

The background is a composite image. The top left shows a woman in silhouette drinking from a cup while looking at a laptop screen. The bottom right shows a close-up of hands with purple nail polish typing on a laptop keyboard. The laptop screens display various data visualizations, including bar charts and tables.

Awaken Sleepy Email Subscribers with **Reactivation Campaigns**

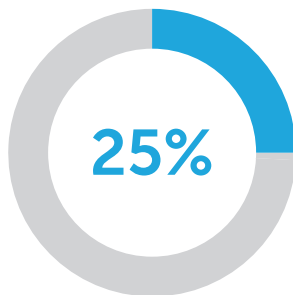
INTRODUCTION

Building a subscriber list is fundamental to email marketing, but maintaining your list by keeping subscribers engaged is even more critical to long-term marketing success.

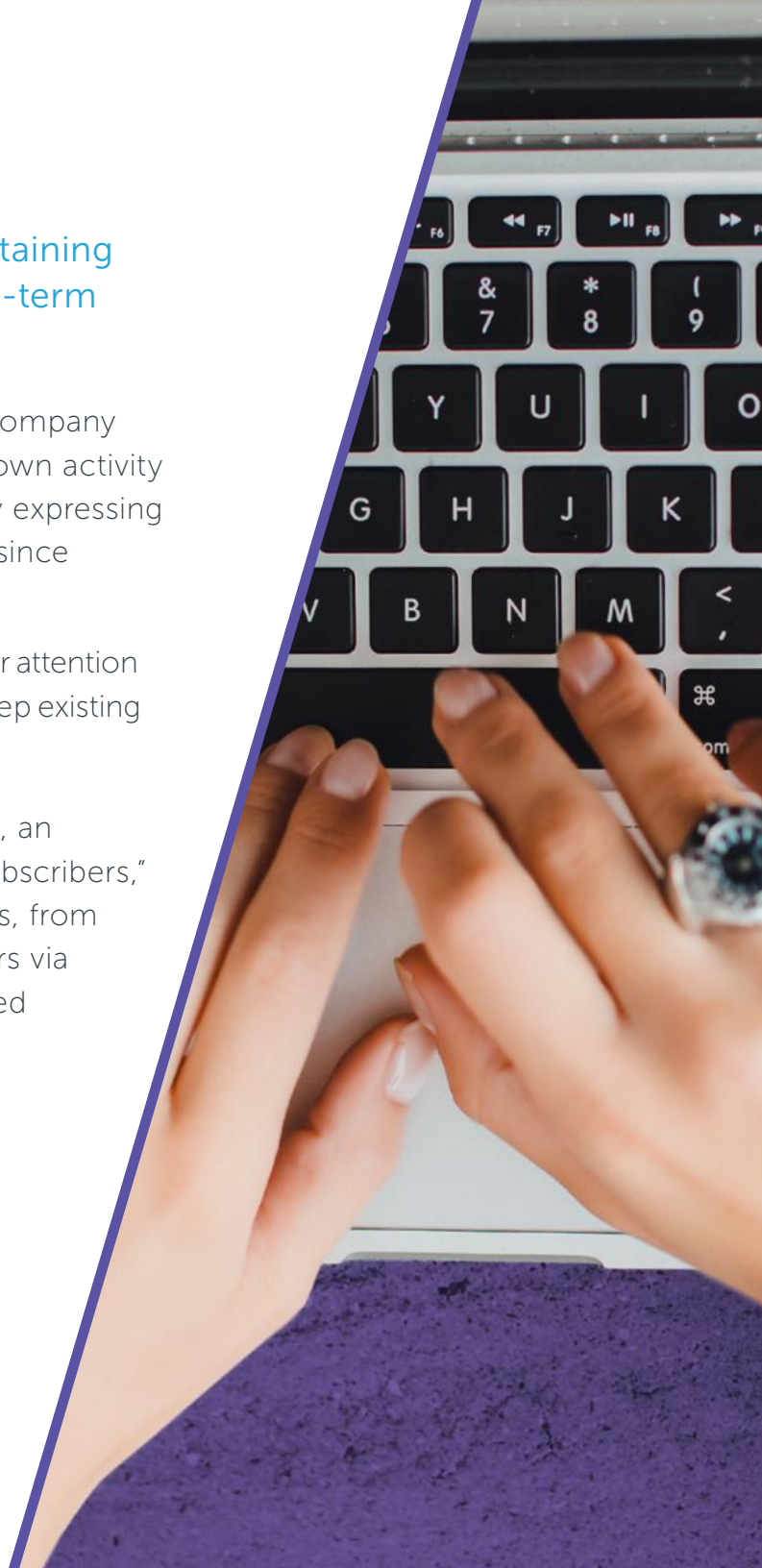
According to a study conducted by Return Path, over **25%** of email addresses in company databases were classified as “inactive,” referring to email accounts that haven’t shown activity in **30** days or more. These people have raised their hand in the past—by previously expressing interest, purchasing a product, or otherwise engaging with your brand—but have since “gone dark.”

