



Keep Customers Coming Back (Australia)

A plain-English retention guide for Australian small businesses: work out what a customer is worth, email legally under the Spam Act, and win repeat trade.

Winning a new customer almost always costs more than keeping one you already have. In a market as small and tight-knit as Australia's, the business that gets repeat trade — and the word-of-mouth that comes with it — usually wins. This guide is about the unglamorous work that makes that happen.

It's written for Australian owners and managers, so it sticks to the rules and rhythms you actually deal with: the Spam Act 2003 governing your marketing emails and SMS, the Privacy Act 1988 covering the customer data you hold, and the local calendar that runs from the summer rush in December to the EOFY scramble at the end of June. No fluff, no invented stats — just what works.

1. Know what a customer is actually worth

Before you spend a dollar on retention, work out what a repeat customer is worth over the years they stay with you — their lifetime value (LTV). A cafe with a A\$12 average sale, four visits a week, over three years is worth far more than the single transaction in front of you. A trades business doing two A\$2,500 jobs a year for five years is looking at A\$25,000 from one relationship. Once you see the real number, spending A\$50 to keep someone stops feeling like a cost and starts looking like an investment. Use the calculator below to put your own figures in.

2. Stay in touch — legally

The cheapest way to bring customers back is to remind them you exist, usually by email or SMS. In Australia that's governed by the **Spam Act 2003**, and the rules are concrete: you must have the person's consent (express, or inferred from an existing customer relationship), every message must clearly identify your business and how to contact you, and every message must carry a working unsubscribe that you action within five working days. No exceptions, no 'just this once'. Breaches draw real penalties from the ACMA, so use a reputable email tool that handles consent records and unsubscribes for you, and keep your list clean.

3. Look after the data you hold

The moment you store names, emails, phone numbers or purchase history, you're handling personal information under the **Privacy Act 1988** and the Australian Privacy Principles. Only collect what you genuinely need, tell people what you'll do with it (a short privacy notice is enough for most small businesses), keep it secure, and don't hand it to third parties without good reason. Even if your turnover puts you below the Act's threshold, following the APPs builds the trust that keeps people coming back — and the bar is moving, so it's worth getting the habit now.

4. Earn reviews, referrals and the right timing

Australia is a small, connected market — word-of-mouth and online reviews carry real weight here. A steady trickle of honest Google and ProductReview.com.au reviews does more for repeat trade than any ad. Ask happy customers directly, soon after a good experience, and make it a one-tap link. Then ride the calendar: the December–January summer and Christmas run is peak for retail and hospitality, while the lead-up to EOFY on 30 June is a genuine buying trigger for business customers spending before the books close. Plan a campaign around both rather than emailing into dead air in between.

A starting point — pick one or two and do them well rather than all four badly.

Tactic	Effort	When it pays off
Welcome / onboarding email	Low — set up once, sends automatically	Immediately; sets the tone for the relationship
Regular newsletter	Medium — needs something worth saying	Over months, as you stay top-of-mind
Win-back for lapsed customers	Low — one or two messages to a defined list	Fast; cheaper than finding new customers
Reviews & referrals ask	Low — a link and a habit	Compounds; reviews and word-of-mouth keep working

Common questions

Is it legal to email past customers in Australia?

Often yes, but only on the Spam Act 2003's terms. You can usually rely on inferred consent from an existing customer relationship, but every message must still identify your business, give a way to contact you, and include a working unsubscribe that you honour within five working days. If someone never bought from you or has opted out, you need their express consent first.

How often should I email my customers?

Enough to be remembered, not so much that people unsubscribe. For most small businesses that's monthly, with a few extra around peak times like the Christmas summer season or EOFY. Watch your unsubscribe and open rates — they'll tell you faster than any rule of thumb whether you've got the frequency right.

What is customer lifetime value?

It's the total value a customer brings over the whole time they buy from you, not just one sale. Roughly: average sale x purchases per year x number of years they stay. A A\$60 monthly customer who stays two years is worth around A\$1,440 — which changes how much it's worth spending to keep them. Use the calculator above to find your number.

How do I ask for Google reviews without being pushy?

Ask soon after a good experience, in person or in a follow-up message, and make it effortless with a direct link to your Google or ProductReview.com.au listing. Don't offer payment or incentives for reviews — it breaches the platforms' rules and can mislead consumers under Australian Consumer Law. A genuine, well-timed ask works better anyway.

When are the best times of year to run a retention campaign?

Two windows matter most in Australia. December–January is the summer and Christmas peak for retail and hospitality, so plan ahead and don't leave it to mid-December. The run-up to EOFY on 30 June is a real buying trigger for business customers spending before year-end — a well-timed offer or reminder there can bring lapsed clients back.

How do I win back customers who've gone quiet?

Pull a list of people who haven't bought in, say, six to twelve months, and send one honest message — acknowledge it's been a while, remind them what you offer, and give a reason to return. Make sure they're still validly on your list under the Spam Act, keep it to one or two messages, and respect any unsubscribe. It's almost always cheaper than finding someone new.

Read the full interactive guide, with a free tool, at cmbeyer.com — or ask Bea to build a package for your business.