

● RETENTION PLAYBOOK

The 11 flows every DTC brand **needs**

The exact automated email flows we build for every brand: what triggers each one, how many emails it runs, what it's for, and the mistake most brands make with it.

11

email flows

42

emails, fully automated

30%+

of revenue from email and SMS on strong accounts

Why flows come first

Campaigns are what you send. Flows are what sends itself. A flow fires on a customer's behavior (they signed up, they left a cart, it's been 60 days since they bought), so it reaches people at the moment they're most likely to act. Build these once, keep them sharp, and they earn every day without you touching them.

01

Welcome series

Trigger: new subscriber

6 to 8 emails

Over ~14 days

Turns a new subscriber into a first purchase. Email 1 delivers whatever they signed up for, right away. The rest tell your story, show best-sellers, answer objections and stack social proof before the offer expires.

COMMON MISTAKE

One email with a code, then silence.

DO THIS

Exit anyone who buys, and branch buyers into post-purchase instead.

02

Abandoned checkout

Trigger: started checkout, no order

3 to 4 emails

1h · 24h · 48 to 72h

Your highest-intent flow. These people had a card out. Remind them, show exactly what they left, and remove the reason they hesitated (shipping, returns, sizing).

COMMON MISTAKE

Leading with a discount in email 1 and training buyers to wait.

DO THIS

Hold any incentive for the last email, and only for first-time buyers.

03

Abandoned cart

Trigger: added to cart, no checkout

3 to 4 emails

2 to 4h · 24h · 72h

One step earlier than checkout, so a little softer. Bring the exact items back, add reviews for those products, and make it one click to return.

COMMON MISTAKE

Someone who also started checkout gets both flows at once.

DO THIS

Exclude anyone already in the checkout flow so they hear one voice.

04

Browse abandonment

Trigger: viewed a product, no cart

2 to 3 emails

Over 2 to 3 days

Interest, not intent. A light "still thinking about it?" with the product they viewed and a few related picks usually beats a hard sell here.

COMMON MISTAKE

Firing on every product view and flooding inboxes.

DO THIS

Skip people you've emailed in the last day or two.

05

Site abandonment

Trigger: active on site, no product view

1 to 2 emails

The lowest-intent abandonment flow. Point them to best-sellers or your most popular collection and keep it short.

COMMON MISTAKE

Treating it like a cart flow with urgency and discounts.

DO THIS

One helpful email that answers "where do I start?"

06

Post-purchase

Trigger: placed order

4 to 6 emails

Over ~30 days

Where lifetime value is won or lost. Thank them, show them how to get the most out of what they bought, check in, ask for a review, then suggest what's next. The goal is the second order.

COMMON MISTAKE

A shipping confirmation and nothing else.

DO THIS

Split first-time and repeat buyers. They need different messages.

07

Upsell and cross-sell

Trigger: purchase of a specific product

2 to 3 emails

Recommends the product that naturally pairs with what they just bought. It works because it's relevant to them, not because it's your best-seller.

COMMON MISTAKE

Showing the same best-sellers to everyone.

DO THIS

Map "bought X, recommend Y" from your actual order data.

08

Replenishment

Trigger: time since last order

2 to 3 emails

Before they run out

Essential for anything consumable. Time it off when customers actually reorder, so the email lands a few days before they run out, with an easy reorder and a subscription option.

COMMON MISTAKE

Guessing the timing ("30 days") instead of using real reorder data.

DO THIS

Set timing from your average days between orders, per product.

09

Winback

Trigger: no order in 2 to 3x your reorder cycle 3 emails

Re-engages customers who've gone quiet. Lead with what's new, then remind them why they bought, and save the incentive for the final email.

COMMON MISTAKE

Same generic timing for every brand.

DO THIS

Base "lapsed" on your own repurchase cycle.

10

VIP

Trigger: top spenders or 3+ orders 2 to 3 emails

Your best customers drive a big share of revenue. Recognize them with early access, a personal thank-you and perks that feel exclusive.

COMMON MISTAKE

Treating your best customers like everyone else.

DO THIS

Recognition beats discounts. Make them feel known.

11

Sunset

Trigger: no clicks or site activity in 90 to 120 days 2 to 3 emails

Asks unengaged subscribers if they still want to hear from you, then suppresses the ones who don't respond. It protects your sender reputation, which is what gets every other flow into the inbox.

COMMON MISTAKE

Never pruning, and mailing dead addresses forever.

DO THIS

Judge engagement by clicks and site activity. Opens are inflated by Apple Mail.

The SMS layer

- **Welcome (3 texts):** deliver the offer, then a reminder before it expires.
- **Abandoned checkout (1 text):** one short, well-timed nudge, often the highest-converting message you'll send.
- **Browse abandonment (1 text):** for high-intent product views only.
- Keep it short, get proper consent, and respect quiet hours.

Weekly campaigns

- Flows run in the background. Campaigns keep your brand top of mind.
- Mix value (education, stories), nurture (community, reviews) and sales (launches, promos).
- Send most often to engaged subscribers so your list stays healthy.

What good looks like

Targets we hold well-run retention programs to. Use them to see where your account stands.

30%+

of total store revenue from email and SMS

5%+

pop-up opt-in rate, and 10 to 20% for top brands

60 to 80%

of your list engaged and mailable

Under 0.1%

spam complaint rate (Gmail's hard limit is 0.3%)

Quick self-audit

Count how many of these are true for your account today.

- All 11 flows are live, not drafted or paused.
- Your welcome series is 5+ emails, not one.
- Buyers exit abandonment flows the moment they purchase.
- Post-purchase is split for first-time and repeat buyers.
- Replenishment timing comes from your real reorder data.
- A sunset flow is pruning unengaged subscribers.
- You know what percentage of revenue email and SMS drives.

Want us to audit yours?

In a free 30-minute strategy session we'll review your flows, show you the revenue your list should be producing, and hand you the plan to get there, whether or not we work together.

[Book at shorebreak.digital](https://shorebreak.digital)

Benchmarks are general targets for DTC brands and vary by category, price point and list source. They are not a guarantee of results.