They’re the result of the valuable time and money that marketers spend to grab their attention in the first place. And given that it costs more to attract new customers than to keep existing ones, it’s vital to awaken these inactive, or “sleepy,” subscribers.

The best way to awaken your sleepy subscribers is to run a reactivation campaign, an email campaign, or multiple campaigns, specifically targeted towards “sleeping subscribers,” to get them to re-engage with your brand. These campaigns can take many forms, from direct requests to deals and offers. The most common reactivation method occurs via email, but with the rise of smartphones, tablets, and smartwatches, marketers need to strongly consider re-engaging subscribers over mobile as well.



of email addresses in
company databases were
classified as “inactive.”



WHY DO YOU NEED REACTIVATION CAMPAIGNS?

Reactivation campaigns help you improve your overall revenue, email metrics, and email deliverability and inboxing. Reactivation campaigns offer a multitude of benefits to marketers, including:

Maximize ROI

Reactivation campaigns help you identify your most active, valuable email recipients as well as valuable recipients that haven't engaged in a while. Reactivating inactive but valuable recipients is much cheaper than acquiring new names; you've already acquired the name—now you just need to trigger past customers to purchase again.

Increase Email Engagement

The bottom line here is that the everyday campaigns you run do not engage all of your

subscribers. Perhaps the language or the offers are not enticing or relevant enough to keep them engaged. And if it's been a long time since their last engagement, they may just get tired of hearing from you and mark your emails as spam. Rather than letting that happen, you can use a reactivation campaign to proactively ask them if they still want to receive communications from you. By determining which subscribers don't want to hear from you, you ensure the "dead weight" in your database doesn't bring down your email engagement metrics.

DON'T BE SO FAST TO REMOVE THOSE VALUABLE EMAIL ADDRESSES



Let's face it, some email addresses are harder and more expensive to acquire than others. If you're a B2B marketer targeting, say, those in executive-level roles, you probably never want to retire such valuable contacts. We suggest creating a new group to add these subscribers to and just sending emails to them at a lower cadence. Perhaps one email per quarter.



WHY DO YOU NEED REACTIVATION CAMPAIGNS?

Improve Your Email Deliverability and IP Reputation

On average—in both the personal and business world—**30%** of email addresses turn over each year from subscribers changing or creating a new email address, as reported by ClickZ. From a B2B perspective, this means that there is no one on the receiving end of nearly one-third of your emails. On the consumer side, the same is true, but in this case, internet service providers (ISPs) can commandeer inactive email addresses and turn them into spam traps.

Repeatedly sending emails to subscribers who no longer engage with your emails will have a negative impact on your email open and

click-to-open rates due to a large portion of your list going cold. Coupled with the possibility of more hard bounces and spam traps, sending to unengaged subscribers affects the deliverability and email inboxing of your present and future email campaigns.

On the other hand, showing ISPs that you practice good list hygiene gives them reason to view your emails favorably and deliver them at a higher rate. Cleaning out your email lists is great for email deliverability and overall IP address health. Subscribers that do not respond to reactivation campaigns can be removed from all future mailings to avoid spam complaints and hard bounces, or placed in a separate segment that's set on a lower email cadence.

UNSEEN EMAILS ARE WORSE THAN UNOPENED EMAILS



According to “The Ultimate Guide to Email Deliverability” published by Return Path, only **79%** of commercial emails land in the inbox. This means that 1 in 5 sent emails never make it to your recipients’ inboxes. So if you’re counting on 100% of your emails to hit your subscribers’ inboxes, but 1 in 5 emails end up somewhere else, it’s going to be hard to meet your revenue goals.



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

So if you are interested in getting a reactivation campaign started in your organization, you can run it by following these four steps:

1

Isolate your sleepy subscribers through engagement segmentation.

2

Test different content, offers, and language.

3

Think beyond a one-and-done campaign.

4

Give subscribers a way out.



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

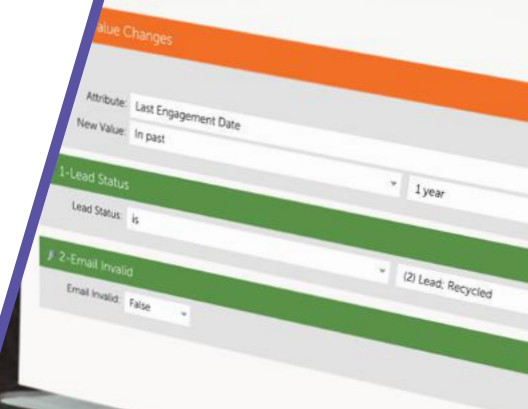
STEP 1: ISOLATE YOUR SLEEPY SUBSCRIBERS

First, identify subscribers who haven't engaged with your emails (in other words, have not opened or clicked) in a long time. How do you define "a long time"? This will vary by your database size and email frequency. If you send subscribers just one email per month, a "long time" might be a year or more. On the other hand, if you send emails daily, a six-month window may be just right.

If you use a marketing automation solution, like Marketo, you can set up triggers that automatically listen for inactivity windows and

send reactivation emails. This process allows you to easily and proactively address your sleepy subscribers without having to constantly worry about creating new campaigns.

