



From Abandon to Conversion:

Why Shoppers Abandon Carts and
What Merchants Can Do About It

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All online retailers experience shopping cart abandonment. In 2010, Forrester Research and MarketingSherpa reported abandonment rates of 55% and 52% respectively. More recent numbers from SeeWhy and Fireclick show abandonment rates are now hovering around 72%.

In order to combat shopping cart abandonment, it's important to analyze the shopping experience from the moment a shopper adds a product to the cart through purchase completion in order to determine what post-abandonment marketing tactics can be leveraged to eventually gain the conversion. Covering every fork in the road that could cause customers to abandon their purchase and automating post-abandonment messages will lead to increased revenue without requiring a major effort.

This white paper will cover:

- Leading reasons for shopping cart abandonment
 - Analysis of carting, purchase process, and post-abandonment emails
- Post-abandonment marketing initiatives
 - A strategic approach to post-abandonment email communications

Combating Shopping Cart Abandonment

In 2009, Forrester asked nearly 3,000 web buyers why they abandon online purchases. The top 10 reasons can be classified into 4 categories: User Experience, Indecision, Technical Issues and Total Order Cost. This white paper explores each of these categories in depth and also shares data from a Bronto study evaluating the carting and purchasing processes of 100 brands and their abandoned cart marketing strategies.

User Experience

Retailers have a tendency to ask for a lot of personal information upfront which consumers are reluctant to give. While an email address is essential to completing an online purchase, in-store purchases don't require personal information to be shared.

Some people want to shop quickly and efficiently; otherwise they are going to abandon. There are several roadblocks in the online purchasing process that can frustrate or confuse shoppers and lead them to abandon their purchases:

Required Registration

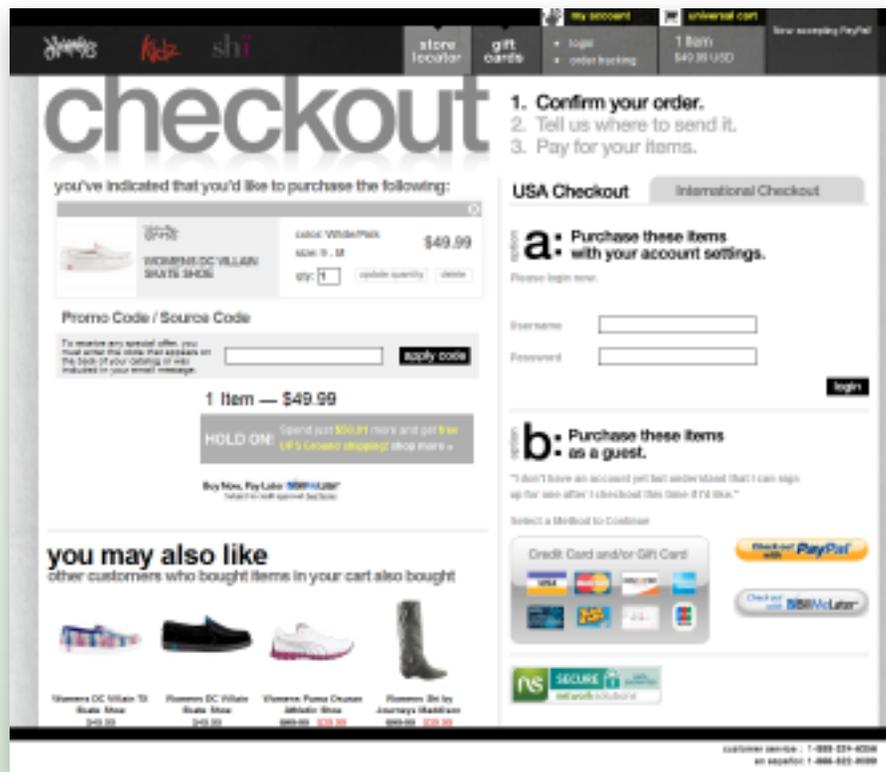
Bronto found that 9% of brands included in our analysis require customers to register or create an account in order to complete a purchase. While collecting customer data is important and valuable to a marketer, there are many tactics to collect this data post-purchase. Requiring a shopper to create a username, password, and in some cases set preferences and demographic information requires work on the shopper's part and can mentally take them out of the buying mood. Of the 91% of brands not requiring a shopper to register, most provided options to purchase as a guest or create an account allowing the shopper to make the decision about how much time and data they are willing to share.

It is also important to consider the sign-in requirement for returning customers. For shoppers who know their usernames and passwords, logging in during a purchase will save them from re-entering their shipping and payment information. However, for those who do not remember their login information, having to go through the steps to send a username reminder and password reset email can be laborious and time-consuming. According to Forrester, 14% of shoppers didn't pay for items because they forgot their usernames and passwords for their store accounts created with the merchants.

Too Many Pages

Many brands have switched from a purchase experience where each data point such as shipping address, billing address and shipping options has its own page to a more consolidated path. In many cases, all information required from the shopper is entered on one page even though the same number of clicks may be required by the shopper to get to the purchase confirmation. According to Bronto's analysis, there are an average of 5.6 pages from cart to order confirmation. One brand forced the shopper through 9 pages before the purchase was complete. The most succinct brand had a 2-step process where the entire purchase was completed on the cart page.

Conversely, attempting to put too many options on one page of the purchase process could result in the shopper becoming overwhelmed and abandoning out of confusion.



According to Bronto's analysis, there are an average of 5.6 pages from cart to order confirmation.

Journeys combines the carted product, promotional codes, upsell copy, suggested product and a checkout process on one page, providing numbered steps and lettered checkout options which may overwhelm a shopper.



L.L.Bean dedicates an entire page view to a branded credit card offer. For customers who are not interested, this completely removes them from their orders.

