69%	18.70%	9.99%
Category B	4.47%	15.10%	8.18%	4.74%	6.47%	24.04%	7.49%	18.15%	11.36%
Category C	2.76%	10.78%	14.40%	3.58%	6.37%	23.41%	7.52%	18.40%	12.78%
Category D	4.07%	4.37%	2.33%	16.40%	7.10%	20.31%	8.52%	27.20%	9.70%
Category E	1.87%	6.68%	4.52%	7.05%	15.94%	22.78%	9.84%	21.45%	9.88%
Category F	5.61%	7.26%	5.61%	5.82%	5.72%	33.42%	6.36%	20.67%	9.54%
Category G	2.69%	6.26%	5.02%	7.56%	7.65%	19.62%	16.41%	23.13%	11.66%
Category H	4.19%	6.35%	5.31%	7.36%	6.40%	25.44%	7.71%	25.90%	11.35%
Category I	4.26%	6.94%	5.73%	6.13%	6.42%	21.69%	8.45%	21.92%	18.46%

Some categories simply tend to be bought more often than others, but you can still see the patterns showing that the customer is most likely to buy the same category as the first on the second purchase.

Beyond specific product taste, it's also important to think about when customers will buy. So many marketers we come across have fixed ideas of when it's OK to talk to a customer about their next purchase. Perhaps it's at least 30 days since the last purchase, for fear of bothering them or because they deem that the time someone becomes lapsed.

Instead, look at the actual data. 9/10, you'll probably find that the most popular time for a second purchase is the day after the first purchase, and if someone hasn't made that second purchase within 30 days of the first, the chances of them ever coming back are tiny.

These timings always surprise marketers but it's crucial to understand as leaving either repeat purchase activity or lapsed campaigns for too long can dramatically lessen the chances of bringing customers back.

Here are two examples of reports that show the speed of repeat purchases and typical 'lapsed' timings.

Days to 2nd purchase	% of customers	Average 12 month spend
<5 days	37%	£2051
5-14 days	21%	£1060
15-24 days	8%	£997
25-34 days	5%	£698
35-44 days	3%	£478
45-54 days	2%	£597
55-64 days	1%	£242
65+ days	22%	£211

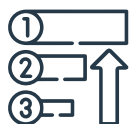
The first table shows customers who returned for a second purchase. 37% of all of these do so within 5 days of the first purchase - many before the order is delivered. It goes up to 58% if we look at the first 14 days. Another way of looking at this is if they don't make another purchase within 14 days, you only have a 42% chance of ever getting that purchase, and this drops to just 22% beyond 64 days.

The second example below is an attempt to gauge an optimum time for sending reactivation campaigns.

Total Orders	Average Days Between Orders	Median Max Period Between Orders
2	82	165
3	81	198
4	76	217
5 to 11	55	226
11+	17	175

The average days between orders give us a reasonable picture of typical order frequency. However, customers don't tend to order in regular patterns but clusters of activity. The end column looks at this differently, finding the longest period between orders a customer has had and identifying the median rather than average value across all customers. This shows even the best customers can go long periods of time between orders. You might, therefore, choose to reconsider how aggressive your reactivation offers are for certain groups to prevent giving away too much unnecessary margin to customers who are 'sleeping' rather than 'lapsed'.

Clearly, both of these example reports will vary enormously across different brands, but also rather than giving you an exact answer, they require the marketer to use their experience and judgement when planning timings of retention and reactivation campaigns.



Where to prioritise?

First of all, you'll see there are more than a dozen 'recipes' and this list isn't exhaustive. Not all of these will apply to your brand but you need to decide where to start. To do this, it's a case of what is going to give you the biggest bang for the lowest amount of effort.

Again, there isn't an exact science to this. You need to use your judgement and experience to estimate what sort of uplift in performance each campaign could give you. We show examples of this 'back of an envelope' maths against each recipe.



Measurement

As personalisation attempts often start with fairly engaged, active customers, they can automatically look successful as open, click, and conversion rates are far higher than your weekly 'blast' sends. That is as much the nature of the audience as your personalisation. The audience are likely to be above average in terms of engagement rates.

So, to judge your personalisation effectiveness you have two main options.

Firstly, you can compare the same audience's performance of one of your recent non-personalised campaigns versus the personalised email. This will give you a reasonable level of confidence if you see an uplift in the proportion of those who got both emails responding more to the personalised version.

But by far the best approach is to keep a hold-out group of a random percentage of those who qualify for the email from receiving it and ideally send a generic message instead. Comparing the revenue activity of both groups then enables you to confidently judge if there was an incremental uplift from personalisation, or if it simply would have occurred anyway.

► Data

It goes without saying that data and how that data is transformed is a key ingredient. Don't despair though - most of this data you probably already have, or certainly can easily access.



Product data

There is a strong likelihood that you already have a product catalogue for the purposes of Google Shopping Ads and similar types of campaigns. You can then use this as your source for populating your email with recommended products. The more data you have against the products in the file, the more you can achieve both in the filtering of what is shown (perhaps by brand or category and, of course, stock availability) or by ranking (such as best sellers, most viewed or top-rated).



Customer data

Under this, we can count purchase history, browsing behaviour and preference data. Handily, much of this data is available in your email marketing platform already. Having this data in aggregate form is particularly useful for making personalisation decisions. For example, last brand purchase, favourite category, or a field with a list of all products purchased are types of aggregated fields that can be useful.

► Logic

Once you have the data, the next key ingredient is logic to make sense of it and filter what is shown to customers.



Filters

These can be generic such as 'Product is in stock', 'Category = Sale', but to tailor products to specific customer tastes, this might also have rules such as 'Category = [favourite category]' where the category could be different for each customer or perhaps 'Product ID NOT IN [Past products purchased]'.



Diversity

This logic ensures the results have some variety in them, whether that is a variety of brands or product categories. Without this, an email can become uninspiring with certain product types dominating all the slots in the email.



Sleep Rules

When manually selecting products to show in email campaigns, marketers typically ensure they don't pick the same ones time and again. When leaving the decision of what to select to an algorithm, there is a danger that the algorithm will pick the same ones over and over again. A simple solution is to have what we call 'sleep rules' where you prevent the same items from being shown to the same person in any given time period, such as 7 days.



Ranking

How you choose to prioritise what to show can be handled by ranking rules. Here are some of the options

- **Product Recommendations Algorithms**
Typically generated by Artificial Intelligence, these models will rank each product in priority order for each customer. The nature and quality of these algorithms can vary considerably but these predictions have the advantage of surfacing unique products to each individual with minimal maintenance.
- **Product Popularity & Recency**
At the simplest level, ranking can be achieved just by showing the most popular based upon sales, or recency based upon the date they became available. On their own, this ranking won't generate particularly

effective results, but combining with other rules, such as filtering based upon the customers favourite brand, gives a simple method for adding personalised products.

— **Weightings**

Rather than have a fixed ordering approach, an alternative is to use weightings to push certain products higher or lower in the returned results. There are a few reasons for doing this. Perhaps as a business, you need to give more prominence to products in a promotion. Or maybe you want to boost more colourful items to make the results more visually appealing. Or perhaps you simply want to boost a product's chances of appearing if it's in the customer's favourite product category or brand. Weightings give you more control over the personalisation shown than basic ranking.

► **Tools & Technology**

The obvious starting point for email personalisation functionality should be the email marketing platform you are using. However, nearly all email platforms have limited functionality in this area. For example, they might be able to store endless information about your customers, but product data has nowhere to go and no means of building logic other than handwritten dynamic content rules.