The example to the right demonstrates how you can listen for inactivity. Using the trigger (in orange), we listen for an email address with inactivity in greater than 1 year. Then, we further filter (using the green filters) for customers or prospects with a favorable lead status and a valid email. We can then qualify them for reactivation campaigns.



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

STEP 2: TEST DIFFERENT CONTENT, OFFERS, AND LANGUAGE

As you are running your campaign, be sure to test content, offers, deals, creatives, and whatever else might tip the scales to trigger a response. Just remember: these campaigns aren't like your everyday campaigns. You're essentially trying to jolt your audience to life, so the more the message or offer catches the eye, the better. And that usually means using

language or an offer your subscribers are not accustomed to seeing from your company.

Because you don't know what will work to awaken your subscribers, it's important to test new content, enticing offers, a range of language, and new deals.

DON'T OVERLOOK THE USER EXPERIENCE

Coding your emails with an HTML button instead of an image button gives recipients a better user experience. When an email is opened, the email client needs to download all images—which may include your call to action—in the email. That means an image-based button will be hidden until all images are downloaded. However, a call-to-action presented as an HTML button will render before the other images are downloaded. In other words, your main call-to-action will appear before the images download, which changes the user experience for the better.



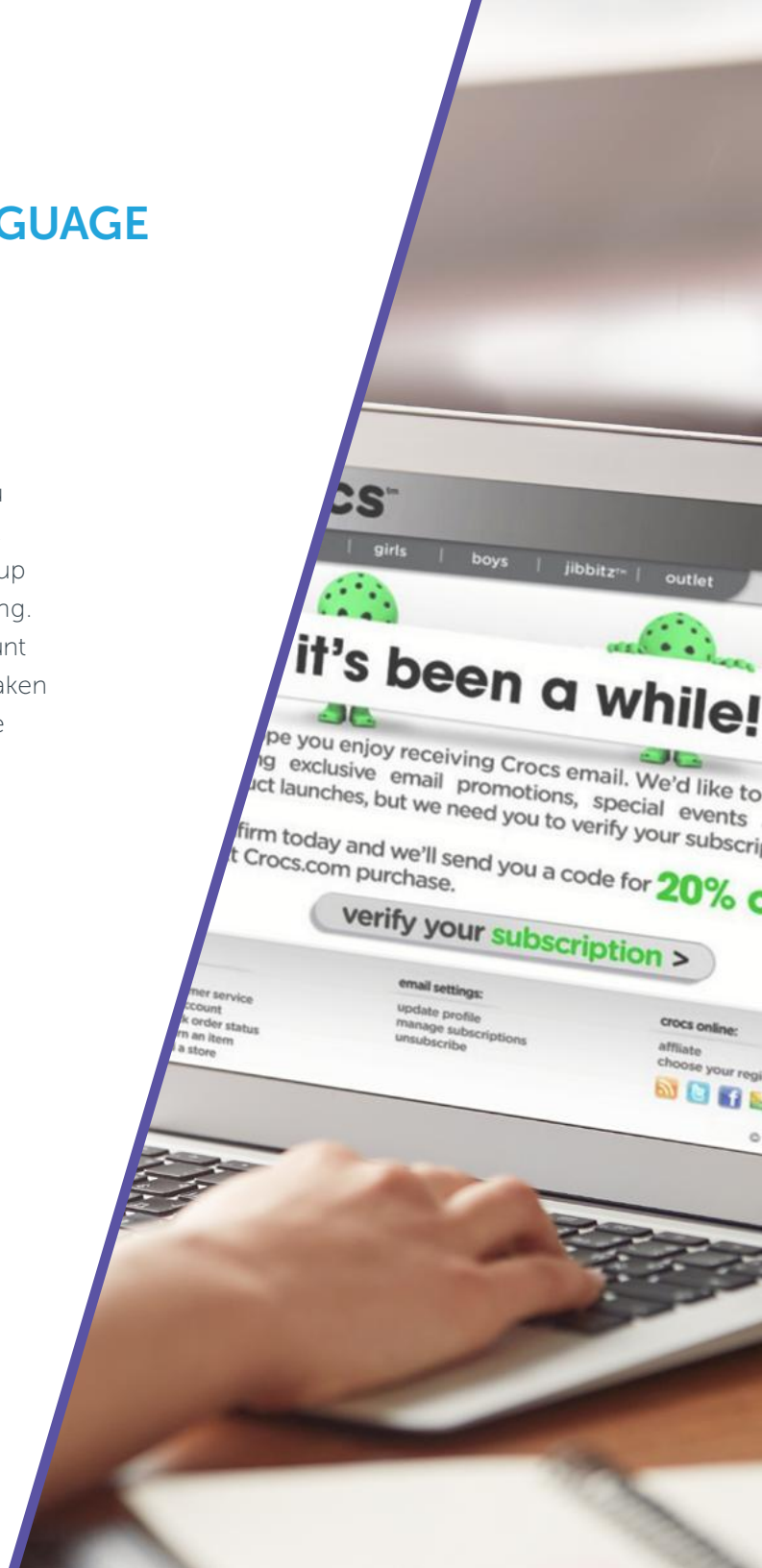
HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