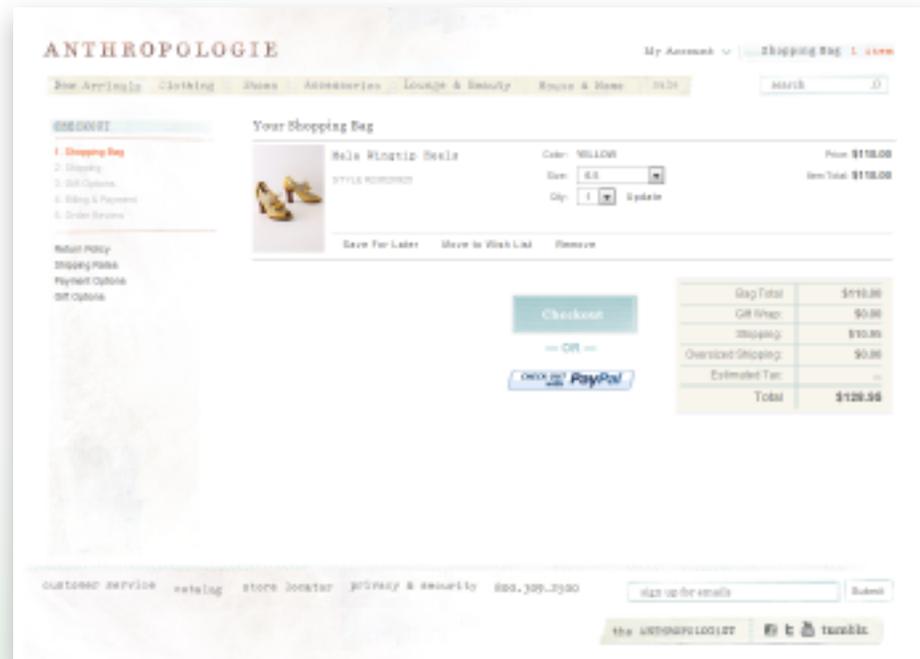
Site Functionality

When the navigation of carts and the purchase process differ from the shopping experience, it can be confusing to the buyer. If different calls-to-action, buttons and selection options are presented, it is important to keep the shopper progressing toward purchase without becoming overwhelmed with options or clicking on a wrong link.

Emotions

Consolidating the actual number of pages a shopper must view, digest and complete during the checkout process will help the shopper more quickly complete a purchase. But merchants should also consider the psychological factors of checkout. Excitement, anxiety, and confusion can all play a role in the decision to abandon a purchase. If a shopper has carted an item, he or she is clearly in an engaged state. Including a visual reminder of the product they are purchasing can maintain enthusiasm throughout the purchase process. Bronto found that 98% of brands included a picture of the product in the cart.

Many shoppers will intentionally cart more items than they plan to purchase with the intention of making modifications when they are finished shopping and view their cart. Seeing all of the products, costs, and shipping fees could overwhelm someone who may have over-shopped. Providing options to change the quantity of items can calm an anxious shopper by enabling them to whittle down their list to what they would consider to be a reasonable purchase. Bronto found that 21% of brands do not allow customers to change product quantities within the cart.



Bronto found that 21% of brands do not allow customers to change product quantities within the cart.

Anthropologie includes options to change both quantity and size in the cart.

After the cart has been modified and the shopper proceeds to the checkout process, it is important to set expectations about what will happen next each step of the way. Including a breadcrumb trail or step indicator of the pages that a shopper will need to complete will avoid confusion and help them to keep the finish line in sight. Bronto found that 5% of brands do not include any form of a step indicator during the checkout process.

A summary of the order should be continually shown and updated throughout the purchase process and a final review of the order, including payment and shipping information, should be provided before the purchase is completed to give the shopper confidence that all of the information is accurate. Not doing so could result in the shopper losing confidence in the order and abandonment.

login | billing & shipping | order summary | **payment options**

1 | 2 | 3 | 4

payment option **ORDER TOTAL: \$33.09**

credit card

Fields marked with an asterisk [*] are required.

*Card type: JCPenney

*Name as the card: _____

*Card number: _____

*Expiration date: Month Year 2012

VISA Card Verification #: _____

(Required for VISA Cards only)
VISA Card Verification # is a three digit number found in the signature area on the back of your VISA credit card. This three digit number is displayed after your credit card number.

I can't read the numbers

cancel **final step** place your order

JCPenney's final step in the checkout process is to enter credit card information and place the order. Even though the order total is shown, not including a full order summary including the items in the order, quantities and shipping charges could result in the shopper losing confidence and abandoning.

Kmart

Home | Cart | My Account | My Orders | My Wish List

0 items

Continue

E-mail: shirley@sears.com

Shipping

Item	Product Information	Quantity	Price
1	Walter's World's Best Tea - 4oz. Soft Drink Walter's World's Best Tea - 4oz. Soft Drink	1	\$33.09

Payment

Feel Secure using your Sears card. \$0 Liability on unauthorized purchases. See how our card helps you [Learn More](#)

Billing Address

800 Westcott
400 Eastmanville
Apt. 207
Dorham, NC 27834

[CHANGE ANOTHER ADDRESS](#)

Payment Method

Pay with a Sears Credit Card

Payment Type: Name on Card: Card Number:

Expiration: Month Year Security Code: [Learn More](#)

Pay with a Different Credit Card

Pay with PayPal

Preferential and QR Card Codes

[Add a New, Renewal, Lapse, or Expired Card](#)

[Use an Existing Card](#)

Review your estimator before placing order **Review Order**

Apply to make shop purchases in terms **Place Order Now**

Order Summary

Walter's World's Best Tea - 4oz. Soft Drink
\$33.09

Shipping
\$0.00

Subtotal
\$33.09

Total \$33.09

Place Order Now

Need Help?

Call us 1-800-368-1081
[Shop with Confidence](#)

Easy Returns
30 Day Return Policy

Responsibly Sourced Cotton
[About Cotton & Cotton](#)
[About Poly & Polyester](#)
[About Other Fabrics](#)

Kmart provides shoppers with options to either review or place an order, giving them the choice to skip a page view if they are confident in the order.

Indecision

There are other factors besides the site's purchase process that could cause shoppers to abandon their purchases. Abandoners who are on the fence about completing a purchase can be some of the most responsive to post-abandonment messaging. Understanding the behaviors that surround purchase indecision can help to shape a post-abandonment marketing strategy.

