

THE

ECOMMERCE

EMAIL

STRATEGY

QUIZ

PLAYBOOK

Find out why the right answers are right
(and the wrong answers wrong.)

emails
done  right

Table of Content

[What's covered in this Playbook](#)

[Question #1](#)

[Question #2](#)

[Question #3](#)

[Question #4](#)

[Question #5](#)

[Question #6](#)

[Question #7](#)

[Question #8](#)

[Question #9](#)

[The truth about email strategy...](#)

[Interested in mastering ecommerce email strategy?](#)

[That's awesome... who are you again?](#)

What's covered in this Playbook:

- ✓ The correct answers to the [eCommerce Email Strategy Quiz](#).
- ✓ In-depth review of what makes the right answers... right.
- ✓ In-depth review of what makes the wrong answers... wrong.
- ✓ When the wrong answers might become right.
- ✓ An insider look at how Samar approaches email strategy for her ecommerce clients.

If you've ever wondered...

- How my strategic brain works...
- How I come up with email strategies for clients...
- What my thought process is for creating email strategies...

Then this playbook is the answer.

Enjoy (and learn!)

- **Samar Owais**

Founder, Emails Done Right

Picker of email fights.

Question #1 - Beauty brand

A beauty brand is looking to increase its email sales and maximize its profit margins.

Problem #1: They've become known as a "discount" brand. Even their most loyal customers don't buy at full price because they know a discount is always around the corner.

Problem #2: They're afraid moving away from discounts will adversely affect their sales.

How would you help them stop offering discounts without affecting their current sales too much?

Answers:

1. Change their opt-in offer, introduce bundles, and upsell subscriptions
2. Increase the price of their products
3. Save their discounts for seasonal sales and promotions

What makes the right answer right?

✓ **Change their opt-in offer, introduce bundles, and upsell subscriptions**

A lot of brands are afraid of changing their opt-in offer because they believe that removing discounts from their opt-in offers will drastically reduce their sales and turn off subscribers.

What they don't realize is:

a. There are other opt-in offers that their customers would value more.

A discount is the most common opt-in form — but it's not always the best. We need to find offers that our customers will value as much (if not more than) a discount.

b. There's a way to offer discounts without calling them a discount

Think bundles, subscriptions, mystery gifts, etc.

c. Your opt-in offer is irrelevant to your existing subscribers

(because they've already received that offer), and new subscribers coming in wouldn't know what your past opt-in offers was.

They'll just see the new one.

If they don't know that you've been offering discounts previously, they won't care because they don't know what has changed for your brand.

And when I say "change your opt-in offer," I also don't mean that you just lower the discount.

As an email strategist, it's your job to figure out another value-focused opt-in offer that your subscribers will find just as attractive.

See Question #6 for an example of how changing or reframing an opt-in offer to something your audience values more than a discount can impact your sales.

Most of the time, it could also mean offering free shipping on orders above a certain amount — let's say \$45, for example.

This not only qualifies for a great opt-in offer but also increases your average order value. Don't undervalue the allure of scoring free shipping by spending a few extra bucks.

Next, I'd focus on introducing bundle offers for existing customers.

If they were just buying one product for \$14, I'd create a bundle of complimentary products and discount that instead. What this does is:

- Offers them some kind of a discount (without calling it a discount.)
- Increases the average order value (you'll see this as a recurring theme throughout this playbook.)
- Relieves brands from offering discounts on individual products, which eats into the profits.
- Sets the stage for sending replenishment emails and upselling subscriptions.
- Allows ecommerce brands to move products faster. (Unit economics plays a significant role in the world of ecommerce. It's helpful to have a basic understanding of it from a business perspective.)

What I love about bundles is how they allow us to offer a discount without labeling it as one.

This not only helps customers see the value of a bundle offer but also helps the brand avoid getting tagged as a "discount brand."

Lastly, I'd upsell subscriptions to existing customers.

Creating bundles sets the stage for sending upselling subscriptions.

Whenever somebody buys a bundle from you, you get an opportunity to send them an offer where they can switch to a monthly subscription that replenishes their stock so that they never run out again.

Brands (especially skincare brands) usually know how long their products will last. If customers are interested in getting another bottle, subscribing to a subscription offer will give the customer peace of mind (that they'll never run out of their favorite product.)

Setting up subscription offers is easy. You can even offer customers the opportunity to set up their own subscription schedule (e.g., every 4 weeks, 8 weeks, 12 weeks, etc.)