STEP 2: TEST DIFFERENT CONTENT, OFFERS, AND LANGUAGE

This may surprise you, but the most effective language in reactivation campaigns is wording usually associated with dating. In fact, a study by Return Path that assessed the email reactivation campaigns of 33 retailers found the best subject lines included “Miss you.” Perhaps that’s because dating language of the sort “let’s stay together,” “it’s been a while,” and “we miss you” is surprising for having nothing (overtly) to do with a company trying to sell something. Instead, this language is personal and makes subscribers feel they are truly valued and missed by you, and that helps them build trust and a strong association with your brand.

On the right, you’ll see an example of a reactivation email from Crocs, a footwear retailer, using the phrase “It’s been a while!”

The “It’s been a while!” headline feels approachable and friendly, and makes you wonder how long it’s been. You could say it feels like an old friend reaching out to catch up rather than a business trying to sell something. Yet, Crocs is still selling, offering a 20% discount to verify the subscription—a terrific way to awaken sleepy subscribers and get them back on the fast track to a purchase!



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

STEP 2: TEST DIFFERENT CONTENT, OFFERS, AND LANGUAGE

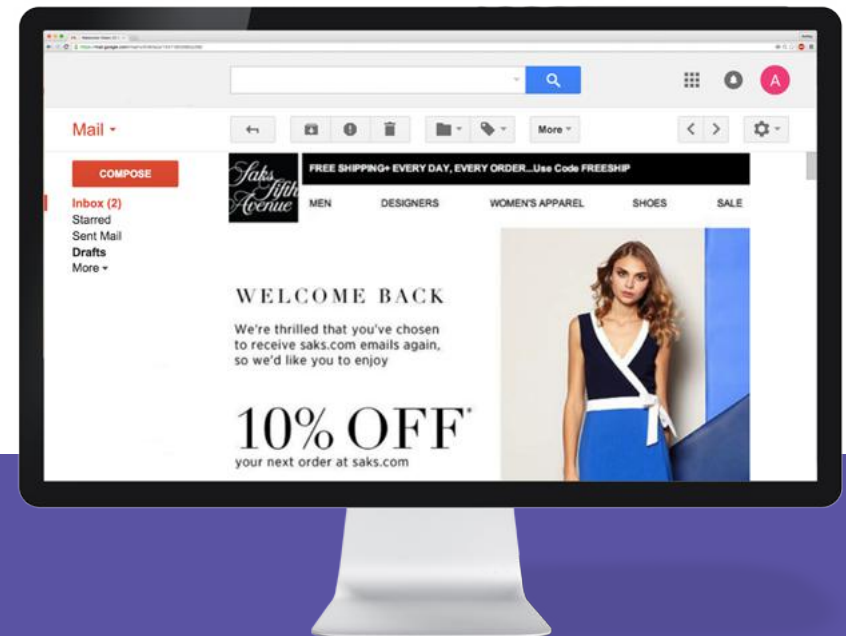
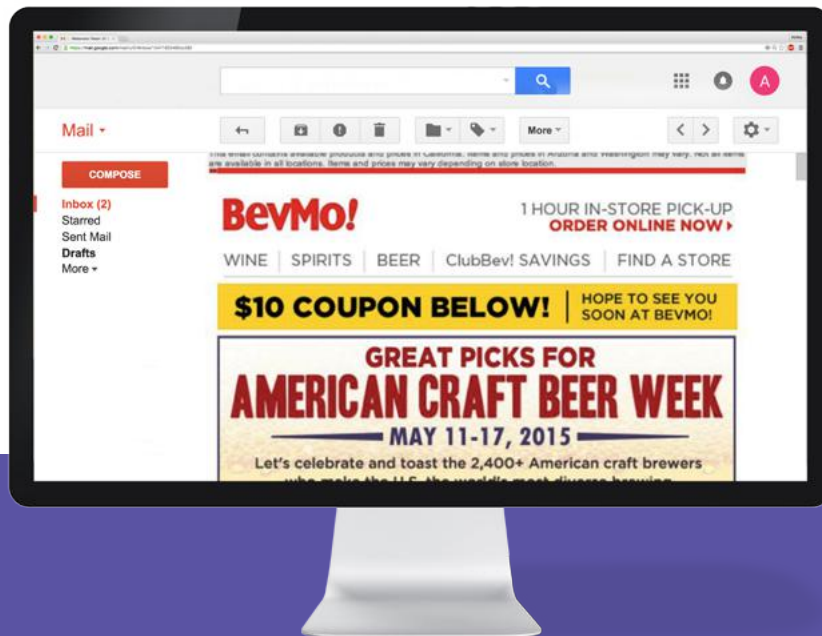
The Return Path study also found that subject lines including a discount in the form of an exact dollar amount were nearly twice as successful as those that included a discount in the form of a percentage. So consider starting off your email with a “miss you” and an incentive, like beverage retailer BevMo! did in their email offering \$10 off your next purchase.