You will see some platforms offer features like Product Recommendations, but these tend to be of limited scope and often lack the ability to control the logic of how the personalised content is shown.

This is why there are so many personalisation solutions that integrate with the email marketing platforms, either by providing an API that pulls the results into the email at the point of send or more commonly, by providing standard HTML tags to add to the email that fetches the personalised content at the moment of open by each recipient.

Designing Effective Product Layouts for Email

A key part of all personalised campaigns is the products shown. This can be a challenge when personalising as you want to avoid them looking like a dull, uninspiring grid.

Here are our top tips for creating effective product layouts for email personalisation:



Colour & Variety of products

Critical to the feel of the email is the actual products themselves. The main elements of the logic can be discussed in the recipes themselves, but to reflect the visual requirements of the email, there are two key concerns.

Firstly, where appropriate, a variety of product types should be displayed. In Reignite, we have a 'diversity' feature that allows you to specify what product data point you want (such as style, colour, or brand) to ensure there is a variety. Without this type of logic, there is a danger that personalised products are dominated by one type.

The second piece of logic is to ensure more attractive, eye-catching items are prioritised to avoid a wall of dull-looking products.



Recipe shows one item per style with eye catching colours pushed higher in results

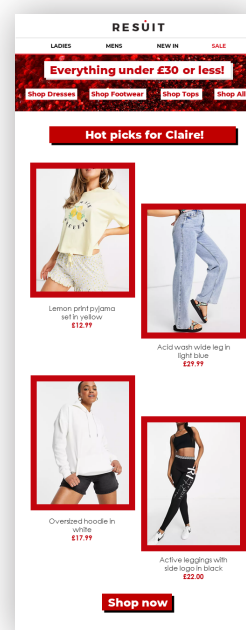


Non-rigid layouts

While scanning the email, the human eye will be looking for visual cues on where to focus. To aid this scanning, and encourage scrolling, it's best to avoid lots of straight horizontal breakpoints.

Instead, consider designing layouts that are less grid-like and use mixed patterns. Perhaps alternate between left and right alignment of product images and overlapping sections.

A basic rigid layout can make the personalised products look like they are picked by a machine when you should be aiming for a tailored look and feel where possible.

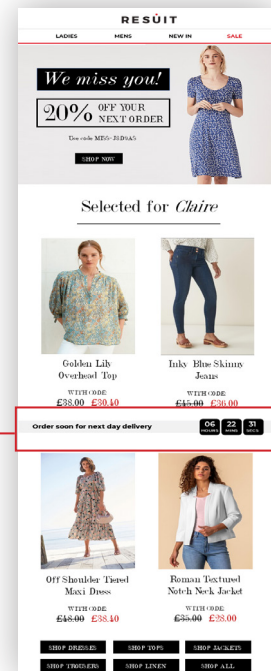




Break it up

Interrupting the list of products with alternative content is another way of aiding scanning and scrolling of the email. This can be achieved with some simple banners or maybe by simply detailing how long they have left to order for next day delivery.

Simple use of a next-day delivery banner breaks up the grid and aids scrolling down the email



Fresh Layouts

Email content that is repeated time and again can become like wallpaper to recipients, so keep rotating through designs and layouts, even if it's just a colour wave change.



Mobile Friendly

Typically, 80% of opens are on mobile devices, so it goes without saying that any layout needs to work on both larger screens (desktop and tablet) and on smaller phones.

Template coders can sometimes be guilty of choosing to stack everything though and overstating the requirements to cater for the smaller screen. Mobile phone resolutions are very high, so don't rule out a two-column structure as this is usually large enough to see and click, and benefits from the recipient not needing to scroll as much.



Product Badges

There are additional opportunities for highlighting products and influencing recipients with the use of product badges where appropriate.

Product badges, also known as stickers or labels, are often seen on website product listings pages where they are overlaid on product images with a relevant piece of information, such as low stock quantities, or if the product is a best seller.

These can invoke psychological triggers with your recipients as they can use scarcity, urgency, and social proof-influencing techniques. Here are some examples to consider:



Social Proof

Add Ratings & Reviews stars or how many sold today or even how many are looking at this item right now.



Product Attributes

Add labels such as Top Seller, Most Wanted, New In or As seen on TV to highlight key products.



Urgency

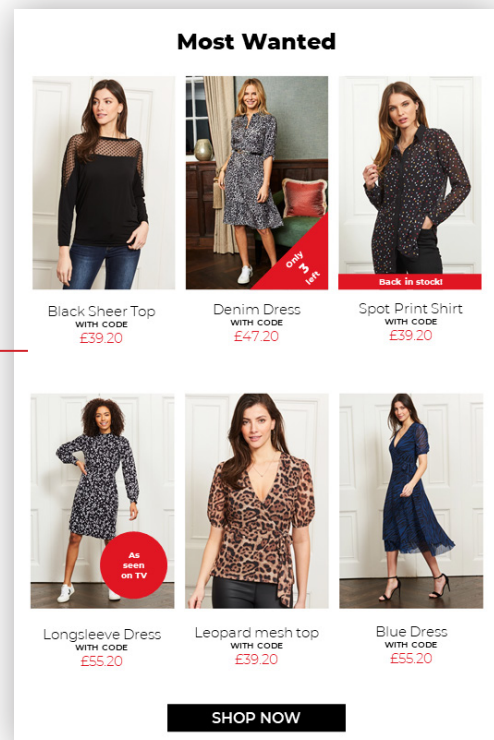
'Last few remaining' or similar messages on items where stock is low will help drive immediate action.



Savings

For products on offer, highlight the savings in a prominent badge.

Example email layout using a variety of badges overlaid on the product images



The Recipes

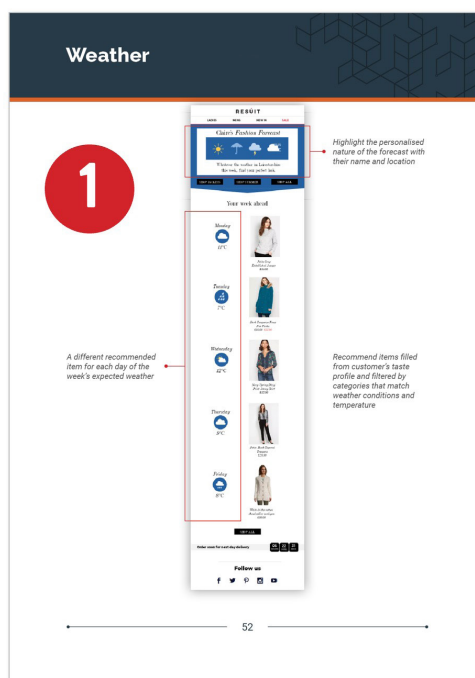
Unlike a traditional cookbook these recipes don't give you step-by-step instructions, rather they are designed to:

- Inspire new ideas that translate to your brand
- Highlight the workings of the recipe, helping you plan data and merchandising requirements, whether you are using a platform like the Reignite Recipe Builder, or working with internal tech teams
- Prioritise which recipes are likely to deliver the most return for you and your business

Recipe Format

Each recipe has 4 sections:

1. The visual design showing one version of the personalised email, including layout, hierarchy and other merchandising considerations
2. A rationale behind how this recipe can solve key business challenges
3. The description of the recipe and the logic that is used to determine what is shown for each individual recipient
4. A basic 'back of an envelope' calculation, not designed to be 100% accurate, but to give you a means of forecasting which recipes might deliver the greatest return



Sale Campaigns

RESULT

LADIES MENS NEW IN SALE

SALE
UP TO
50%
OFF
SHOP NOW

Selected for you

Ottavia
£100 ~~£50~~

Irwin
£100 ~~£50~~

Order soon for next day delivery

06 HOURS 22 MINS 31 SECS

Carnation
£100 ~~£50~~

Graphic Vine
£100 ~~£50~~

SHOP ALL SALE

Shop in-store

Your nearest store is Oxford Street, London

Follow us

f t p i y

Personalised recommended products from sale, that are in stock in the customer's size

Encourage immediate action with an animated next day delivery timer

Use of was/now pricing to show savings

Nearly every retailer will have a number of sale periods throughout the year to clear space for the new season range.