Not Ready

There are several reasons that a shopper may simply not be ready to complete a purchase. They may want to wait until payday, until they get home from work, or until their significant other can review the order. The lifespan of the cart should accommodate enough time for the shopper to complete the purchase when they are ready. While making the cart available from multiple computers may require the shopper to log in to an account, post-abandonment emails can include links that quickly take the shopper directly to their cart to avoid the login process.

Changed Mind

You are much less likely to abandon your shopping cart in the grocery store, but online you can come and go as you please without feeling any sense of guilt, so consumers feel free to change their minds.

A shopper who has carted an item had an initial interest that was strong enough to start the purchasing process, however, the decision to simply not purchase the item could be a result of the price, shipping timeline, or no longer wanting the product. This shopper was in the buying mood at one point and even though the original product is no longer of interest, there may be related products that would interest the shopper. Including additional product recommendations based on the original product category in post-abandonment communications can provide additional shopping opportunities that are highly targeted based on the original interest. Only 15% of brands are including suggested products within post-abandonment email communications.

Decided to Save Product

When a shopper views their cart and sees all of the items that they have added, many will decide to remove products. Although the shopper may not want to purchase the items with this order, there may be future interest in buying the items. Rather than only providing an option to remove a product from a cart, having the option to add the product to a wish list or to save for later will provide the opportunity to market those items to the customer in the future.

Order Tracking | Your Account | Sign In

Join eBags Rewards Club

Free Returns

Cart: 1 Item

Handbags Backpacks Messenger Bags Sports & Outfits Travel Accessories Vitamins & Accessories Electronics Cash & Baby SALE

LIMITED TIME ONLY! This offer has been applied. **20% Off** most items and **Free Shipping** over \$99. **ENDS 5/31/12 @ 11 PM PST** *Order based restrictions apply.

Free Returns | Shop with Confidence

You may also order by phone: 1.800.828.8128. Your cart number is 119018162.

Please Note: You could qualify for **FREE GROUND SHIPPING** on your entire order if you add \$27.01 more qualified products to your cart. Your current total excluding all cart fees is \$11.89 and you need at least \$99.99 to qualify for the **FREE** shipping offer.

Congratulations, these products are eligible for **FREE 2-Day Shipping** to the following **LARGE MEN | SICKLE**

Product Description	Item Price	Quantity	Totals
 Eminent - Trekto™ Large Backpack Color: Black Remove from Cart Estimated Annual Cost (enter 00 cycle below) Upgrade to expedited shipping \$99.99 in the cart.	\$11.89	1	Original: \$11.89 New Save: \$11.89 Final Price: \$11.89

Shipping Cart Options

Remove Saved Cart

Enter zip code for est. delivery (enter zip code)

OR BY PHONE: 1.800.828.8128

International Code:

Terms and Conditions

Save your Cart: (enter your email address)

Shipping fee will apply to orders shipped to CO, IL, IN, TN. Please enter the shipping zip code to see accurate rates for information.

Shopping Cart Total

Subtotal:	\$11.89
Product Discount:	-\$11.89
Shipping:	\$7.89
States Tax:	\$0.00
Total:	\$65.54
Total Savings:	\$11.89

Or Checkout With

eBags provides an option to save the cart to review later.

EVERY DAY FREE SHIPPING! No way order more often. No order too soon.

Today only 15% off your purchase. THE SALE ONLY ENDS TODAY 3/2. ENTER **GAPGIFT**.

YOUR SHOPPING BAG

Item	Quantity	Price	Remove	Save
 Pine Body long-sleeve T-shirt	1	\$65.54	<input type="button" value="Remove"/>	<input type="button" value="Save"/>

Gap includes options to save the cart for later and to print the cart page, which could help the customer complete a purchase in-store.

Technical Issues

Security

In a world where identity theft is top of mind, if a site appears unstable or unreliable, don't expect a purchase. If load times are often slow or if pages don't give the product information expected, many visitors will get impatient and move on to the next site. Displaying security certifications during the checkout process will show a commitment to protecting a customer's personal information. The placement of these badges is also important. Displaying them close to the area where a shopper enters their credit card information will directly connect the shopper to your security of the order. Bronto found that 65% of brands are displaying information about the security of an order during the checkout process.

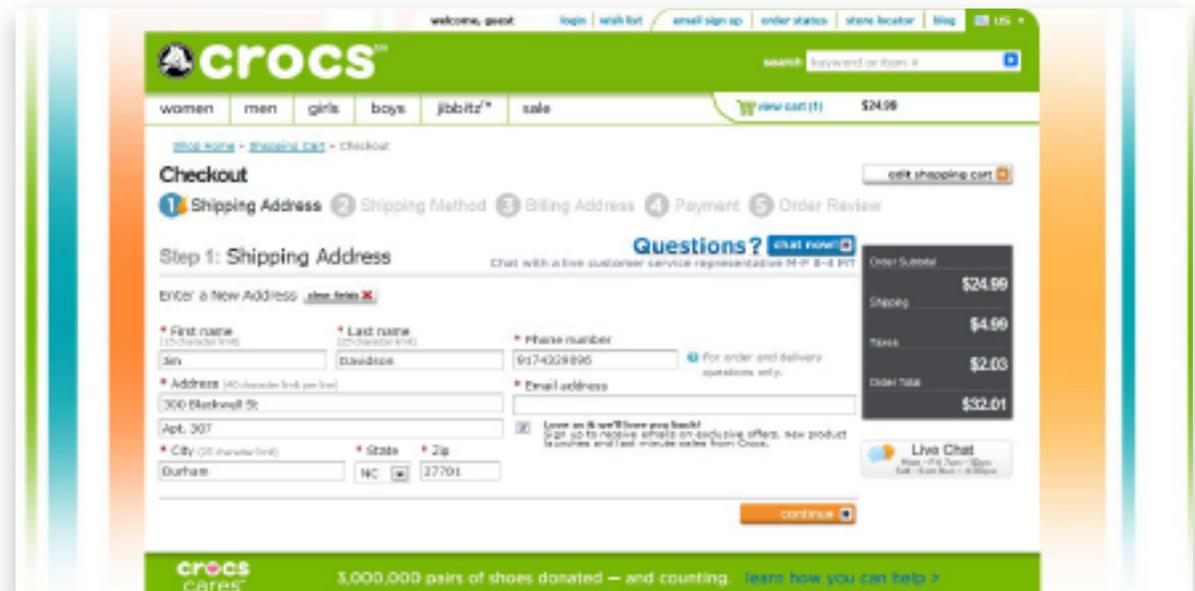
Bronto found that 65% of brands are displaying information about the security of an order during the checkout process.