Including the discount amount in the subject line makes your offer highly visible in your

subscribers’ inboxes, prompting them to open rather than ignore it as they scan through their inboxes.

As you send out reactivation emails, be sure to reference prior engagements, purchases, and other data so subscribers recall their relationship with your company and see that you care about them. In other words, don’t say “we miss you” and nothing else. Add some context to your message, with phrases like “It’s

been a while since we’ve heard from you. How have you been?” Here’s a good example of a relationship reminder from department store Saks Fifth Avenue.



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

STEP 2: TEST DIFFERENT CONTENT, OFFERS, AND LANGUAGE

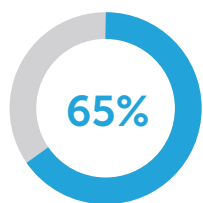
Whatever you choose, it's important to test your reactivation campaigns to determine what resonates with your sleepy subscribers and pinpoint the most effective and preferred channels. Try reaching out to customers across a wide variety of channels and then engage

with them in the channels where they respond best and that are more cost effective for you. For example, run an ad campaign targeting customers or prospects who don't respond to email. If your ad doesn't get much traction, explore another channel.

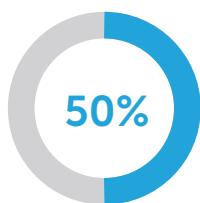
IGNORE MOBILE AT YOUR PERIL

People today are always on the go, so it's important that your emails can reach them wherever they are. In fact, Google has found that **65%** of consumers start their purchasing path on a mobile device compared to only 25% on a computer and 11% on a tablet. Furthermore, over **50%** of all emails delivered are opened on a mobile phone. This highlights your need to start developing mobile responsive emails.

In the mobile channel, you can engage via several methods to reactivate your subscribers. You can send push notifications or in-app messages, or use email to drive re-engagement. Consider the push notifications from health and fitness app MyFitnessPal reminding users to log back into their app (reactivation) to log their meals.



of consumers start their purchasing path on a mobile device.



of all emails delivered are opened on a mobile phone.



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

STEP 3: THINK BEYOND A ONE-AND-DONE CAMPAIGN

Design your reactivation campaign as a series of emails that progressively gets more and more to the point. The first one could start out with "It's been awhile." To anyone who doesn't engage with the first email, send a second one a week later saying "Are you still interested?" If that email doesn't trigger a response, send one more email that continues the conversation.

A good way to send a reactivation email without seeming interruptive is to take advantage of current events or holidays and align your messaging around it. In this example, Hello Fresh, a recipe-kit delivery service, uses the New Year as an opportunity to engage with sleepy subscribers. Given that losing weight and staying fit and healthy is one of the top resolutions, according to the Journal of Clinical Psychology, it's possible that this reactivation campaign successfully awakened some of their target audience.



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

STEP 3: THINK BEYOND A ONE-AND-DONE CAMPAIGN

Using the power of marketing automation, you can listen for inactivity windows and automatically drop subscribers into reactivation nurture campaigns. For example, you could listen for inactivity like “has not opened email in past 6 months” or “has not visited web site

in 12 months.” Just because some subscribers don’t read your win-back campaign, doesn’t mean they won’t read future messages. In fact, Return Path found that even though subscribers may not read a brand’s reactivation campaign, about **45%** of them read subsequent messages.

MAKE SURE YOUR EMAILS ARE GETTING DELIVERED



Gmail and other internet service providers are making it tougher to get your emails delivered. Due to smarter spam filtering algorithms and features like Gmail’s category tabs, your emails may not even make it to the recipient’s primary inbox, let alone get seen. In your reactivation campaign to Gmail users, try saying something like “If you want to keep hearing from us, please drag this email to your Primary tab so we don’t get lost in your Promotions folder.”



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

STEP 3: THINK BEYOND A ONE-AND-DONE CAMPAIGN

In the example below, not only is designer retailer Kate Spade trying to activate sleepy subscribers, the brand is trying to do so by segmenting by email domain. As you can see, this email is aimed at subscribers with a Gmail email address.

The company is asking this subscriber to check the Gmail Promotions tab for any prior messages from Kate Spade and drag them to the Primary inbox to ensure the subscriber doesn't miss out.