Subscriptions make your customers' life easy, give brands guaranteed future sales and help brands accurately predict future sales.

Wondering why not a replenishment flow?

That works too! It's a great offer for folks buying individual products. And it can set the stage for a subscription offer as well.

Which flow you set up first and what offer you make first depends on your strategy.

What makes the other two answers wrong?

✗ Increase the price of their products

This strategy will affect the new people coming in as well as your existing subscribers and customers because when they're used to buying from you at a discount, they're going to be miffed because not only has their discount gone away, but you've also increased the price of their products.

Doing so will only p* *s off your customers, and that's going to affect sales.

When will this strategy work?

This strategy does work a bit later down the line and there are two ways to go about this:

1. I've seen brands increase their price gradually by a couple of dollars at a time (less than \$5) and not announce it.
2. Other times, I've had brands increase the price by \$7-\$15 and announce it by stating their reasons. It's usually that:
 - a. Their supply chain has become expensive OR
 - b. Producing the product has become expensive

And it makes sense as far as it is communicated in a way that doesn't piss off customers.

The benefit of choosing option 1 is that barely anyone will notice the change. Even if they do, as a business, increasing prices is the brand's prerogative — it's their business, after all.

The benefit of choosing option 2 is that you get a sudden revenue boost even before the prices increase by creating natural scarcity.

Here's how:

When you announce a price increase and put a date on when this will happen, you automatically create natural scarcity even without a discount because people know that this is the last time they can buy at the old prices.

This creates an influx of revenue for the brand because suddenly, everybody rushes to buy the products they weren't planning on buying otherwise.

Another side benefit is when people are buying your products in a sale or a "prices are increasing" window, you'll get the latest data on your best-selling products — or at least an insight into which products your customers are valuing more right now.

It won't make an impact immediately, but it will give you insight into how to capitalize on future offers.

A strategist's job is to always think ahead.

✗ Save their discounts for seasonal sales and promotions

If this were your only strategy, it wouldn't work.

Because weaning customers off your discounts is like weaning a baby from its bottle of milk. It takes time.

For most brands, this would mean slowly withdrawing discounts and only offering them once or twice a year, which is a long-term strategy.

The downside is that most brands don't have the runway to implement long-term strategies without doing something that will move the needle for them immediately.

When can you expect this strategy to work?

In the long term.

In the short term, it won't give you any returns apart from a dip in sales.

And while a certain amount of dip in sales is going to happen whenever you remove discounts from a brand, there are ways to shorten that dip.

As an email strategist, you should never promise (or even expect) that a brand's sales won't dip when you remove discounts.

Every time I've helped a brand wean off discounts, the most success I've managed to achieve in the short term is to keep their sales steady. In most happy cases, the dip lasts 1-2 months before sales even out.

Brands often understand the limitations when moving away from discounts.

They're mentally prepared for the dip. One of your jobs as an email strategist is also to manage your client's expectations. It's always better to be upfront and realistic than to fall short.

When discussing projects with ecommerce brands that are looking to move away from discounts. Tell them it can be done, but also mentally prepare them for an inevitable dip in sales for the first couple of months so that they know the dip in sales isn't reflective of your skills but is reflective of the nature of the project.

The key is to make sure you have plans in place to boost sales even as you change the opt-in offer and remove discounts.

Question #2 - Socks brand

A socks brand comes to you with a simple request: We want to improve our emails and increase our email revenue.

Problem #1: 50% of our customers are repeat buyers, and that's just a coincidence; they aren't doing anything special.

Problem #2: The majority of their customers are older, conservative, white men (so you can't try anything too unique to drum up excitement.)

As an email strategist, which of these metrics would you optimize for first?

Answers:

1. Average order value
2. Customer lifetime value
3. Email sales
4. Click-through rate
5. Click-to-open rate

What makes the right answer right?

Average order value

The reason I say that this is the right move here is because 50% of their customers are repeat buyers.

It's easier to get existing customers to buy from you again.

According to Invest, "the success rate of selling to a customer you already have is 60-70%, while the success rate of selling to a new customer is 5-20%."

In fact, back in 2020, Microsoft reported that one of their partner agencies found that "loyal customers are 5x as likely to repurchase, 5x as likely to forgive, 4x as likely to refer, and 7x as likely to try a new offering."

Repeat customers are the perfect segment to focus on when looking to increase email revenue.

And the fastest way to increase email revenue is to focus on increasing the average order value.