For email marketers, these campaigns have some specific challenges to address though.

Firstly, sale campaigns can last for several weeks at a time. This is especially true in multi-channel retailers where the cost of changing point-of-sale is high, so sales tend to last several weeks. At best, in this period, the headline sale discount might change but generally, it's going to be the same message again and again. For the email programme, there is a danger of the message going stale.

Additionally, including products in these emails is a challenge. Sale stock by its very nature tends to have low quantities with fragmented amounts of sizes left. Building emails in a traditional way with sale products means, by the time the customer clicks on the product, it's either completely sold out or isn't available in their sizes, thus lowering conversion rates.

With limited freedom of what products can be included in an email, this also leads to a repetition of the same old items that aren't even to the customer's taste.



Recipe

Using a personalisation recipe, we can automatically pull through into every sales email a series of products without the same restrictions of static-built emails.

Firstly, we can use information on customer sizing to filter the products, so each customer will only see items that, at the moment of opening, are in stock and in their chosen size, thus boosting click-to-buy conversion rates.

If you track what products customers have viewed online, any of these can be pushed to the top of the personalised listing as the now-reduced price is clearly going to increase the chances of them buying. Equally, we might also want to exclude any items the customer has already bought as highlighting the fact they could have paid less doesn't create a good feeling.

In addition, we can layer in preferences around taste such as styles or brands, or use a recommendation engine to further rank which items are shown, using bestseller data to rank remaining products.

Finally, we would typically include a diversity filter on something like product type to ensure there is a range of product types included in the email, and a recency setting so a product doesn't get re-displayed during your sale campaigns.



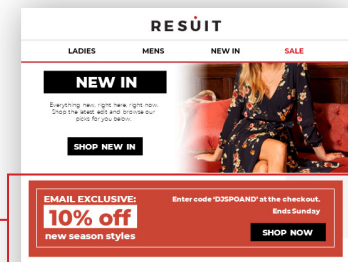
Forecasting Uplift

We have seen this recipe deliver a 60% incremental increase in revenue when split-tested against the same email without any personalised products.

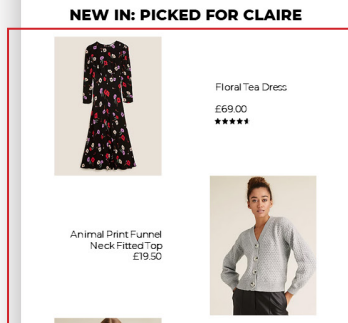
Maintaining this performance over all sales emails in a year is unlikely, but an overall 10% uplift in revenue from all sales emails is a realistic goal.

RFM Promotions

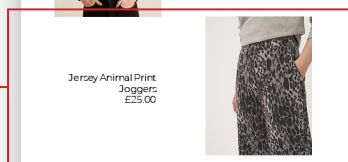
Different levels of offer based on prior spend and last purchase date



Alternate left/right layout helps draw the recipient's eye down the email



Recommended products filtered by New In with 'diversity' setting on category to ensure a mix of product types



Live social feed from the brand's Instagram account



Retailers use short-term promotions to help keep trading numbers on track for where they need to be against forecast. There is usually the general expectation that the email database can be used en masse to support these tactical promos.

This isn't optimal for a number of reasons.

Firstly, sending the same promotion to the whole customer base isn't ideal as that will cannibalise sales that would have occurred anyway from your most active and loyal customers, thus impacting margin.

One approach is to manually segment your database so that different customers get different offers. The problem with this is it adds extra work to your already-stretched and stressed-out team.

There is also the view that plastering these promotions all over the website can cheapen a brand and distract from your core themes and messaging online.

And finally, this blunt approach isn't customer-centric focused, but determined when you need the money; not what the right promotion is for each individual customer at any one time.



Recipe

RFM stands for Recency (How long since last purchase), Frequency (How often the customer purchases), and Monetary (How much a customer spends).

Each customer is given scores associated with these values and allows you to plan the treatments to these groups accordingly, such as:

- Reactivate lapsed customers with attractive headline offers, such as flat percentage discounts
- Increase frequency with tailored offers, such as free delivery
- Increase average order value, perhaps through offers such as 3 for 2, or £10 off when you spend £50

These promotions can then be served via a single content block within existing emails. The promotion (if any) can be chosen at the moment the customer opens the email based upon their current RFM scores. If there are no current promotions, or the customer doesn't qualify, then nothing is shown.

This makes maintenance simple as you are maintaining one content block that can be inserted into any email. This includes automated emails, such as welcome messages and transactional sends without needing to edit each email to update offers.

In fact, you could control the offer dates and promotions to different segments from something as simple as an online spreadsheet.

The benefits to the retailer of this approach are numerous, including a much greater scale and reach of these offers as they can be included in any email. Email teams prefer them as it means they are not building additional emails for some short-term promotions.

Trading managers are happy because they see revenue uplifts but without the dramatic hits on margin as there is little cannibalisation of sales from the most active customers, and can also see key KPIs like AOV increase.

And, of course, your website doesn't have to support as many promotions and can have promo-free periods with these running as 'Email Exclusives'.



Forecasting Uplift

Clearly, the nature of the promotions, and your chosen segment sizes, will determine the revenue uplift you will achieve. By the nature of the promotion you are planning, you'll be working backwards from the revenue figure you need to hit! A bit of trial and error and you'll get pretty accurate on forecasting these promos. You may already have response data on past campaigns you have run.

However, to understand how much of a priority for your business such a technique should be, we have previously calculated that this approach when used around 1-2 times per month for six months delivered in the region of 3.5% of all online revenue for our client.

Daily Deals

Deals automatically fetched from website or API - no manual template builds required

RElectro.

Home Hot Deals Categories Laptops Smartphones Cameras Accessories

TODAY'S DEALS

CANON EOS 250D DIGITAL SLR CAMERA + 18-55MM IS STM LENS KIT

REGULAR PRICE **£649.99**
SALE PRICE **£449.99**

SAVE £200

42 Sold - only 5 remaining!

Hurry, deal ends tonight

07 : 10 : 06 : 51
DAYS HOURS MIN SEC

SHOP NOW

More great deals...

Sony Cashback Claim up to £300 Cashback From £1,545 inc cashback Sony A7 III Mirrorless Camera	Best Seller Save up to £50 From £169 Telescopes
Google Save Save up to £60 From £29 Google Nest Products	Limited Time Savings Save up to £146 From only £49 Gimbals and Stabilisers

FREE SHIPPING STORE FINDER EMAIL PREFERENCES GIFT CARDS

Twitter Instagram Facebook YouTube Pinterest Snapchat

Social proof and urgency influencers

Other live offers automatically pulled through to the template from the website to give customers choice if the main deal doesn't appeal

Creating 'Daily Deals' or even 'Deal of the Week' helps retailers keep interest among their customers. Done well, and your customer base will continually revisit to see what deals are on offer today.

For Daily Deals to work well, a broad mix of product categories is required to cycle through to ensure there is always something fresh. They don't tend to work so well in sectors with limited product breadth.