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

STEP 4: GIVE SUBSCRIBERS A WAY OUT

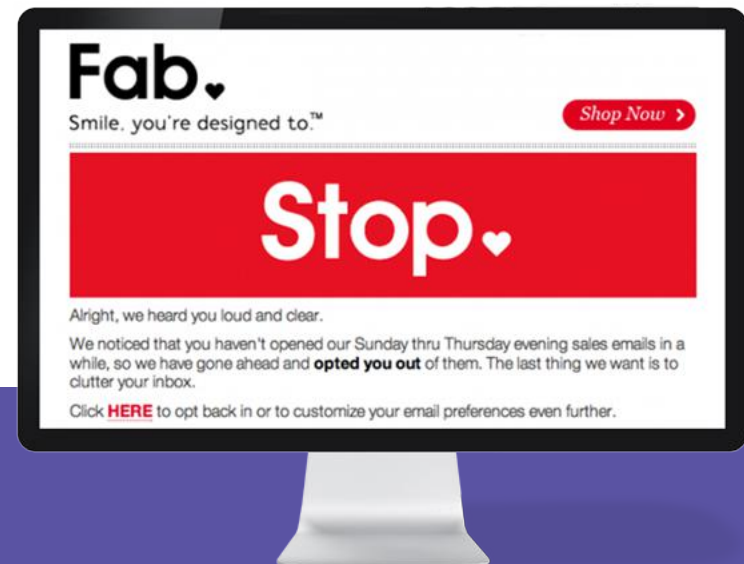
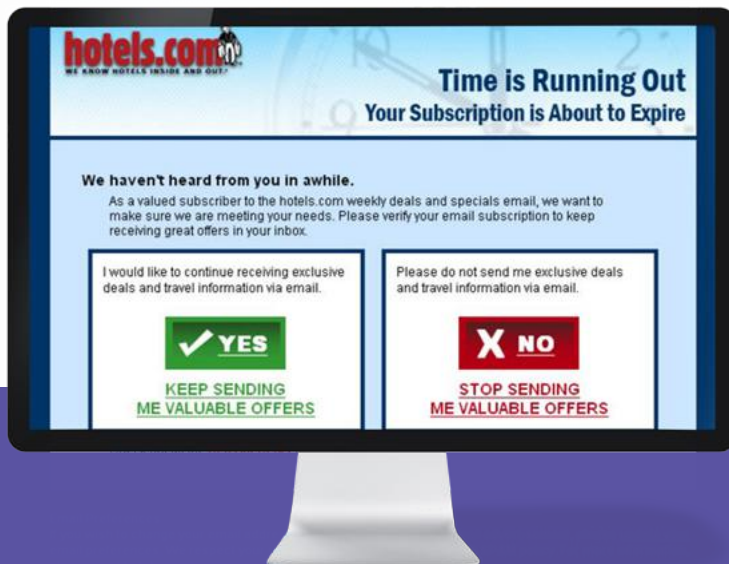
Remember, one reason to run reactivation campaigns is to determine who doesn't want to hear from you anymore. You can identify subscribers who aren't interested with a message like "We'd love to keep sending emails to you, but we're afraid you don't love us anymore. And we'd hate to keep bothering you. Re-subscribe today or miss out forever."

Allowing someone to opt-out and unsubscribe from your emails is far better than having them mark you as spam. To that end, include a prominent unsubscribe button in your

campaign message. And don't be afraid to make it tongue in cheek, as Hotels.com, online accommodation booking website, has done here. Also, notice the colors of these buttons: green means go and red means stop. Be sure to play with colors to entice the desired action. If you offer someone a choice between two call-to-action buttons—one to unsubscribe and another for a terrific offer, such as a 20% discount—most will take the offer. One reason may be that this taps into what is commonly known as FOMO, or fear of missing out. Nobody wants to miss out on great deals.

If you tell them they're going to miss out on unbelievable, record-breaking deals, they'll probably stay opted in and highly engaged with you.

If you've tried all angles to no avail, it might be time to mass unsubscribe the inactive subscribers and send them a final email that includes an option to re-subscribe. Here's how Fab did it—letting their subscribers know they've been opted out so they don't clutter their inbox.



SET GOALS, IMPLEMENT, AND MEASURE

As with any type of email campaign, when it comes to reactivation campaigns, first establish your goals, then implement your plan, and then measure your results.

Establish Goals




The goals of your reactivation campaign will depend on your unique business needs. Make a best effort to determine these up front and ask yourself:


- How many people do you want to re-engage?
- How many email addresses do you want to scrub out?
- By what percentage would you like to increase your email deliverability and inboxing, email metrics, revenue, etc.?