Of course, that doesn't mean we don't do anything special to convince non-buyers or people who've just bought from us once.

It just means we optimize for repeat customers first. Since they've bought from us before, it's going to be a lot easier to convince them to buy something of a higher value.

And one of my favorite ways of increasing average order value is to offer bundle offers.

If most people are buying one pair of socks, you could:

- Offer "buy three pairs, get two free"
- Create bundles of five or more pairs
- Put together themes for offices, weddings, or parties and market those to existing customers
- Create subscriptions (cuz people lose socks alllllll the time.)

All of these would dramatically increase the average order value and that's what makes this the right metric to optimize for first.

Now, that's not to say you shouldn't be optimizing for any of the other metrics, but whenever I am tasked with increasing email revenue for an established brand, I always start with increasing the average order value as it gives an instant boost to email sales.

What makes the other four answers wrong?

✗ Customer lifetime value

Customer lifetime value (LTV) is a metric used to estimate the total revenue a business can anticipate from a single customer over the lifetime of their relationship.

I've always had an issue with this metric because there's no accurate way of figuring out the lifetime value of a customer.

Who gets to decide what a customer's lifetime is?

The brand? The customer? Email marketers like you and me?

Every brand seems to have a different way of deciding what their customer's lifetime is, which means there's no universal way of calculating the lifetime value.

There's no way to guarantee accuracy, either.

It's all extremely subjective.

And to top it all off, it doesn't play a very active role when figuring out how to increase your revenue from emails specifically.

This is a controversial opinion because there are email experts and brands out there that put a lot of importance on LTV of customers. Based on my experience, this metric has never played a role in my email strategies.

✗ Email Sales

Any email marketer who's worked on a bunch of ecommerce projects will automatically assume that email sales is the way to go. That's because when people click through and buy from your emails, it's a sign that your email revenue is increasing.

However, email sales is a premature metric to focus on because email sales is not the ultimate metric that you should be optimizing for.

As an email strategist, EVERYTHING you do will be designed to improve email sales.

But how are you going to do it?

The right answer always lies in that.

Also, the question is "Which metric would you optimize for FIRST?"

And that is increasing average order value—because when you optimize for it, email sales will automatically increase.

When you say you're going to focus on increasing email sales, you're only giving a half solution.

What is your strategy? What are you going to work on first? Is there a specific sequence that needs to be optimized or added?

And just like that it becomes a longer conversation on a call which also makes you look unprepared and underskilled.

✗ Click-through rates

A click-through rate refers to the number of people who clicked on one or more links in an email marketing campaign. They're more reliable than email opens because they prove that the email was read and scrolled through.

But there's a catch.

They're calculated based on the total number of emails sent.

Email CTR formula

$$\text{Click rate} = \frac{\text{Emails clicked}}{\text{Emails sent} - \text{Bounces}}$$

(Image source: Mailchimp)

This means it calculates the CTR irrespective of whether the email was opened or not.

And that gives me an incomplete picture.

It doesn't tell me how well my emails worked (because people who didn't open the email, didn't see the email and there's no way for me to figure out whether it was effective in convincing them to click through.)

Click-through rate gives me diluted data as it has irrelevant information included in it (the number of unopened emails.)

As far as this brand and its situation is concerned, the click-through rate is not the metric you should be focusing on.

Click-to-Open rates

Click-to-Open rates or CTOR is the percentage of people who opened your email who then clicked a link within that email.

They're calculated by dividing the number of unique clicks by the number of unique opened emails.

Click-to-open rate = $\frac{\text{\# unique clicks}}{\text{\# unique opens}} \times 100$

* Note: the symbol "#" means "number of"

They're more reliable than click-through rates, but still not accurate enough for this brand's situation.

But thanks to the iOS updates and the recent changes in how Apple, Google, and Yahoo! are tightening the security around email inboxes, open rates have become unreliable — which makes these metrics unreliable.

Question #3 - Medical device brand

A consumer medical device company that creates beds and mattresses for kids with special needs wants to increase its sales through email marketing.

Problem #1: Buying a bed or mattress is a one-time purchase because they won't need a new one anytime soon.

Problem #2: Not all families need their mattresses because not all families have kids with special needs.

Problem #3: Their beds retail between \$10k and \$14k (but are covered by medical insurance in most cases.)

How would you help this brand increase its sales?

Answers

1. Offer 20% off on their first order
2. Create bundle offers (2+ mattresses, bed + mattress, full comfort kit, etc)
3. Send weekly emails that nurture brand loyalty and sales.