Recipe

For this recipe, we are creating an email with the deal being the main content. For your brand, it might integrate more effectively into your email programme as secondary content in existing emails.

Within our email, we have a single deal showing. When this deal expires or is sold out, we replace that with an overlay - you might prefer not to show it at all, or pull in the next offer instead.

In the offer itself, we are using a mixture of live data to add persuasion factors.

Firstly, we calculate the saving between the 'was' and 'now' price, as that is usually not expressed in any product feed, and insert that into the live image itself.

We also add social proof showing how many items have been sold and how few are now remaining.

Finally, we create urgency using an animated countdown timer to show how long the deal will last.



Forecasting Uplift

There are many variables at play with daily deals, namely frequency of send. A lot of brands will be reluctant to send daily for fear of swamping their subscribers with too many emails.

However, let's say you send 3 times a week for 50 weeks of the year, this gives you 150 'Deals of the Day' as secondary content in your normal emails for that year. If we assume each deal averages £1,000 in revenue, this alone would give you £150,000.

Browse Abandon

Personalising by brand avoids putting 'we saw you were looking at...' messaging

RESULT

LADIES MENS NEW IN SALE

BEST OF BRANDS

DUNE LONDON

SHOP NOW

'Painter' Ankle Boots
£125

TRENDING NOW

Obsessive
£99

Patricie D
£140

Otylia
£140

Payge
£130

SHOP ALL DUNE LONDON

Shop in-store

Your nearest store is Oxford Street, London

Follow us

f t p i y

First product viewed displayed in hero to ensure it catches the eye

Chosen items are in stock and are the closest match to the first item to match intent, with any additional items viewed pushed to the top of the list

Remind customers of alternate ways of shopping with a personalised map showing their nearest stores

The Browse Abandon email is exactly what it says - sent to those who look at products on-site but don't get as far as adding to their basket.

While not as much intent to buy is shown here compared to those who have already added to the basket, clearly these prospects are worth following up with as most websites convert 2% of visitors, leaving behind 98% who don't buy. Therefore, there is little to lose by sending a follow-up email. Huge wins are made here.

The key to a successful browse abandon campaign is the tracking mechanism for matching a visitor to an identifiable person. Clearly, the more visitors you can identify by building up a large cookie pool, the more emails you can send, and the greater impact the programme will have.



Recipe

Our personal preference is not to be overt with the messaging. Sending things like, 'We see you've been looking at some items', can feel creepy and overbearing to some people.

Instead, we identify the customer intent and match the messaging to this. In this case, we have tailored the messaging based upon the brand of items they were looking for.

To capture as much attention as possible, we have included the first item they were looking for in the hero. The first item is usually the most important as that usually is the strongest signal in terms of their intent for the nature of products they were looking for. But rather than include it in a clumsy way that looks stuck-on, we have integrated it into the creative using a picture frame; something that helps elevate the look of items using standard photography rather than a lifestyle shot.

The rest of the products we have filtered on the same brand to match our messaging and upweighted those that they also looked at from the same brand to ensure they appear. In fashion retail, like this example, we would also typically filter on gender or department, in this case, ladies footwear.

In most other recipes in this 'cookbook', you'll notice we apply a diversity filter to ensure we show a breadth of product types. But here we don't want that as, unlike other emails where we are trying to inspire, here we have seen specific intent from the customer and we want to recommend products close to that to drive interest back to our site.

The rest of the ordering of items is then usually best-suited to a popularity ranking, such as most viewed or purchased.



Forecasting Uplift

As a rule of thumb, we normally say a good behavioural email programme consisting of multi-stage basket and browse abandonment campaigns can generate as much as an incremental 5% on all online revenue, although this is typically seen as half of this. Of that, 80% is usually associated with basket abandonment where there is a much higher intent, leaving up to 1% of all online sales to be associated with a browse abandon email programme.

Cart Recovery

RElectro.

Home Hot Deals Categories Laptops Smartphones Cameras Accessories

DON'T MISS OUT!

We've noticed you have left an item in your shopping basket.

Our great deals only have limited stock so checkout now to avoid missing out on this great deal.

CHECKOUT NOW

Lenovo V15 Ryzen 3 8GB 256GB SSD 15.6" Win10 Home Laptop

★★★★★

£499.99

12 people are looking at this

Order soon for delivery tomorrow

03 HOURS 17 MINS 01 SECS

Have a product question?
Chat live with our product experts who will be happy to help you pick the right product for your needs.

START LIVE CHAT

Trustpilot
★★★★★

FREE SHIPPING STORE FINDER EMAIL PREFERENCES GIFT CARDS

Twitter Instagram Facebook YouTube Pinterest Snapchat

Show main item abandoned above the fold

Social proof and urgency influencers

Trust markers to give customers confidence to complete purchase

Studies show that 68% of shopping carts are abandoned, making an effective cart recovery programme a high priority for online retailers (Source: Baymard⁹).

These carts are abandoned for a multitude of reasons from trust concerns, complexities of purchase, delivery costs, through to simple distractions or simply the fact they are browsing and not quite ready to buy.

The first key task for marketers when tackling cart recovery is to ensure their tracking mechanism maximises the number of carts that can be matched to an individual. If you are relying on customers logging in or reaching the part of the checkout where they enter their email address, you are missing out on a vast number of potential carts that can be retargeted. Instead, any solution should be able to identify visitors from many different sources, such as email campaign click-thrus, newsletter signups, logins, and checkouts – not just identification made in that session, but also remembering them on future visits.

Our preference is not to create a single abandonment programme but segment by user type - an active regular spender requires different messaging to a brand-new customer, while the nature of the product in consideration can also be an area for optimising variants. For example, a department store that has a customer buying a brand-new TV will perhaps have concerns about warranty while a clothing customer will be thinking about sizing and returns if it doesn't fit.

The first email should ideally reach the customer within the first hour of abandonment as carts are more likely to go cold after that. Then it's typical to have a daily email during the next few days if a purchase hasn't been completed. Each additional email will see diminishing returns, but should still deliver additional returns for a few days, possibly longer for more considered purchases.

In terms of including incentives in cart recovery, you'll often see so-called best practices that suggest you shouldn't. But if you are sending segmented versions, then there are definitely opportunities, if not on the initial send. The key here is to measure correctly, keeping a control cell that receives the non-incentivised version and measures how many of those come back to complete their purchase (by any means, not just clicking via the email).

For the purposes of describing this recipe, we are keeping this one nice and simple with a one-product, generic version.



Recipe

In our recipe, we are making a big play for urgency, using the 'Don't miss out' messaging. Other variants might take the form of 'Can we help?' or ramp up the urgency even more with a 'Last chance'.

We are putting the product right up above the fold as this is what will grab attention. Within the product itself, reviews and other reassuring data points are worth adding. For example, we might also include how many people have bought this item already.

Instead, we are including how many customers are looking at this item right now as we are valuing urgency here.

We provide a single call-to-action. We haven't actually included any alternatives or recommendations here and that is quite deliberate. We don't want distractions at this point but simply focus on getting the customer to complete their purchase. Giving customers more choice only creates indecision, so for once, we don't try and be too clever with product selection.

To push urgency further, we are highlighting they can get the item tomorrow with next day delivery if they order within the time shown by the animated timer.

Lastly, we ensure we include any credentials and trust markers - in this case, a Trustpilot score and the option to speak with a human being on the phone or chat to answer any specific questions they might have.