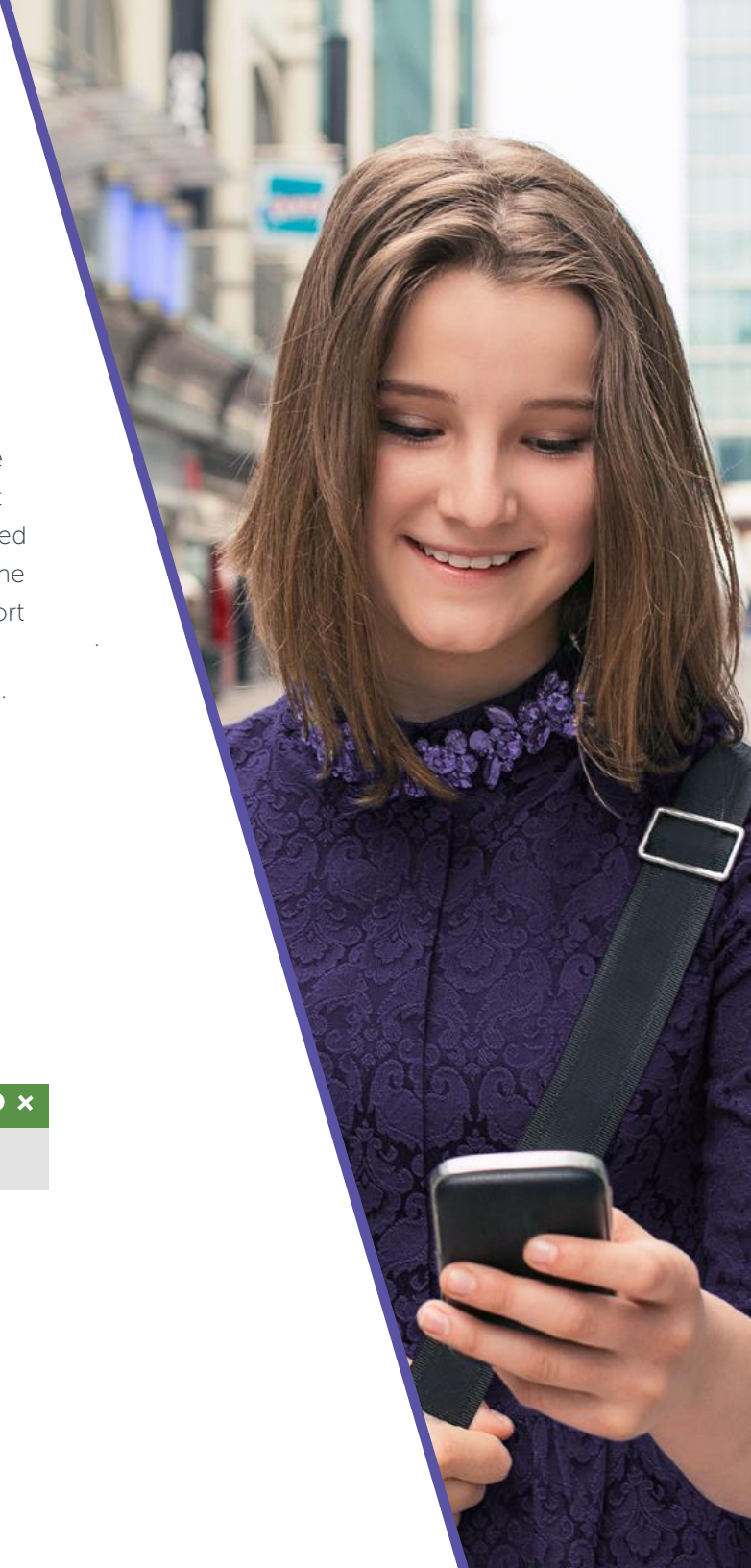
Implementation

We covered campaign implementation in the “How to Get Started” section. Here, we want to highlight what you can do with an advanced marketing automation system, like Marketo. The best marketing automation systems will support just about anything you can dream up simply by allowing you to create and define a field.

For example, you could create a field for “last engagement date,” and indicate that this field should be populated by any noteworthy activity, whether you define that as a form completed online, an email opened, or a coupon downloaded.

 1-Last Engagement Date  

Last Engagement Date: 

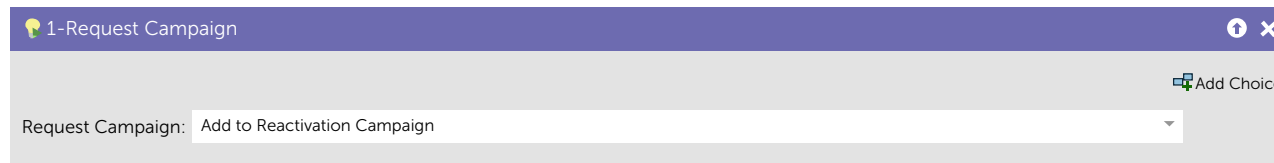


SET GOALS, IMPLEMENT, AND MEASURE

Implementation

You could then apply the “last engagement date” to every email in your database. Along with this, you could indicate that subscribers should be automatically dropped into your reactivation campaign when they have failed to engage within a predetermined time frame (for example, 6 months or 12 months).

The most advanced marketing automation systems make it easy to set up automated campaigns based on a rule. Here’s an example: “A contact that falls out of the 6-month engagement window qualifies for the automated program, a series of 10 reactivation emails meant to trigger re-engagement and get the subscriber back into the 6-month window.”



The screenshot shows a software interface for setting up a campaign. At the top, a purple header bar contains a lightbulb icon, the text "1-Request Campaign", and a close button (X). Below the header is a light gray area with a green plus icon and the text "Add Choice". The main section has a label "Request Campaign:" followed by a dropdown menu that currently displays "Add to Reactivation Campaign".