Promotional Code Redemption

While a promotional code such as this actual code received in an abandon cart email from our study, "ABC3_S1ajHdMv56G9," may result in free shipping, such codes may be difficult for the customer to remember when they are ready to check out. A shopper who has to make multiple attempts to redeem a promotional code or leave the site to confirm the code in an email may abandon out of exhaustion and frustration. Promotional codes within an email should be text and not part of an image so the customer can easily copy and paste in their cart. Including a call to action for the user to copy the code could help put the email subscriber into a purchasing mind set. Alternatively, promotional codes can be coded into URLs and passed to the cart page, saving the customer the trouble of having to input the code.

Customer Support Options

Online shopping lacks the ability to ask a store employee a question. In addition to product questions, there could be technical issues that are prohibiting a customer from completing a purchase or the shopper may have questions about other ways to buy. Providing customer support options such as live chat or customer service phone numbers throughout the purchasing process can provide customers with options to get answers rather than simply abandoning the purchase. Include these options near areas that may result in abandonment like near the order total or shipping options.



Crocs places live chat options both at the top of the cart and near the order total.

Directed Away from the Cart

In the analysis of abandoned carts, there are multiple situations where the buyer is taken off track from the purchasing process. This most often occurred when sites prompt shoppers to create an account or when profile information such as shipping address was entered. Shopper profile data and transactional data may be recorded using different systems that are updated independently. This can result in a disconnect during the purchase process.

Merchants should frequently audit the process from carting to order completion as a completely new customer, a returning buyer, and as a prospect to ensure that all systems are communicating and that the shopper is not removed from the purchase process.

Product Cost and Additional Fees

According to a study by Paypal and ComScore, 36% of purchasers didn't pay for items because they felt the total cost of the purchase was higher than anticipated. State taxes, shipping and any other associated costs of the purchase can sometimes be unexpected and cause the shopper to abandon.

Until a shopper views the cart, the focus may have been on selecting the product, viewing product images, and choosing a size, but once they view their cart, prices and fees become a reality.

Price Comparison

According to the Forrester report, 27% of shoppers didn't pay for items because they wanted to comparison shop on other websites before making a purchase. Online marketing has turned buyers into comparison shoppers. What was once "big purchase" behavior is now a behavior seen in purchases as small as purchasing an inexpensive book online. Consumers are looking for the best product with the best cost and the fastest, cheapest delivery.

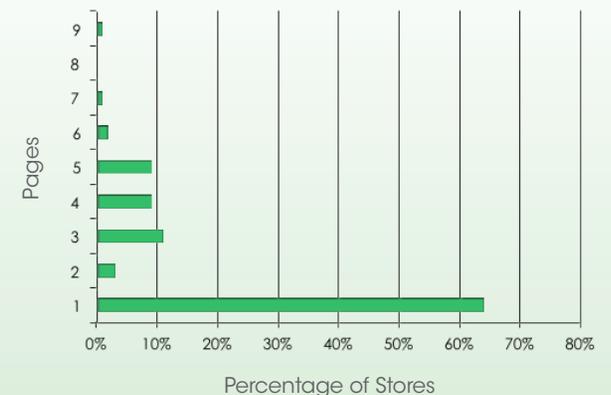
Many shoppers will abandon their carts to search for a lower price or promotional code. Remind the customer of how much they are saving on the item they are purchasing. In a poll done by ComScore, 41% of customers abandoned their shopping cart because of the return or exchange policy. If a price guarantee or price match policy exists, feature it in the cart near the order total. Including information on return policies, customer service, or warranty offerings can add value as well. During our study, we found brands that had a promotional code preloaded in the cart providing the shopper the experience of calculating the discount to see additional savings.

Shipping Costs

The downside of online marketing is non-instant gratification and shipping charges. People want to receive their purchases quickly and they're only willing to pay a few dollars more in shipping. Not all are convinced that convenience should be charged a premium.

It is important to clearly communicate shipping costs and show totals or estimated totals early in the checkout process to avoid abandonment related to sticker shock. We found that 64% of brands included actual or estimated shipping costs on the cart page before the actual checkout process began. The second most common page for shipping costs to be revealed was 3 pages into the checkout process. One brand did not show shipping costs until the 9th page.

**Number of Pages into Checkout Process
When Shipping Costs Shown**



Marketing Initiatives Post-Abandonment

Even if shopping cart and website functionality are optimized, merchants can still see high abandonment rates. What can marketers do? Luckily, there's an arsenal of tools that can be used to combat shopping cart abandonment.

Abandon cart reminders, for most shoppers, will be an unexpected communication. Making sure a brand is not taking a big brother approach is important. Keeping the balance between a customer service and promotional tone can be key to making sure the email is perceived as valuable to the customer.