Forecasting Uplift

The issue of incrementality of cart recovery campaigns is a hot topic. Too many vendors will claim 100% of those that receive the email and buy as recovered revenue.

This is simply just incorrect. A high percentage of customers will return on their own accord to complete their purchase, no matter how many emails you send them.

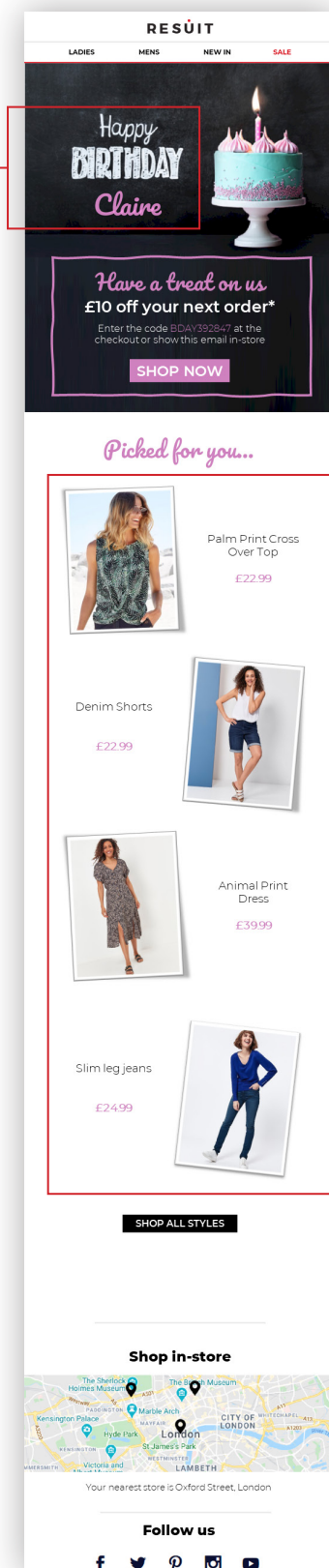
The only way of understanding how much of the activity is incremental is to keep a holdout cell. In one recent example, this showed that 16% of customers came back to complete a purchase after receiving the email - but 14% of the control cell also did. Therefore, we can only say that 2% of the recovered carts are due to the emails.

It is important to understand this as it gives a far more realistic view of what this programme is delivering and highlights the poor ROI commission-based cart recovery providers offer, as they typically charge 5-7% of all recovered carts. Based upon the numbers above, this would cost you more to add a cart recovery campaign than it would incrementally return.

While that might sound like a downer, 2% of abandoned carts is a lot and a well-run programme that has been optimised can achieve a lot more. Typically, a well-run cart recovery programme can deliver around 2% of all online sales, but as much as 4% has been observed.

The Birthday Email

High-impact hero using a personalised image to display the customer's name in a special font



Personalised products with items previously viewed but not bought upweighted in the results, along with a 'diversity' setting applied to ensure a mix of items

Angled images with alternative left & right layout encourages scrolling

Sending an email to customers on their birthday offers a unique opportunity to develop the brand-customer bond. In addition, research by Experian shows these emails generate 481% higher transaction rates than a standard promotional email.



Recipe

There isn't a lot to say about the format of these emails, but they typically take the form of a hero image with a voucher.

The hero graphic should be where to focus your creative energies to make something special for your customer. In our example, we have used a special font for the customer's name in a personalised graphic.

The voucher codes should ideally be unique.

We have also added a range of products to the emails and have built a special recipe to support this.

In this case, there are no filters apart from basic criteria around stock, but we are upweighting anything they have viewed online but not bought in the last few months to ensure anything they have been keeping an eye on can be used to redeem their birthday voucher.

From here, if we have a recommendation model, we would rank other products by that or, alternatively, we could use something simple such as best sellers in the last week.

And as we want to ensure there is a real breadth of product types, we make sure our diversity



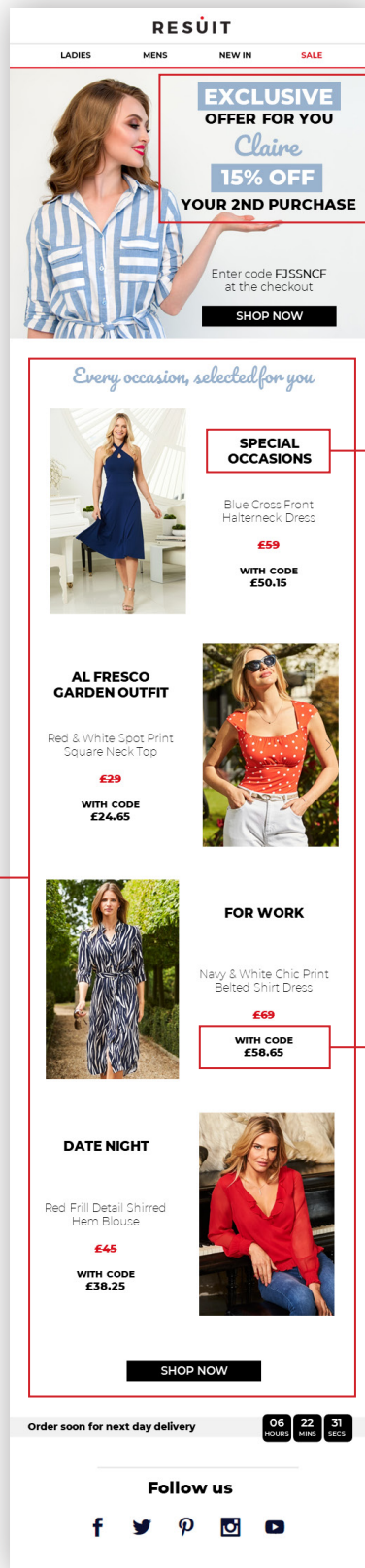
Forecasting Uplift

While there is plenty of evidence and first-hand experience of birthday emails generating revenue uplifts, the key challenge for most marketers is capturing a sufficient number of birthdays from their customers.

If most customer data is captured as part of the checkout process, traditionally, elements like date of birth are not deemed necessary here so can be stripped out.

As a simple calculation for expected returns, take your average revenue per email sent and multiply that by 3 for a conservative estimate of potential returns each email will generate. Multiply this by the number of birth dates you hold for customers.

Next Purchase



Highlight the special nature of the email with personalised hero imagery

Each recommended product is tagged with an occasion for added interest and a magazine-style presentation

Recommendation algorithm predicts what the customer is most likely to buy next with brighter colours upweighted to ensure they catch the eye

'With code' pricing helps highlights the savings

On average, only 14.7% of first-time purchasers will make a second purchase (Source: Yopto¹⁰). And we also know that repeat customers can be worth 10x those purchasing once, as establishing habitual purchasing and stronger brand association leads to greater purchasing activity and reduces the cost of sale as costly acquisition methods aren't required.

Growth in any business can only be sustained with new customer acquisition for some time, so increasing repeat custom has to be a priority.

But why implement a specific programme for second purchases when your overall CRM campaigns will surely do the job?

One key reason is the speed of the second purchase. A report I always create when first working with clients looks at when second purchases are most likely to occur and how the speed of acquiring the second purchase influences the overall lifetime value of that customer.

What we see on 99% of occasions is the second purchase is always quicker than you think. It varies across industries but is almost always within the first 30 days, and often in the first week. So, while many marketers are in 'do not disturb' mode thinking that they should go easy on customers with the number of emails after that initial purchase, the opposite is true.

If you don't get that second purchase within, say, 30 days, the odds of you getting any future purchase drops to a tiny fraction.