What makes the right answer right?

Create bundle offers

When the medical insurance is covering the costs for the beds and mattresses, it makes more sense for the brand to offer bundles that would increase the average order value.

Because customers will be eager to spend more when they're not footing the bill.

So when the insurance company is paying for it, you'd be willing to buy a bed and a mattress. Or you'd even buy 2 mattresses because you were getting a great price on the bundle offer and to top it all off, you didn't even have to worry about the bill.

And when it comes to creating bundle offers, the sky really is the limit.

- You could sell 2+ mattresses in a bundle.
- You could bundle up beds and mattresses together.
- You could bundle beds, mattresses, sheets, and other accessories into a Full Comfort Kit.

And the upside? The more you bundle things together, the more you increase the average order value.

And since the customers aren't really paying for it, the only regret they'll have is not buying whatever their insurance was covering.

That's not to say that medical insurance coverage is some magical do-good system that will cover everything. We're all aware of the mess the medical insurance system is in the U.S. (This was an American brand.)

But considering that most of this brand's customers have medical insurance, that's the market our email strategy needed to focus on first.

What makes the other two answers wrong?

✗ Offer 20% off on their first order

On the surface, it might look like a good idea because when you offer 20% off on a high-priced product like mattresses and beds, 20% looks like a big discount.

And taking 20% off on a \$10,000 mattress or a \$14,000 bed translates to \$2000-\$2800 in savings minimum.

And no matter how easily you can afford this, \$2,000 or more is still a very significant discount for anybody.

But the reason this isn't the right move here is because MOST of their sales are covered by medical insurance. That means their customers aren't paying for this. Their insurance company is.

And so when the insurance company's paying for something, it doesn't matter whether you have a 20% discount or a 30% discount, it is going to be covered either way.

Hence a 20% discount on the first order won't really do much to increase sales.

And if someone were to say that "20% off still makes sense for those customers that don't have medical insurance", I'd say:

Yes, a 20% discount would make sense for them if the majority of customers were not covered by medical insurance.

However, since the majority of their customers are covered by insurance, the group of people not covered is going to be minuscule.

Remember, the goal is always to figure out which strategy will move the needle the fastest for a brand.

So even if 20% off is a good deal for people without medical insurance, the number of customers without medical insurance is very low for this brand to consider this offer.

When would this solution work for the brand?

As mentioned above, a 20% discount would make sense for folks whose medical insurance does not cover the cost of these products.

You could create a mini-quiz to help folks figure out if their medical insurance covers the cost.

If it doesn't, then you offer them a 20% discount.

This way, you'll also be able to create offers for folks whose medical insurance doesn't cover this brand's products.

✗ Send weekly emails that nurture brand loyalty and sales.

If you use this as your only email strategy to increase sales from email marketing, it's not going to work.

Because...it's half a solution. It'll take too long for the brand to see results.

But when combined with something else, it'll work well.

For example, merging this solution with creating bundle offers will improve the overall email experience for the customers.

It'll not only get more sales but will also nurture brand loyalty amongst its customers.

And you'll also be able to leverage that brand loyalty and introduce a referral offer where they get a bigger discount or store credit when they refer the product to someone.

When would this solution work?

This solution will only work in combination with other email marketing strategies and tactics.

Question #4 - Apparel brand

An apparel brand tells you, “We’ve got 80,000 subscribers who’ve never bought from us. How do we get them to make their first purchase?”

What’s your plan of action?

Answers:

1. Send them a sunset flow. If they haven’t bought yet, the chances of them buying are low. It’s time to shed the dead weight.
2. Send a re-engagement flow. Let’s try one last time before we kick them off the list.
3. Try to find out why such a huge number of users haven’t bought. What’s stopping them? What would get them to buy?

What makes the right answer right?

Try to find out why these customers haven't bought.

Before you decide to send a 20% discount on a re-engagement flow or say goodbye to them forever, you should find out WHY such a huge number of people haven't bought and then come up with a strategy accordingly.

Sending out surveys or mining recent reviews will give you insights on why people aren't buying.

Once you know what's stopping them from buying, you'll know what will get them to buy.

But here's the thing, 80,000 subscribers is a huge number to send a survey to without segmenting them first. The easiest way to segment them is by grouping them based on their periods of inactivity and then choosing a group to survey.

1. People who became inactive in the last 12 months
2. People who became inactive in the last 18 months
3. People who became inactive in the last 24 months

Once you have all the insights you need, you'll be able to send re-engagement sequences to past customers who recently stopped engaging and sunset those who've been inactive for a longer period.