Analysis of Post-Abandonment Email Communications

First Post-Abandonment Email

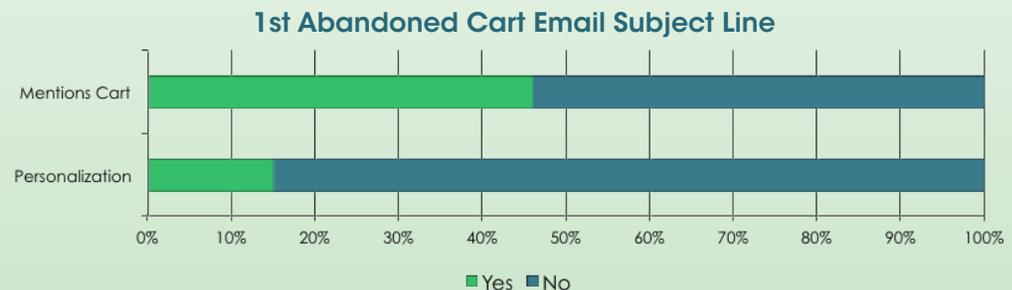
In our study of 100 brands, we found that 13% sent at least one post-abandonment email. This message was received an average of 30 hours after cart abandonment. The fastest brand had a cart reminder in our inbox 45 minutes after abandonment and the slowest brand waited 3 days. We analyzed the subject line and content strategies of the first abandoned cart emails to see how brands are communicating to their customers.

Subject Lines

Most brands avoided using personalization in the subject line of the first post-abandonment email. Personalization can add a touch of friendly recognition to an email but including first name in the subject line of an email that the subscriber did not realize they would receive could be seen as creepy. Results may differ by brand and customer segments but most brands avoided personalization. If you do use personalization, make sure to use it well. One brand in our survey used "Valued Customer" as default personalization.

Direct references to a "cart" were more common, with 46% of brands including a note about the cart. Those brands who did not mention the cart in the subject lines most often asked the shopper to "complete your order" or sent "a friendly reminder" to encourage abandoners to pick up where they left off.

Bronto found that 13% sent at least one post-abandonment email

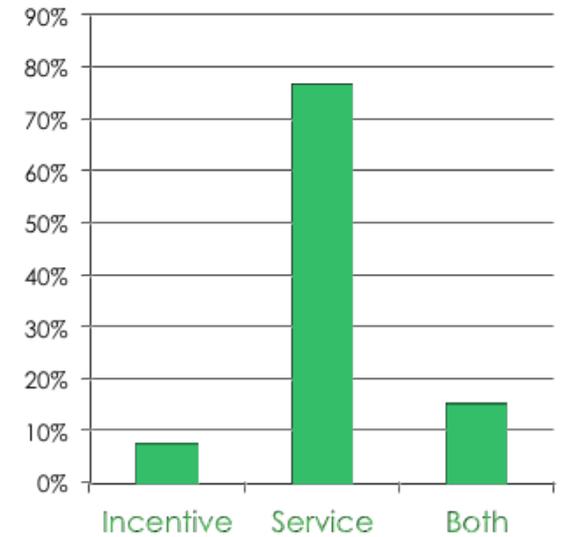


77% of brands took a customer service tone with their subject lines, avoiding any incentive or promotion. Abandoners are typically engaged and very far down the purchase funnel. An additional incentive can hit to your bottom line may not be needed to get the sale. This is worth testing to see if there are specific customer segments based on demographics, past purchase history, product categories or price points that respond better to an additional incentive. Those who did offer an incentive most often offered free shipping when the order was completed.

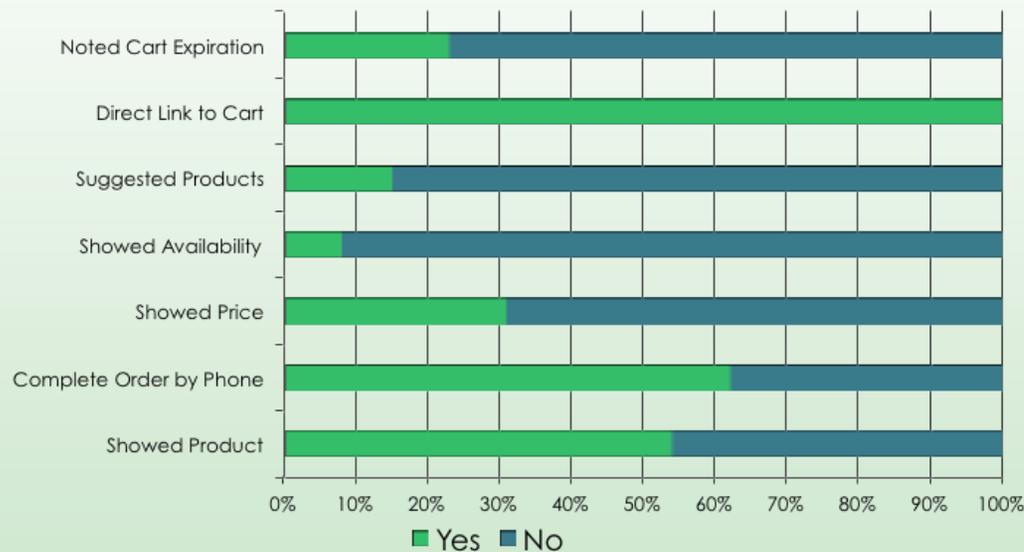
Content

Considering some of the primary factors that lead to abandonment, it is surprising to not see more reinforcing factors included in post-abandonment emails. Promoting urgency by informing the customer when the cart will expire can be an effective way of encouraging the customer to return, yet only 23% of brands took this approach. 54% of them showed the product in the email but only 31% included the price. This could be a result of sales or promotions changing the price points for products between abandonment and the receipt of the email. 8% of brands showed availability of the carted products in the email. This could be a complex task to achieve depending on the depth of integration between your e-commerce platform and email service provider and the fluctuation of your inventory. Alternatives to the original shopping experience were also provided, with 62% of brands offering an option to complete the order by phone and 15% of brands suggest other products related to the original carted items. All brands included a call to action specifically linking the customer back to their cart.

Subject Line Tone



1st Abandoned Cart Email Content



Valued Customer, did you forget something in your cart?

1 message

Overstock.com <Sale@sales.overstock.com>
Reply-To: "Overstock.com" <PromoInfo@overstock.com>
To:

Sat, Mar 3, 2012 at 8:33 AM

View in [Browser](#)
To ensure savings, add Sale@Sales.Overstock.com to your Address Book.  0.00 - Also known as Overstock.com.