The second key reason why a separate programme is useful is the nature of the second



Recipe

As this is a special email outside of the day-to-day CRM programme, you want it to stand out so we have used a special personalised hero message with the customer's name in a special font to attract attention.

With this type of email, we also want to ensure any special promotion won't appear all over coupon sites, so either use a unique code per person or look into your voucher code system to see what options there are for restricting repeat usage.

The products selected for each individual in this instance are based upon the initial purchase, which a recommendation model uses to infer what they might be interested in buying next. This, by its nature, will find products customers are most likely to purchase next of a similar taste, whether that be brand, style or attributes.

However, you might want to add additional rules such as downweighting categories they have already bought from if there is evidence that once they have bought one type of item, they won't buy it again. For example, if a shoe retailer has just sold a gentleman a pair of black work shoes, it's very unlikely they are going to want or need another pair of black work shoes.

Finally, as with many of these campaigns, a diversity setting should be enabled to ensure a mix of products is shown.



Forecasting Uplift

Done well, we have seen these campaigns easily achieve in excess of an incremental 1% to the current repeat rate of first-time purchasers.

To get an accurate estimate, take your average 12-month lifetime value of a repeat customer and calculate the number of brand-new customers you expect in a year. So, if you expect 50,000 new customers, but you hope to achieve 1% more repeat purchases (500 customers) and their expected lifetime value is £300, then this will deliver £150,000 of additional revenue (500 new repeat customers x £300 lifetime value of repeat customer).

Buy the other colour

The screenshot shows a website banner for 'RESULT'. At the top, there are navigation links for 'LADIES', 'MENS', 'NEW IN', and 'SALE'. Below this is a red box containing the text 'LOVED YOUR' in white, followed by the question 'WAFFLE-STITCH MOCKNECK SWEATER?' in bold black. A grid of five images shows the sweater in different colors: light pink, red, blue, orange, and black. The blue image is the largest and is highlighted with a red border. Below the images is a large red box with '15% OFF' in white, followed by 'GET' and 'OFF' in black, and 'ON THE 4 OTHER COLOURS' in bold black. Below this is the text 'Enter code COLOUR15 at the checkout.' and a black 'SHOP NOW' button. Further down is a 'Shop in-store' section with a map of London and the text 'Your nearest store is Oxford Street, London'. At the bottom is a 'Follow us' section with icons for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube.

Lead with the name of the prior item to capture the customer's attention

The hero image is dynamically generated from all the images of the available alternative colours

The goal of CRM in retail can be summed up as getting customers to spend more, more often. This particular recipe is one way of helping.

When analysing what a customer is likely to buy next for a footwear retailer, we saw amazing high proportions of the next purchases to be from the same brand as the prior purchase. When we drilled in further, we saw a lot of this was actually customers buying the same shoe but in a different colour.

These repeat patterns will exist throughout your customer base and CRM can help amplify the behaviour that happens naturally.

This isn't just for retailers where another colour exists for many of their products. It can also be other products within the same range - maybe books by the same author, power tools by the same manufacturer, or furniture in the same matching range.



Recipe

In this example, you can see we haven't used the usual grid layout to display products but rather integrated them into the hero message, showing the standard product shots of the product in different colours. With this flavour of email, we might have a few different layout options that get swapped out based upon how many different colours are also available.

This is another example of how personalisation doesn't have to look formulaic. By using different sizes of the product photos, we create a more visually-appealing way of laying out standard product photography.

For our recipe algorithm, we are simply filtering the products by those in stock that are in the same range and nothing fancier than that.

Sending this email tends to work best in a relatively short window post the initial purchase - perhaps anywhere between 7-14 days since their goods arrived. Enough time for the customer to experience their new item and close enough that it's still front of mind, and more likely to be acted upon.



Forecasting Uplift

Calculating the potential upside of this campaign is more challenging than most as you need to understand how many products you sell have alternatives in the same range - a figure that isn't usually readily at hand for most email marketers.

Instead, you could simply estimate the number of products you sell and what percentage of these have additional items in the range. If this is, say, 20% and you believe you can sell an additional 5% of these items, then your estimate might look like this:

- 5,000 products - 1,000 have additional items
- £5M website turnover, £1M of which is items with additional items (A very basic assumption of all things being equal)
- An extra 5% would be £50,000 per annum.

For the footwear retailer we implemented this strategy before the 5% uplift figure was indeed a realistic outcome we observed over time.

Live Voting

RESULT

LADIES MENS NEW IN SALE

What's your favourite look?

New season style is here – what has caught your eye? Vote for the trends you most want to add to your collection and explore the full range online.

Click on your favourite image to vote

Trend	Percentage
Stripes	15%
Seventies	39%
Monochrome	28%
Lace	18%

Stripes **Seventies**

Monochrome **Lace**

SHOP NEW SEASON

Follow us

f t p i v

Live tally of votes encourages the customer to vote for their favourite

This one flavour of email is different to all others in the cookbook.

In sectors with fast-moving changes in trends and styles, understanding the customer's taste is a moving target.

Live voting in emails, also referred to as polls, is a means of creating an engaging way of updating customer taste profiles which can then be used for further targeting.



Recipe

In this specific example, we are previewing new season trends and asking which one is their preferred look.

Customers can vote simply by clicking on the image of each answer without having to fill in any forms. We will know who voted for what just like you know who clicks on what links in your emails.

What makes it more compelling for the customer is the real-time display of what other people are voting for, and encourages them to add their view.

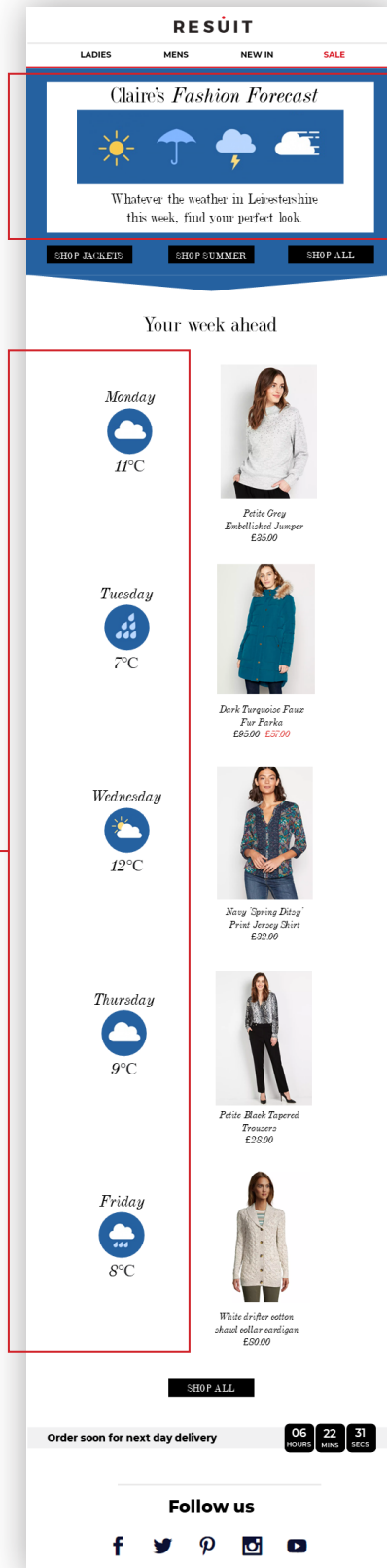
This voting data can then be used to follow-up a little time later with specific emails based upon what they chose as their favourite. This dips into the influencing principle of commitment and consistency where, if someone tells you they are interested in something, then they are more likely to follow through on that commitment when asked to later.