This is what makes option no. 3 step one of your action plan.

Sending the re-engagement flow is step two.

Sending the sunset flow is step three.

This is the perfect trifecta for dealing with subscribers who've never bought from a particular brand.

What makes the other two answers wrong?

✗ Send them a sunset flow.

When you've got 80,000 people who haven't bought from you in a long time, they're never going to buy from you at this point and so it makes sense to say goodbye to them.

Right?

Wrong.

The reason I say this is the wrong strategy to implement is because the sunset flow is the last step when you are trying to get customers who haven't bought from you to buy.

Because if you just send across a sunset flow, you're leaving so much money on the table.

This is 80,000 people we're talking about.

I mean we don't even know why they haven't bought from us at this point. We don't even know if there was something we could do that would encourage them to buy from us.

And so it's not wise to just send them a goodbye email.

Story time:

A very popular shoe brand once came to me saying our email sales are down and we can't figure out why.

Now, I'd been a long time subscriber of this brand and I said "Isn't it because you haven't been sending emails? I've been a subscriber for 2+ years and I haven't received an email in 3 months."

I even tried resubscribing and didn't receive anything.

Turns out, somehow, a large segment of their email subscribers had been tagged as unengaged and had stopped receiving their emails. And their homepage opt-in form was broken and nobody noticed.

If your first strategy for this brand was to send a sunset flow to their unengaged subscribers, you'd have lost them a massive chunk of revenue without you even realizing it.

✗ Send a re-engagement flow.

Trying one last time before we kick them off the list is a better strategy than sending them a sunset flow.

But it's still not the right move for this brand because the problem with a re-engagement flow is that you need to come up with an offer that would encourage people to buy from you.

And these are people who haven't engaged with your emails in a long time. They are going to be a hard sell.

Now when it comes to re-engagement flows, most brands just offer a 20%-25% discount to convert them into customers and engaged subscribers.

But how do you know it's the right offer to make?

As a strategist, I want you to think deeper into making an irresistible offer. Or at least think longer. Even if you decide that a discount is the best offer, you should know why.

When does re-engagement work?

Brands handle re-engaging subscribers a bunch of different ways.

- Some will lower the frequency of emails to once a week if they're sending 3 emails a week to their engaged subscribers
- Others will create specific offers for unengaged subscribers
- And some will play the long game and improve their emails to increase overall engagement.

Most brands should try more than one strategy to bring unengaged subscribers back from the dead. As an email strategist, YOU should have more than one strategy up your sleeve.

Question #5 - Snack brand

A snack brand with less than 12,000 subscribers approaches you to help them grow their list and make them money STAT. They have some flows in place and are sending 1 email a week to their list.

Problem #1: Their email list isn't growing as fast as they'd like.

Problem #2: Their existing flows have stopped converting

Problem #3: Their weekly emails have low open rates and even lower sales.

What would you do?

Answers:

1. Do an email conversion audit
2. Run ads to grow their email list (more people coming in will automatically increase conversions)
3. Send more emails with new offers and promotions

What makes the right answer right?

Do an email conversion audit

Anytime a brand comes to you and says its emails aren't performing well, an email conversion audit is the first step.

Because you want to figure out why their emails aren't performing and what they've been doing wrong.

An email conversion audit is generally a fact-finding mission that helps you find out what's working, what's not working, and what missed opportunities this brand can capitalize on.

Plus you'll also find some low-hanging fruits; little changes that a brand can make that will move the needle for them immediately.

What makes the other two answers wrong?

✗ Run ads to grow their email list

The main idea behind running ads is to bring more people into the funnel which would automatically increase sales.

However, there are two problems with this approach.

1. You are not an ads expert. This is something that is not only out of your control but also out of your area of expertise. And suggesting something where you're not the expert could not only harm the brand but also taint your reputation as an email strategist.
2. As an email strategist (unless you're an agency), growing somebody's email list is also not your forte. You can help them optimize what offers to make, but the client is responsible for bringing traffic to their website and making sure that most of their traffic sees that opt-in offer.

So I would never recommend talking about running ads to grow their email list apart from saying "You need to focus on growing your email list."

Your job is to get people who are signing up for the email list to make that first purchase and come back to buy again (and again.)

Also, it's faulty thinking that more people coming into the funnel would lead to more conversions.

It will not.

