



Keep Customers Coming Back (North America)

A plain-English retention guide for US & Canadian small businesses: email, reviews, win-backs, CAN-SPAM vs CASL, and seasonal timing that works.

Winning a new customer almost always costs more than keeping one you already have — you pay for the ads, the time, and the discounts all over again. The customers who already trust you are the cheapest growth you'll ever get, and most small businesses in the US and Canada barely talk to them after the first sale.

This guide is practical, not theoretical. It walks through how to turn a one-time buyer into a repeat customer, what's actually legal when you email people (CAN-SPAM in the US and CASL in Canada are not the same rules), and when to reach out across the North American calendar — from back-to-school to Black Friday to the December budget flush.

1. Nail the first experience

Retention starts before you ever send a marketing email. A new customer who gets a clear receipt, a friendly welcome, and a product or service that does what you promised is far more likely to come back. Set expectations honestly on delivery times, returns, and support hours — over-promising is the fastest way to lose someone for good.

2. Build a list you're allowed to use

Collect email addresses (and phone numbers for SMS) at the point of sale, on your website, and at checkout — but capture *how* and *when* you got consent, because that record is what keeps you compliant. In the US, CAN-SPAM lets you email customers you have a relationship with as long as you follow the rules. In Canada, CASL is stricter: you generally need express consent before you email at all. Keep your US and Canadian contacts tagged separately so you can treat them correctly.

3. Stay in touch on a rhythm

Pick a cadence you can sustain — a monthly newsletter beats an ambitious weekly one you abandon by March. Mix genuinely useful content (tips, how-tos, early access) with the occasional offer. Because the North American market is large, email and SMS automation scales cheaply: a single welcome sequence or birthday offer, set up once, runs for thousands of contacts without extra work.

4. Ask for reviews, referrals, and win-backs

In the US especially, reviews on Google and Yelp heavily influence whether the next customer trusts you, so ask happy buyers to leave one while the experience is fresh. Set up a referral ask for your best customers, and build a simple win-back flow for anyone who hasn't bought in, say, six to twelve months — a short 'we miss you' note with a reason to return often costs almost nothing and recovers real revenue.

A quick comparison of the core retention tactics and roughly when each starts to pay back.

Tactic	Effort	When it pays off
Welcome / onboarding email	Low — set up once, runs automatically	Immediately; shapes the first impression and the second purchase
Regular newsletter	Medium — ongoing content each month	Builds over months; keeps you top-of-mind for repeat buys
Win-back for lapsed customers	Low — one automated flow	Fast; recovers revenue you'd otherwise have written off

Tactic	Effort	When it pays off
Reviews & referrals ask	Low — a template and a habit	Compounds; better Google/Yelp ratings lower your cost to win the next customer

Common questions

Is it legal to email past customers in the US and Canada?

Yes, but the rules differ. In the US, the CAN-SPAM Act lets you email customers without prior opt-in as long as your headers and 'from' line are accurate, every message includes a real physical postal address, and you honor unsubscribe requests within 10 business days. Canada's CASL is stricter: in most cases you need express consent before you send a commercial email at all, plus clear identification and an easy unsubscribe. If you serve both countries, tag your contacts by region and treat your Canadian list as consent-first.

How often should I email my customers?

Often enough to be remembered, not so often that you become noise. For most small businesses a monthly newsletter plus a handful of timely offers a year is a sustainable baseline. Watch your unsubscribe and complaint rates — if they climb, you're emailing too much or sending content people didn't sign up for. Consistency matters more than frequency.

What is customer lifetime value, and why does it matter?

Lifetime value (LTV) is the total profit you can expect from one customer over the whole time they buy from you — roughly the average order value multiplied by how often they buy and for how many years. If a customer is worth US\$600 over three years (read as CAD for Canadian buyers), spending US\$50 to keep them happy and coming back is an easy decision. Knowing your LTV tells you how much you can afford to spend on retention.

How do I ask customers for Google and Yelp reviews?

Ask soon after a positive experience, make it a one-click link straight to your Google or Yelp profile, and keep the request short and personal. In the US these two platforms carry a lot of weight with new buyers. Never offer payment or discounts in exchange for a review — both platforms prohibit it and it can get your listing penalized. Just make it easy for happy customers to say so.

When are the best times of year to reach out in North America?

Lean into the genuine seasonal moments: back-to-school in late summer, Black Friday and Cyber Monday in late November, and the end-of-calendar-year budget flush in December when both consumers and businesses spend remaining budgets. Plan campaigns a few weeks ahead of each, and don't ignore quieter stretches — a well-timed message in a slow month often lands better than one competing with the holiday flood.

Do win-back campaigns for lapsed customers actually work?

Often, yes — and they're among the cheapest revenue you can recover, because these people already know and trust you. Define 'lapsed' for your business (commonly six to twelve months without a purchase), then send a short, friendly sequence with a clear reason to return. Just confirm those contacts are still validly on your list under CAN-SPAM or CASL before you send.

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