Forecasting Uplift

Out of all the potential recipes in this cookbook, this is probably one where the direct uplift in revenue is least likely to materialise. However, a quick voting system is a great way to freshen content and boost engagement, which can indirectly lead to revenue improvements that can be tracked elsewhere.

Weather



Highlight the personalised nature of the forecast with their name and location

A different recommended item for each day of the week's expected weather

Recommend items filled from customer's taste profile and filtered by categories that match weather conditions and temperature

When I worked client-side for a retailer, we always joked before a trading meeting when sales were down in-store that it would be blamed on the weather no matter what. It was either too hot, too cold, rainy, or the wrong kind of snow.

While most of the time this was a poor excuse, the weather does clearly have an effect on the pattern of sales in certain sectors.

With contextual targeting, we can look up current or future weather events for each individual customer, either by using an address we have for them or by looking at where they are right now.

With information on the weather type, rainfall, and temperature, we can then display the most appropriate items for each customer.



Recipe

To make the most out of the weather targeting, we have created a personalised fashion forecast for the week ahead.

To highlight this to the recipient, we use their name and location in the hero banner.

The next five slots are then rules-based upon what the weather type and temperature will be in that location for each of the next five days.

For example, if it's forecast to rain, then we may filter the recommended products by those that are items from coats, boots, and other weather-suitable ranges.

More advanced brands actually tag products by weather types or temperature ratings to make this process easier.

For those brands with a recommendation model, this can help rank an item in each weather type slot. Alternatively, a popular approach for those just starting their personalisation journey is to simply manually pick a variety of products for each of the types of weather.



Forecasting Uplift

Even for brands where the weather is an important influence in purchase behaviour, this recipe is something that can really only be used between 4-8 times a year. After all, one of its main purposes is to inject fresh creative messaging into your programme.

We should expect anything that is personalised and high-impact creative like this to generate a large uplift in interest, so we can use a typical email campaign to estimate what the potential uplift could bring.

If we, say, send to 250,000 customers and achieve a 15% open rate with a 2% click rate, of which those clicks convert at 2% into purchases with an average order value of £75, this would give you £7,500 per campaign (5,000 clicks converting at 2% = 100 orders x £75 AOV).

It would be pessimistic to assume we could achieve a 3% click rate as the content has engaged more, and a 3% conversion rate because the click-thrus are more relevant and focussed. Each campaign could not achieve £16,875. (7,500 clicks that convert at 3% = 225 orders at an AOV of £75). This is an increment of £9,375 which, if repeated, 6 times a year gives you £56,250.

Themed Newsletters

RESULT

LADIES MENS NEW IN SALE

MOST Wanted Clarks

SHOP NOW

Top 5 Clarks

1		Aubrie Sun Hot Pink Suede £59.00
2		Taylor Shine Black Leather £75.00
3		Un Darvey Cap 2 Ivory £69.00
4		Pure Easy Tan Leather £79.00
5		Baile Brogue Black Leather £69.00

SHOP NOW

Find your nearest store

Follow us

f t p i y

Personalised hero based upon Customer's favourite brand

Products ranked by customers recommendation score and filtered by brand

Customers have specific tastes and interests that can easily be grouped together. These might be favourite brands or product categories. While personalising content within an existing promo email can aid clicks, sending a fully branded email on the specific area, complete with a tailored subject line mentioning their favourite brand or category, will deliver the best results.

Yet, it isn't practical to build each of these variants manually, so an alternative is to run a semi-automated approach that dynamically tailors the whole email to their specific taste.

This can then be used to swap out a generic campaign in your send calendar with this more personalised approach that will deliver additional revenue.



Recipe

For each variant, we will need a banner that will get displayed based upon a field such as 'favourite brand', which we then package as something like 'Most Wanted'. There will, of course, be edge cases such as odd brands or where no data is available, so a fallback version should also be created.

These example banners were simply created using brand imagery with some text overlaid. This simple standardised approach makes it possible for a designer to run through a whole series of them in no time. With the right design and planning, it is possible to make these banner dynamics. Simply create one template, and the banner gets automatically populated rather than you having to create a dozen variants manually.

To pull in the right products, we filter based upon the same brand.

We then rank by most popular if we don't have recommendations. In this case, we will use the diversity setting to ensure a mix of styles is shown, but this may not always be needed if, by their nature, a brand only produces a single style. In this instance, you might select a different product attribute like colour or price band for diversity.



Forecasting Uplift

Compared to a generic version of a newsletter, this type of email roughly achieves somewhere in the region of a 15-20% uplift in tracked revenue. Simply multiply this increment by 12 to get you a simple forecast of potential if you were to run this once a month.

Price Points

Items filtered by price where under £30 with categories like accessories removed to ensure the content remains inspirational

'Diversity' setting applied to ensure each slot is taken by a different type of product with a simple ranking of sales in the last month

RESULT

LADIES MENS NEW IN SALE

Everything under £30 or less!

Shop Dresses Shop Footwear Shop Tops Shop All

Hot picks for Claire!

Lemon print pyjama set in yellow
£12.99

Acid wash wide leg in light blue
£29.99

Oversized hoodie in white
£17.99

Active leggings with side logo in black
£22.00

Shop now

Follow us

f t p i y

Using the name in the heading highlights the personalised product selection

Layout uses offset to create an irregular spacing which draws the eye down the email

Retailers tend to hold major promotions back until the end of the month to align with payday. As a result, it can be challenging for CRM Managers to keep the revenue numbers moving in other weeks.

One approach is to simply highlight the lower-priced ranges available with an 'Everything under £30' campaign.

This can be implemented as a personalisation algorithm, saving time on production as well as ensuring items shown are still within the customer's taste.



Recipe

While you could use this recipe with a recommendation model, let's build it without as it's another simple starting point into advanced email personalisation.

Firstly, we have filtered to only show products under £30. As a lot of cheaper items in categories such as socks and accessories don't work well as a 'shop window' in email, we also filter out those categories.

We also want to show a mix of styles, so we add a diversity setting to ensure a range of product types are shown.

But we do want to boost any items in their favourite brands, so we upweight that along with certain colours to ensure there is a mix of eye-catching products.

Finally, we need a simple method of ranking the items shown after the above rules so we order these by the number of sales in the last 30 days.



Forecasting Uplift

If you do have campaigns that struggle to hit the same revenue heights in weeks 2-3 of a month, then this is where you would aim to drop these campaigns. A simple, rough, and arguably crude way of calculating how much revenue you might generate is to simply add 20% of the revenue you make on campaigns in the quiet weeks.

Underserved Segments

Sample generic hero that matches the segment

The screenshot shows the RESULT website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for LADIES, MENS, NEW IN, and SALE. The main hero banner features the text 'THE Unlimited EDIT' and 'The latest looks in sizes 16-32' with a 'SHOP NOW' button and an image of a woman in a purple cardigan. Below this is an 'EMAIL EXCLUSIVE: FREE DELIVERY' offer with a 'SHOP NOW' button and a code 'KJDFBS' ending Sunday. The 'New for you' section displays four product cards: 'Angel Girele big pocket dress' (£110), 'Angel Girele kimono jacket' (£80), 'Kashah Tashira kaftan neck tunic' (£60), and 'Kashah Paige jersey palazzo' (£40). At the bottom, there is a grid of category buttons: SHOP DRESSES, SHOP TOPS, SHOP JACKETS, SHOP TROUSERS, SHOP LINEN, and SHOP ALL. A 'Follow us' section includes social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube.