Manage Email Preferences View Cart

Search

Home & Garden Furniture Bedding Clothing & Shoes Jewelry Watches Electronics Sports

Valued Customer, thank you for your visit to Overstock.com. Below is a product you recently added to your shopping cart. [Continue Checkout >](#)



Item	Product Name	Options	Qty	Price (Each)
------	--------------	---------	-----	--------------



[Safety 1st Ultrasonic 360-degree Blue Humidifier](#)

1 \$29.99

\$2.95 Shipping*

Place your order today and receive \$2.95 Shipping on your entire order. [Shop Now >](#)

Subtotal: \$29.99

Shipping Charge: \$2.95

Grand Total: **\$32.94**

Join Club O today, and earn \$1.30 in Club O Rewards and get free shipping** on your entire order. [Sign Up Now >](#)

[Edit Cart](#)

[Continue Checkout](#)

Pay with 

[Shopping](#)

[Community](#)

[Cars](#)

[Real Estate](#)

[Auctions](#)

Although they miss the mark for the first name personalization, Overstock's abandoned cart email appears visually similar the actual cart, helping to remind the customer of their initial shopping experience. Not only is the price of the product shown but shipping costs, two payment options and an edit cart link are included.

Re: Your unfinished order

1 message

shoppekeeper@vitaminshoppe.com <shoppekeeper@vitaminshoppe.com>
To:

Sun, Mar 4, 2012 at 1:32 AM



YOUR UNFINISHED ORDER

Dear Jim,

Thank you for your recent visit to [VitaminShoppe.com](#) - we hope you come back soon to complete your purchase. As a courtesy, we will save the items currently in your [shopping cart](#) until Sun, Apr 1, 2012. Simply [return to your cart](#) any time up until then to finish your order.

We look forward to seeing you again soon.

Sincerely,
Your Friends at The Vitamin Shoppe

Here are the items currently being saved in your cart*:

Brand & Name	Size	Price	Qty	Total	Your Savings
 Dynamic Health #DH-1014 Tart Cherry Juice Concentrate	15.0 Ounces (Liquid)	\$11.99	1	\$11.99	\$6.00

Get Free Shipping on your order of \$25 or more

Remember, you can come back to [VitaminShoppe.com](#) any time until Sun, Apr 1, 2012 to pick up where you left off and complete your order. [Return me to my order now.](#)

*Please note that the listed price(s) is/are subject to change at any time. [Return to your cart](#) to view current price(s).

Order Now &
You Could Save
\$6.00

[RETURN TO YOUR CART](#)

The Vitamin Shoppe used an interesting subject line approach, making the email seem as if it's a reply. Product information is shown and the savings off of full retail value are highlighted to further motivate the shopper to complete the purchase.

Second and Third Post-Abandonment Emails

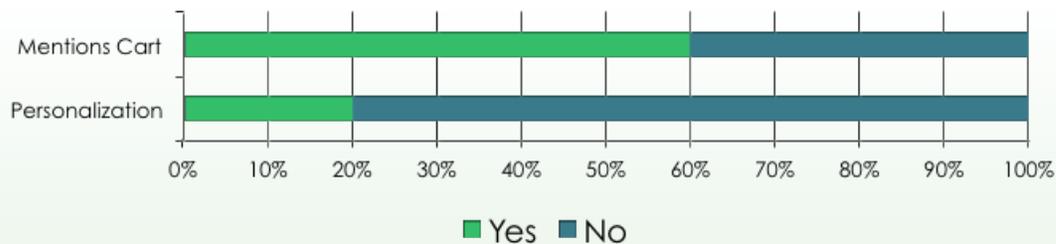
38% of brands that sent a post-abandonment email sent a follow up email. This means that only 5% of brands included in the study employ a multiple-message strategy to reclaim the sale. Only one brand sent a third. The second emails were received an average of two days after cart abandonment. The quickest second reminder was received one day after cart abandonment, and the last email was received three days after abandonment. The amount of time between the first and second messages ranged from 17 hours to 2.5 days.

Subject line and content strategies were again analyzed for the second set.

Subject Lines

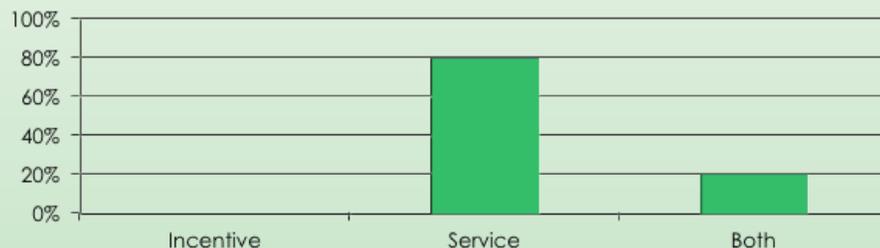
Personalization was seen 5% more frequently in the subject lines of the second post-abandonment email while a large shift was seen in the percentage of cart mentions. Brands referenced "cart" 14% more frequently in subject lines compared to the first post-abandonment emails mostly due to brands messaging cart expiration.

2nd Abandoned Cart Email Subject Line



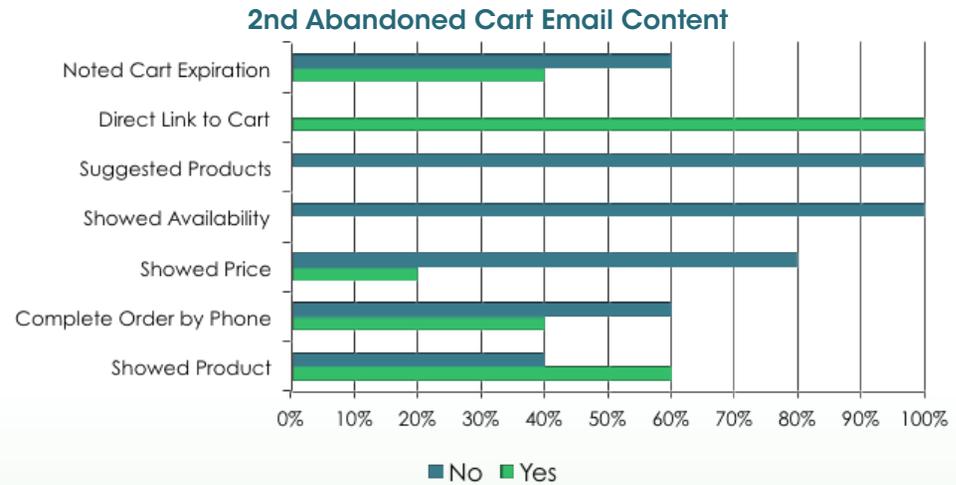
No brand promoted an incentive in the subject line of their second message on its own though incentives were seen in combination with customer service themes like "You Left Some Things In Your Shopping Bag + Get FREE Shipping!" A customer service related approach to subject lines was still the most common approach.