Because the problem lies in the brand's emails. In the connection with their audience.

If their emails aren't converting, it obviously means that something is off, and adding more people to this flow will not convert as well as improving their emails.

This could be the right move if...

You were also an expert in ads (or were an agency owner who had an ads management team.)

Either way, you'd have to work on fixing their emails first and then bring in more traffic to their website.

Always focus on fixing what's broken first, and then capitalize on missed opportunities.

✗ Send more promotional emails

This idea usually stems from sending more than just one email per week and seeing if that increases conversions.

Honestly, it might. But not to the point where it'll make a significant difference.

Because if they're already sending emails that are not converting and you continue in the same way, it's not going to make much of a difference. You might even end up annoying your subscribers and increasing the brand's spam complaints.

You start increasing your email frequency when...

You've conducted an audit, understood what's broken, and fixed it.

Once you're ready with your improved version of emails and start seeing results, you can then double down and start sending more emails.

Question #6 - Skincare brand

A skincare brand tested two different opt-in offers. One had abysmal conversions; the other skyrocketed them. Which one converted better?

Answers:

1. ❌ Free Sample + \$7 Shipping (People love free goodies as testers)
2. ✅ \$14 Product + Free Shipping

What makes the right answer right?

✅ \$14 product + free shipping

This was an actual experiment and it came as a surprise to everybody (including me) when option no. 2 (free shipping) made more sales than option no. 1 (free sample).

In hindsight, we realized that people were hesitant to trust a skincare brand with a free product.

The hesitation was “How good could their product be if they’re willing to give it away for free?”

Folks are not willing to take risks with their skincare because if there's a bad reaction, it's visible to EVERYONE.

So when we put a price on the product it suddenly became much more trustworthy.

While the free sample was not converting as well as they'd thought it would, putting a price on the product along with free shipping suddenly changed everything.

And so they ended up making money on an offer that they were ready to lose money on.

An interesting learning point for me was that it's really important to focus on what a brand's target customers and audiences feel and give importance to.

So for this audience, having a product that had a price attached to it was important for them to be able to trust it.

This brand's audience valued free shipping more.

Not the free sample, but free shipping. Time and time again, I've seen that free shipping works better than a discount because sometimes a 10% discount is just like \$2-\$5 off, but shipping can get really expensive for the customer.

What made the wrong answer, wrong?

✗ Free Sample + \$7 Shipping

Turns out people don't love free samples - if free sample is your entire offer.

- Free samples with orders over \$35? Winner.
- Free sample or travel sized products with a full sized product?
Absolutely.
- Free sample and only pay for shipping? Shady.

The more you know.

Question #7 - Cereal brand

You're creating a post-purchase upsell flow for a cereal brand. How long after purchase would you trigger this flow?

Answers:

1. Right alongside the post-purchase flow to allow them to add items to their initial order
2. Right after the product is delivered so we can upsell on items frequently bought together
3. When it's time to replenish the product so we can upsell a subscription offer.

What makes the right answer right?

When it's time to replenish the product

The best time to send a post-purchase upsell flow for this cereal brand is when it's time to replenish the product.

Now, brands typically have the data on when customers will need to replenish their products. They have apps for that now which make it easy.

Let's say it's one week for this cereal brand.

So if the customer has ordered one packet, they're going to need another one delivered to them next week.

When it's time to replenish the product, you could send them an email upselling a subscription offer that gives them the opportunity of never running out of their favorite cereal again.

And the best things about subscription offers are:

- They're super customizable. You can add or remove as many boxes as you wish
- They can be paused or restarted as and when the customers require
- They easily take away the friction of buying because the customer doesn't have to do anything
- You'll always receive your products even if it's out of stock on the website
- Brands will prioritize their subscription offers because these are guaranteed sales.

And yes, you could argue that a replenishment flow could also work... but getting weekly replenishment emails can get annoying.

A subscription on the other hand is “set it and forget it” and simplifies your customer’s life.

What makes the other two answers wrong?

✗ Right alongside the post-purchase flow

I’ve seen brands like Dollar Shave Club and Bloom do this really well.

(We’ll get to why it won’t work for the cereal brand in just a bit.)

1. Dollar Shave Club

They immediately redirect you to a landing page that gives you the option of adding things to your order right there and then, and that works because it’s a friction-free buying process.

And it works for them because Dollar Shave Club has a lot of built-in trust. They’re a big brand that has built a name for themselves that even non-customers would know about them.

So it might work for them, but it won't work for a smaller brand that is just starting to build a name for itself.