Tailored 'RFM' offers included to offer different levels of incentives based on their order recency

Products filtered by those available in the larger sizes, with a diversity setting ensuring a mix of categories shown. Ranked by the most views in the past month

Underserved segments in marketing are usually referred to as 'market niches' where there are very few, if any, suppliers serving their specific needs.

In CRM, though, we use the term to describe segments within your database that, while valuable with a strong lifetime value, have fairly specific needs that differ from your core customer profile. These segments are typically fairly small, so there usually isn't much specialist treatment for them as there aren't enough resources in the team.

Examples could include:

- In fashion, those that buy from your plus or petite sizes, or in some instances, retailers that have a small offering for a specific gender or kids' range
- Department stores might have dozens of segments who are loyal to the brand but the category sits outside core ranges of clothing, electronics, and furniture
- Electronics retailers might have those whose sole interest is something specific such as photography or perhaps those who own a slightly more obscure games console and will only buy games for that
- In Travel, the classic underserved segment is solo travellers who, while booking the same holidays as those travelling as a family or couple, have specific pricing and requirements
- DIY stores might have specific traders that will only ever buy from certain categories
- Pet retailers will typically load marketing initiatives at cat and dog owners, but those who own exotic reptiles, birds, or small animals have very particular product requirements

So, if these are small segments, why are we even bothering to do anything extra? Well, that's because these are also, per segment member, above average in value and usually easier to retain and get spending more as there is less competition.

We can also serve these segments using semi-automated emails, meaning they can receive an email every week, month, or however often you choose, with little, if any, extra effort on your part. By doing so, you are effectively adding additional revenue you would otherwise not achieve.

you are effectively adding additional revenue you would otherwise not achieve.



Recipe

To keep the build of this email as streamlined as possible, for a regular send, we just need to create a few simple hero banners for the top of the message that can be rotated through. For our example, we are targeting the plus-size segment of the database with an 'Unlimited Edit' positioning of the email.

The product selection can be automatically pulled at the moment of opening. Within this recipe for the products, we filter based on the category - in this case, products with the larger sizes available.

If we don't have a recommendation model, we might choose to rank by best sellers in the last 30 days. Another alternative might be choosing the most-viewed or highest-converting items. Remember, we are here to inspire, so exact precision of what they are most likely to buy isn't as important when a segment has self-qualifying tastes as underserved segments do.

As usual, a diversity setting ensures a mix of products is shown and we will also add a recency setting of 30 days, so if we send this email every week or so, we won't show any product again for at least 30 days.

Finally, we might also use this opportunity to include our RFM offers to help conversion. After all, this will contain a mix of active through to lapsed customers, so we may want to



Forecasting Uplift

To understand the potential of this approach for each underserved segment, we need to first work out how many people are in this segment and what their average annual spend is.

From here, we can take a simplistic and pessimistic approach by looking for a 5-10% uplift in their spending over the year to gauge what sort of opportunity size there could be.

Change the discount level by time since last purchase. The greater the time since purchase, the greater the discount offered

Recommended items selected based upon past purchase and browse activity to find what customers with similar tastes have also bought

The screenshot shows the RESULT website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for LADIES, MENS, NEW IN, and SALE. A prominent banner features the text "We miss you!" and a "20% OFF YOUR NEXT ORDER" offer, with the code MESS-JSD9AS and a "SHOP NOW" button. Below this, a personalized header reads "Selected for Claire". The main content area displays four recommended items: Golden Lily Overhead Top, Inky Blue Skinny Jeans, Off Shoulder Tied Maxi Dress, and Roman Textured Notch Neck Jacket. Each item includes an image, name, and pricing with a "WITH CODE" discount. A countdown timer indicates "Order soon for next day delivery" with 06 hours, 22 mins, and 31 secs remaining. At the bottom, there are category buttons for SHOP DRESSES, SHOP TOPS, SHOP JACKETS, SHOP TROUSERS, SHOP LINEN, and SHOP ALL, followed by a "Follow us" section with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube.

Personalised header indicates the products are personally selected for the customer

Highlight savings using 'with code' pricing

Every year, the average business loses 20-40% of its customers (Source: Griffin & Lowenstein¹¹). The majority of these will simply have forgotten about you or fallen out of the habit of visiting your store. It almost always isn't because you offered poor service or products as you wouldn't be in business if you had those problems.

These customers will be easier and cheaper to sell to than any new ones you need to acquire.

Creating campaigns to winback these lapsed customers is, therefore, a vital component of a successful CRM programme.



Recipe

Our preferred approach to winning back lapsed customers is not to set these up as automated trigger emails. Instead, we prefer to plot specific dates on the calendar when we will target lapsed customers, i.e., every 4-6 weeks.

Scale is the main reason for this. Automated emails only reach a very small number of customers at any point in time. For example, if you have a 180-day lapsed programme on any given day, you only reach those exactly 180 days since their last order.

Over time, in order to add further campaigns at additional data points, you need to add more and more creatives. That creative will become out of date, and compared to sending monthly to anyone who is lapsed, you will need many more creatives to reach the same size audience. It's much more realistic to aim for producing one new lapsed campaign every month or six weeks.

The other advantage of this approach is you don't have clashes with other promotional activities as you schedule these when you want a website clean of promotions, thus giving your online trading team a timely boost in revenue outside of promo periods.

Another important approach is to tailor the actual promotions you use by segment, typically by using a mix of recency and value. An example of this would be those who recently lapsed will receive a smaller incentive than those long-term lapsed. This is because you have to work harder to attract the long-term lapsed, but also there will be an element of cannibalisation from recent lapsed customers that would return anyway, so you don't want to give too much margin away.

With regards to product content, we need to use past purchases and browsing data to match these to a customer's taste. A good recommendation model will do this for you, but otherwise, we might look to upweight products from brands, styles, and ranges they have bought from before. In particular, anything they have looked at in the last month should be pushed towards the top of the results if still available, as that is most likely to catch the eye and be aligned with intent.

Finally, as we are in inspire mode, we should be ensuring diversity in the results and think about what pops out to our lapsed audience. This might be by populating results with colourful products or other attributes you know attract attention.



Forecasting Uplift

If running regularly throughout the year, it can be expected to achieve a pessimistic incremental 5% return of lapsed customers. Let's say we have 400,000 mailable customers, it's probably realistic that 300,000 of them have lapsed. If over 12 months, 5% make just one additional order at, say, an average order value of £50, this would equate to £750,000 in incremental revenue.

You might consider 5% to be optimistic, but actually, if you have 10 lapsed promotions to this audience in a year, this is only a 0.5% conversion rate each time.

This doesn't take into account the retention of these lapsed customers either. Cracking the lapsed programme, therefore, is the biggest win a CRM team in retail can expect.



What next?

Congratulations on reaching the end of the book. I'll leave you with the following thoughts.

You might be feeling energised and ready to tackle email personalisation, or you might be daunted at the size of the task ahead of you.

But if there is one proven method for significantly increasing the performance of your email marketing, it is personalisation. The sooner you start on this journey, the sooner you'll realise the benefits.

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About the book

Personalisation is the number one priority for email marketers. With personalised emails generating up to 6x the revenue of generic campaigns it is easy to see why.

Yet there is currently very little written about the finer details to help guide marketers along their first steps in email personalisation.

With this book we hope to put you and your business on the right track from the start of your email personalisation projects by:

- ✓ Understanding the unique requirements of email for personalisation
- ✓ Planning your email personalisation projects and where to start
- ✓ Fresh ideas of what is possible with email personalisation with 14 'recipes' for retail marketers

About the author



Sean Duffy is a multi-award winning email marketing veteran with a specific specialism for all things personalisation.

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