Subject Line Tone

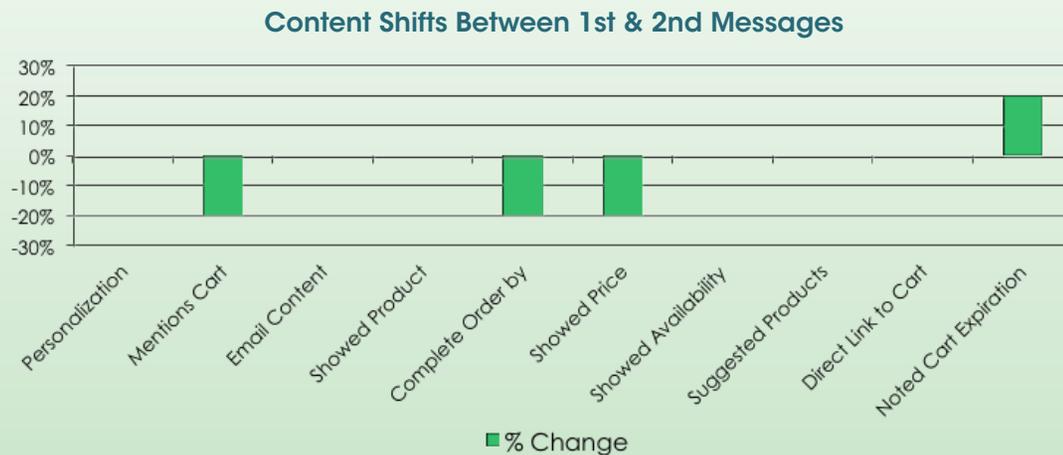


Content

Of those sending a second abandoned cart email, a higher percentage used cart expiration as a motivator. Product shots were included in over half of the emails and only 20% included the price of the abandoned items. No brand included product availability. These service-oriented notifications never featured suggested products and only 40% offered an option for the purchase to be completed over the phone. As expected, all emails contained a link with a specific call to action to revisit the cart.



When comparing the first and second message for brands that sent both, most subject line and content strategies remained the same. But there was a 20% drop in the direct reference of a cart in the subject line as well as a 20% decrease in providing an option to complete the order by phone and showing the price of the carted items. A 20% increase was seen in using cart expiration to drive completion of the purchase.



You Left Some Things In Your Shopping Bag + Get FREE Shipping!

1 message

Alloy <alloy@alloyshopemail.com> Fri, Mar 2, 2012 at 11:45 AM
Reply-To: Alloy <support-bwuf64bf5m5eawqmsbyk0g1d8h@alloyshopemail.com>
To:

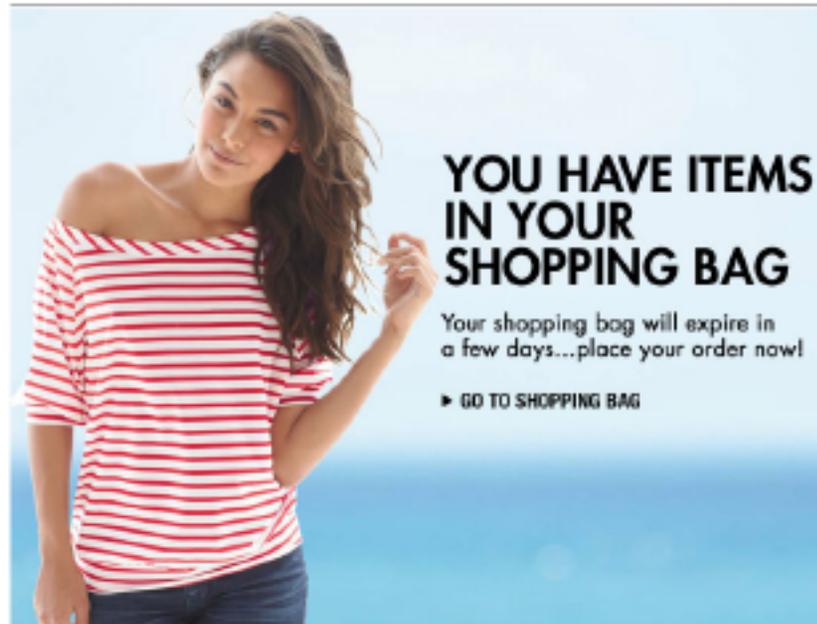
[Resend this. You're having trouble viewing this message.](#)

If you are unable to see the images in this email, please [click here](#). For mobile version [click here](#).
Keep Alloy emails coming! Add alloy@alloyshopemail.com to your address book now.

ALLOY

[Like Us](#) [Like Us On Facebook](#)

[Clothing](#) [Jeans](#) [Tops](#) [Dresses](#) [Shoes](#) [Sweaters](#) [Clearance](#)



FREE SHIPPING ON ORDERS OVER \$25. ENTER APCAC3 AT CHECKOUT.

Hurry, Your Shopping Bag Expires Soon!