Another reason this works for Dollar Shave Club is because they're a shaving brand at heart. And no matter how bad a razor is, it'll still do the job that it's hired for, which is to shave and groom.

A cereal brand on the other hand is a lot more subjective.

If somebody's buying it for the first time, they won't be enticed with an upsell offer right away because they don't know whether they or their kids will like the taste of the cereal yet.

2. Blume

As soon as you process your order, Blume will send you a thank-you email where they'll offer a higher-priced product for a discounted price that you won't find anywhere else on their website.

And if you choose to avail that offer, Blume would hold your order until new items have been added to your order which unfortunately, delays the delivery.

While this could work for certain brands, it doesn't make sense for a cereal brand that's just starting out because delayed shipping would just add friction to the whole process.

It especially won't work for first-time customers because they don't know whether they'll like the cereal or not yet.

✗ Right after the product is delivered

This option wouldn't work for a cereal brand as well because the customer is yet to taste the product. Cereal is a breakfast meal — it's not something you'll eat immediately.

The earliest you'll try it will be on the next day at breakfast.

A cereal brand is not like an apparel brand where customers can just look at the product and decide whether they like it or not.

Cereals are taste-related products. And so with food items, it's so important for customers to taste it first, have it a couple of times, and decide whether they like it before buying again.

So sending an upsell offer right after the product is delivered might not be the best time because they (or their kids) might not have had the chance to taste your product yet.

However...

This could be a great opportunity to ask for a review. You could send an email the next day or 2 days later when they've tasted the product and ask for a review.

Question #8 - Skincare brand

Which crucial email is missing in this post-purchase flow from a skincare brand:

Email 1: Order confirmation

Email 2: Shipping Confirmation + Tracking details

Email 3: Out for delivery OR delivery confirmation

Email 4: Review request

Answers:

1. Upsell email
2. Care or usage instructions
3. Thank you message from the Founder

What makes the right answer right?

Care or usage instructions

When it comes to skincare brands (especially when it comes to makeup, skincare, and beauty products), care and usage instructions are super important.

These emails set expectations — like when to expect results because no skincare product is pure magic. It takes some time and consistency before you can see the results.

It also teaches the customer the best way to use their product including do's and don'ts.

When you send emails that are based around educating your audience on how to use your product, you also positively influence the reviews that your customers will leave.

Alternatively, if you don't send an email walking your customers through the right way to use it, your customers will use it however they think is the right way to use it and then not see the results. Which can terribly impact your reviews and brand name.

A care and usage email might not be needed for every brand but it's a must-have for a skincare brand.

Any brand selling products that require educating its customers about best practices or usage instructions, must include this email in their post-purchase flow.

What makes the other two answers wrong?

Upsell email

We've already covered this in the previous questions about when it's the right time to make an upsell offer.

So considering that this is a skincare brand, an upsell email doesn't make sense until the customer has had the chance to try the product and see some results.

Thank you message

A thank you message from the founder is always a nice-to-have email in a post-purchase flow, but it's not going to make a difference in the overall email experience for the customer experience as they use your product.

So yes, you can absolutely include the thank you message from the founder, but in the grand scheme of things, care or usage instructions are more important than a thank you message.

A thank you message is nice to have, but it won't move the needle when it comes to:

- the performance of your emails,
- the reviews your products will receive from customers, and
- any upsell or cross-sell offers that you will make in the future.

Question #9 - Choose the brand

Look at the stats below. Which of these brands should offer a discount in their opt-in offer?

Answers:

1. New brand. Has less than 15000 subscribers and its profit margin is 30%
2. Fast-growing brand. Has 15,000 subscribers and has a 35% profit margin
3. Pre-launch brand. Has around 15000 subscribers on the waitlist, with profit margin projection of 44%

What makes the right answer right?

New brand with 15k subscribers and 30% profit margin

The correct answer here is a new brand that has 15,000 subscribers.

Now, I am extremely anti-discount and I always believe that discounts should be used as a reward and not a bribe.

But there are certain situations or phases of business where I'm totally okay with offering a discount in the opt-in offer. And a new brand whose main goal is to grow its email list so that it can make more sales is one of those times.

Because whether you like it or not, offering a discount in your opt-in offer is one of the fastest ways of growing an email list.

There are potential downsides to it though — like the brand could become known for its discounts and its customers wouldn't just buy at full price.

But for a new brand, it makes sense to offer a discount especially when one of their main goals is to increase their email list.