MEASURE RESULTS



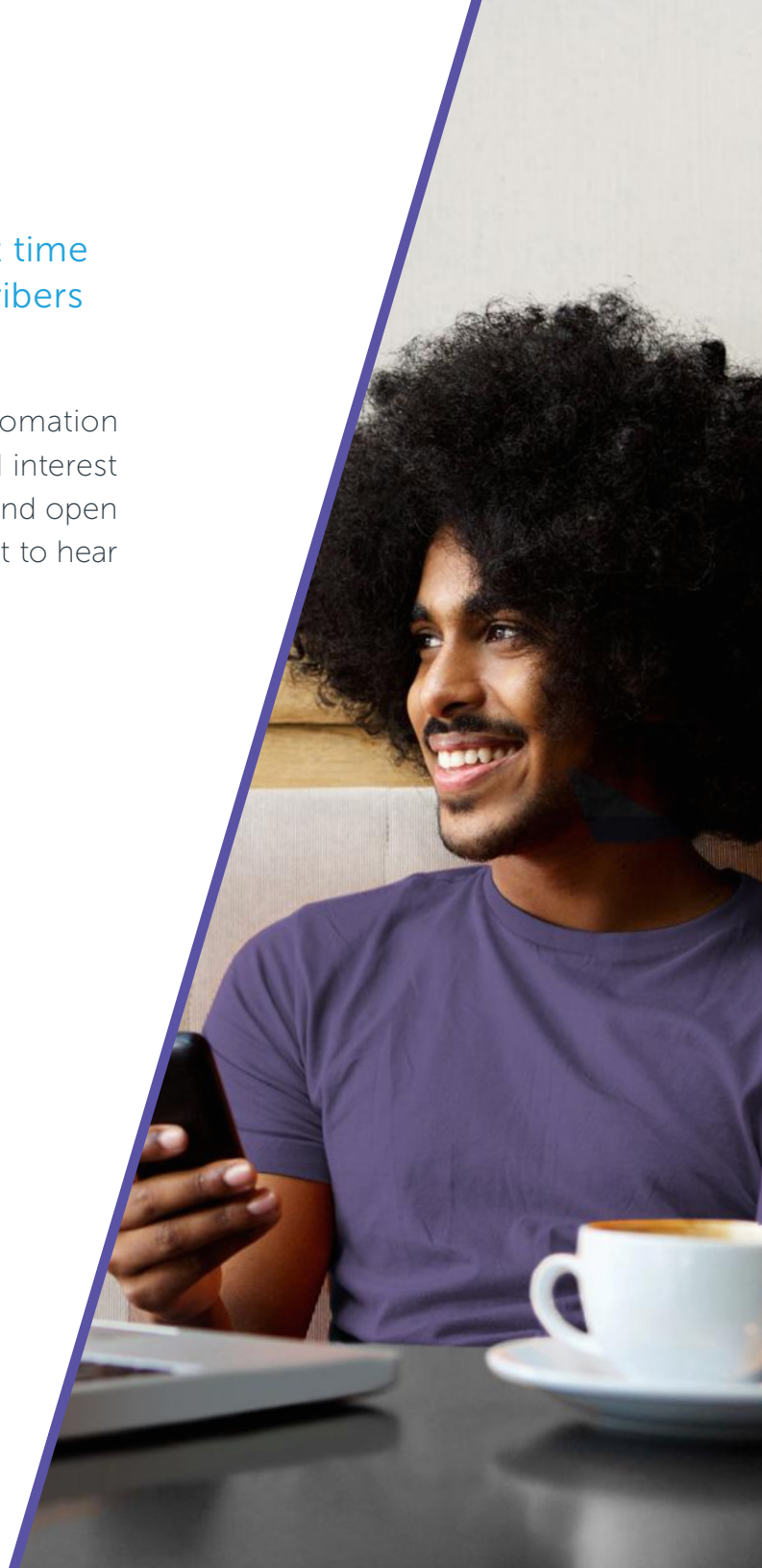
You should measure the results of your reactivation campaign through a slightly different lens. In this case, re-engagement—not an immediate purchase—should be your success metric. Getting a sleepy subscriber to purchase takes time, especially if it’s a subscriber who’s just getting to know you again. Also, you’ll look at “unsubscribes” as a good thing! If recipients are unsubscribing from your emails, they genuinely don’t want to hear from you anymore. Better they leave than mark you as a spammer.



BRING YOUR DATABASE BACK TO LIFE

Clearly, it pays to get the most from the email database you've spent time and money to build, whether that means reactivating dormant subscribers or purging disinterested ones from your database.

By calling upon a tried-and-true process along with a sophisticated marketing automation system, such as Marketo, you can proactively take steps toward sparking renewed interest from sleepy subscribers. Just as important, you can keep your email deliverability and open and click-through rates on the high end of the scale, meaning subscribers that want to hear from you and engage will get every opportunity to do so.





About Marketo

Marketo (NASDAQ: MKTO) provides the leading engagement marketing software and solutions designed to help marketers develop long-term relationships with their customers - from acquisition to advocacy. Marketo is built for marketers, by marketers and is setting the innovation agenda for marketing technology. Marketo puts Marketing First. Headquartered in San Mateo, CA, with offices around the world, Marketo serves as a strategic partner to large enterprise and fast-growing small companies across a wide variety of industries. To learn more about Marketo's Engagement Marketing Platform, LaunchPoint® partner ecosystem, and the vast community that is the Marketo Marketing Nation®, visit www.marketo.com.