1 message

Alloy <alloy@alloyshopemail.com> Mon, Mar 5, 2012 at 12:05 PM
Reply-To: Alloy <support-bwuf64bf5m5eawqmsbyk0g1d8h@alloyshopemail.com>
To:

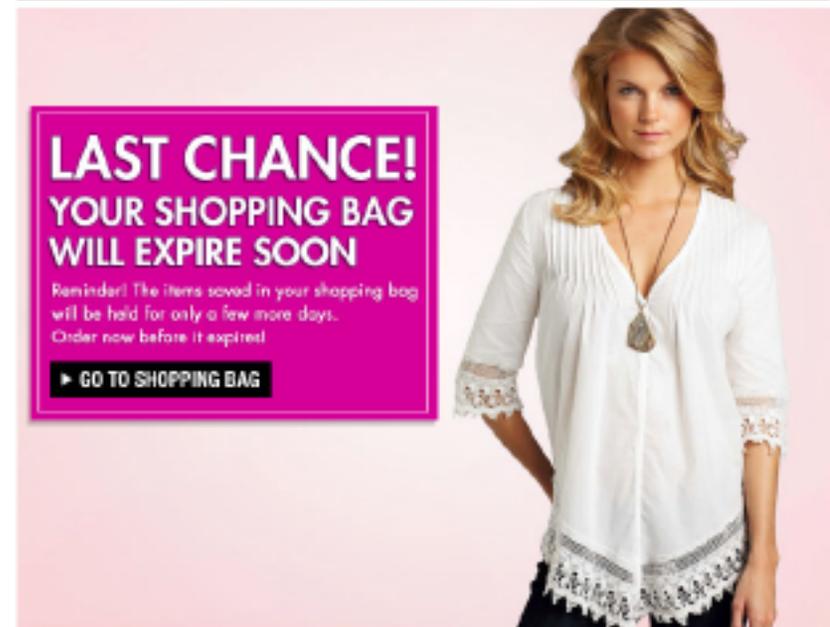
[LAST CHANCE! You Left Some Things In Your Shopping Bag + Get FREE Shipping!](#)

If you are unable to see the images in this email, please [click here](#). For mobile version [click here](#).
Keep Alloy emails coming! Add alloy@alloyshopemail.com to your address book now.

ALLOY

[Like Us](#) [Like Us On Facebook](#)

[Clothing](#) [Jeans](#) [Tops](#) [Dresses](#) [Shoes](#) [Best of Winter](#) [Clearance](#)



FREE SHIPPING ON ORDERS OVER \$25. ENTER APCAC3 AT CHECKOUT.

Alloy's first shopping cart reminder features a clean design with soothing colors, a friendly reminder about items that are still in the shopping bag and a free shipping offer. The second message drops the free shipping incentive and strongly raises the sense of urgency in the subject line. The content of the email is much bolder, reinforcing cart expiration and uses a very direct model shot.

Only one brand in our survey sent a third message, which was received 1.5 days after the second email. The email was a last chance to complete the purchase, noting that the cart would be emptied that day.

Recommendations for Post-Abandonment Email Communications

Considering the many reasons for cart abandonment, abandoned cart messages need to be carefully planned and optimized to address the variables that seem to lead to abandonment.

While one email may be enough to gain the sale, sending multiple communications should be considered and tested to determine which approach works best for your brand. Here is an approach to take for a two-part post-abandonment series. It is important to remember that abandoned cart messages are considered promotional and not transactional. A shopper must have subscribed to email communications in order to be eligible for abandoned cart communications.

First Post-Abandonment Message

Timing

Considering the wide range of 45 minutes to 3 days shown in our analysis, there seems to be no magic time to send the first message. Start by running a test that covers the spectrum from same day to 3 days and monitoring performance. This exercise can help you determine when the time is right to remind shoppers that they have items waiting in their carts.

Incentives & Promotions

Everyone loves a discount, right? So why not test offering a percentage discount or free shipping when they complete their cart purchase. This provides an incentive for the customer to complete the transaction but you may see similar results when no incentive is presented. Test both variations to determine if the redemption of the offer is impacting final revenue numbers. Better results could be seen if the incentive is not offered until the second message.

Avoid Repeat Abandoners

Set controls on your program to restrict shoppers from receiving abandoned cart reminders each time they abandon. This can result in customers being trained to abandon their carts and wait for the free shipping offer or discount. If the data is available, determine your average abandonment rate by user to determine the optimal spacing between abandonment messages. If this data is not available, try setting the notifications to deploy to customers who have not purchased from a post-abandonment email in the past three months.

Second Post-Abandonment Message

Timing

Sending a second message to all abandoners may result in customers feeling bombarded. This can be avoided by restricting the second deployment to shoppers who at least opened the first post-abandonment message. You can test to a segment of non-openers as well to determine whether the second message is worth it for this population.

Incentives & Promotions

As shown in our analysis, most brands went with a customer service tone in the second message. This email is a last ditch marketing effort and could be the best time to offer an incentive to help the shopper make the purchase. From the user's perspective, this is also the last chance to view their cart and complete their purchase before the cart expires. Combining an incentive and the sense of urgency makes for a compelling statement to return to the site and purchase. Provide the actual expiration of the cart but allow enough time for the shopper to receive the email, visit the site and complete the purchase. Ending your post-abandonment series with a cart expiration notification of 7 days lacks the urgency of a 3 day or 36 hour expiration.

Summary

Email marketing is a powerful tool and when employed strategically, can go a long way in combating shopping cart abandonment. Many online retailers have seen an increase in shopping cart completion when using a targeted email campaign that entices the customer to complete the purchase by offering an incentive. To effectively do this, merchants must first make certain they have permission to email the customer. And they need an analytics system that associates a user with the abandoned cart. An easy way to facilitate this is through a registration process or through integration with an email service provider and the analytics solution. Once these pieces are in place, testing can begin on various campaigns and tactics to see which ones lift your abandonment conversion rate.

About Bronto

Bronto Software provides solutions for retailers and other commerce-focused companies to drive revenue through targeted email and cross-channel marketing. More than 1,000 organizations worldwide, including Party City, Armani Exchange, Timex, Samsonite and Trek Bikes rely on Bronto's software and services to fuel customer engagement and sales. Bronto won the Stevie Award for Best Customer Service in 2009 and 2010, was named a CODiE Award Finalist for Best Marketing Solution in 2011 and is one of Inc. Magazine's top fastest growing software companies. Bronto is headquartered in Durham, NC with an office in London. **For more information, visit bronto.com.**