What makes the other two answers wrong?

✗ Fast-growing brand with 15k subscribers and 35% profit margin

For a fast-growing brand that is actively adding hundreds of subscribers a week to its email list, there comes a time when a discount offer will stop being helpful, and instead become detrimental to their growth.

There are multiple stages to a brand's growth. A new brand needs a discount to jumpstart its email list growth. But a fast-growing brand has already established all the backend foundational systems (like website traffic, ads, SEO, etc.)

If anything else, a fast-growing brand will soon have to change its opt-in offer to a new one where they're not heavily relying on a discount. If they don't, they run the risk of becoming discount reliant to make sales.

I always have a conversation with a brand about changing their opt-in offer when it's time to move their customers away from the discount mentality.

Because no matter how many sales come from discounts, they also eat into your profit margins, which again, is just a bad business model.

And just because you're moving a lot of inventory doesn't necessarily mean that you're making a lot of profit.

✗ Pre-launch brand with 15k subscribers and 44% profit margin

This is one of those brands that I would never recommend offering a discount in their opt-in offer.

That's because they already have a list of people that are ready to buy from you. They signed up on your waitlist because they're eager to know when you're going to launch so that they can buy.

So why would you offer them a discount?

Instead, there are so many ways that you can optimize a waitlist.

Take the brand Farsali, for example.

Whenever they release a new product, they launch with very limited stock and once it runs out, they encourage people to get on the “waitlist” or sign up for a “back in stock” alert.

In the meanwhile, they collect data on how well the product is performing, they gauge their customer’s interest in buying the product and when they believe that a product is going to be a success, then they make it readily available on the market again with no discounts because they already have a list of people waiting to buy.

So for a pre-launch brand with a wait list, their customers are already primed to buy and there’s built-in scarcity with limited stock. You don’t even need to offer a discount because there’s built-in scarcity.

People are willing and waiting to buy from you and they know that you might run out of stock at any time so they’re going to act fast.

Offering a discount to this group is just bad business.

The truth about email strategy...

There's no such thing as a "right" or "wrong" email strategy.

At any given time — for any brand — there's more than one strategy that can work. Which one you implement depends on:

- What the brand's situation is,
- What their business goals are,
- What their current data is,

As an email strategist, it's your job to figure out which of your strategies will move the needle fastest for a brand.

I never stress when a strategy of mine doesn't work because I have at least three other ideas in my back pocket that we can implement and try.

As Thomas Edison famously said, "I have not failed 10,000 times—I've successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work."

Luckily for us, we don't need to fail ten thousand times =)

When you treat strategy like a living, ever-evolving thing it's a LOT easier to get wins and impress clients.

Here's to you taking your strategy game to the next level!

Interested in mastering ecommerce email strategy?

Strategy isn't something that comes naturally to folks.

It's a learned skill.

Unfortunately, it's also what most would consider a "soft" skill.

You can learn copywriting - that's tangible skill. People can read the copy you write. But strategy's harder to package in a deliverable.

Because when you're an email strategist, you aren't just writing emails...

- You're solving business problems.
- You're helping brands reach business goals.
- You're advocating for their customers.

Unfortunately, email strategy is also a lot harder to teach.

It's a way of thinking. It asking questions. It's planning ten steps ahead.

The [eCommerce Email Bootcamp](#) is where copywriters and marketers go to become email strategists that brands line up to work with.

It's where I teach everything I know about ecommerce email strategy.

That's awesome... who are you again?

Hi, I'm Samar (pronounced "Summer")

Founder of Emails Done Right and creator of the eCommerce and SaaS Email Bootcamps.

I'm an email conversion strategist for SaaS and ecommerce brands.

Vanity clients include Hubspot and Pinterest.



Biggest email win is 100% conversion for a SaaS client (but that doesn't count here cuz we're talking ecommerce emails.)

- I am notoriously anti-discount,
- known for picking email fights, and
- have a penchant for telling people not to buy my courses if they're under financial strain.

(Because my courses won't magically make your financial woes disappear — it'll only add to them. I'm teaching you a skill. Not giving you a magic wand.)

If you're unfamiliar with me...

- Check out samarowais.com to find out how good I am at email strategy
- Sign up for my emails at emailsdoneright.com and get front row seats to my email fights
- Search my name (Samar Owais) on YouTube to find the dozens of webinars, podcasts, and workshops I've done over the years.

I guarantee you'll walk away learning something new about emails.

- Samar