

**Wunderkind**

# The Retention Engine

*How Brands Drive Revenue and Lifetime Value With Identity-Powered, Triggered Experiences That Keep Shoppers Coming Back*



# Introduction

Retention is no longer a luxury. It's the most critical driver of profitability in a world of soaring ad costs—and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the deprecation and viability of third-party tracking cookies in Google. Right now, the brands that succeed will be those that know their customers deeply and can act on that knowledge in real-time.

The path forward isn't just about getting more people through the door, it's about building stronger relationships with the customers you already have. Retention is quickly emerging as the new engine for growth.

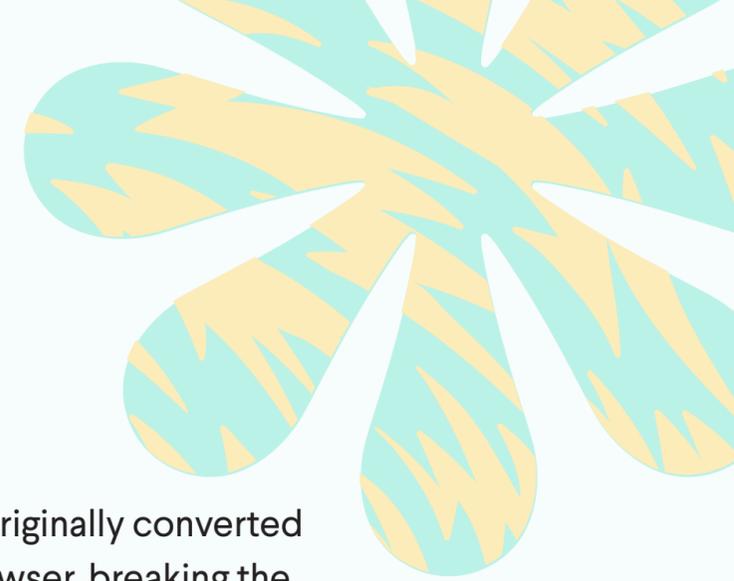
At the center of this shift lies a powerful combination: identity resolution and behavior-based triggers. By turning anonymous website visitors into known users and layering in real-time behavioral insights, brands can deliver personalized, timely messages that recognize returning customers and convert one-time buyers into loyal ones.

These strategies enable marketers to move beyond generic batch-and-blast campaigns, replacing them with dynamic lifecycle messaging tailored to each customer's unique journey and preferences.

From cart abandonment flows to loyalty-based replenishment reminders, today's retention playbook is designed to meet consumers where they are, with the right message at exactly the right time.

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# Why Retention Efforts Fall Short

Retention starts with recognition. But for many brands, that's the biggest challenge, knowing who's actually visiting their site. Even high-value, previously engaged customers often show up as anonymous. They might be long-time email subscribers, past purchasers or even regular users of your loyalty offering, yet without identity resolution, they're invisible, and untargetable. This invisibility gap makes it nearly impossible to deliver personalized messages that bring customers back and keep them loyal.

## Why Returning Customers Might Go Unrecognized

Many technical factors can cause even loyal, marketable users to appear anonymous. Each of these factors creates missed opportunities to re-engage your best customers with personalized, timely messaging.

- **Switching Devices or Browsers:** A customer who originally converted on desktop may return via mobile or a different browser, breaking the connection.
- **Logged Out Sessions:** If the customer isn't logged in when they return, your systems may treat them as new.
- **Ad Blockers or Privacy Extensions:** Tracking scripts and cookies can be blocked, disrupting session continuity.
- **Cleared Cookies or Incognito Browsing:** If a customer clears their cookies or browses privately, you lose visibility.
- **Browser Privacy Updates:** Increasingly strict privacy features in browsers like Safari and Firefox hinder persistent recognition.
- **Mobile App vs. Web Disconnect:** Customers engaging across app and web may be treated as separate users if systems aren't integrated.
- **IP Address and Cookie Expiry:** Dynamic IPs or expired cookies can cause once-known visitors to appear anonymous.

# Reaching Customers Outside Your Loyalty Ecosystem

Not every shopper joins your loyalty program, or perhaps you don't have one. But assuming all your customers are loyalty members is a fast way to misfire your messaging. While loyalty programs are powerful tools for driving repeat engagement, a large portion of your audience may never opt in, even though they love your brand. These customers still represent significant revenue potential, they just need to be reached differently.

In fact, new consumer research from Wunderkind reveals that just a quarter (25%) of consumers actively use multiple loyalty programs, and merely the same amount (25%) are members of loyalty programs for their favorite brands. Understanding who isn't in your loyalty program is as important as knowing who is.

Not every shopper joins your loyalty program, but that doesn't mean they're not worth retaining. Instead of defaulting to broad incentives, use contextual engagement tailored to their behavior.

- **Recognize Them Early:** Identity resolution helps you personalize experiences even before they opt in.
- **Lead With Value:** Serve relevant recommendations and offers before pushing for enrollment.
- **Trigger With Intent:** Use real-time behaviors—like cart abandonment or category browsing—to drive timely, trust-building messages.
- **Nudge Thoughtfully:** After multiple purchases or engagements, use soft CTAs like “You've unlocked a reward” instead of generic asks.
- **Segment by Journey Stage:** Build specific lifecycle tracks for non-members, focused on discovery and re-engagement, not points or perks

25%

of consumers actively use multiple loyalty programs

25%

of consumers only use loyalty programs for their favorite brands

# How Identity Resolution Powers Smarter Retention

Identity resolution empowers you to recognize more anonymous owned channel traffic by continuously linking data points into a unified customer profile. Even when cookies expire or devices change, identity partners can still recognize the user and trigger the next best message.

Identity resolution is the process of stitching together data points like email addresses, mobile numbers, device IDs, and behavioral signals to create a unified view of each customer, no matter how or where they interact with your brand.

Unlike basic tools like ESPs or CDPs, true identity resolution partners operate across thousands of websites and publishers, enabling them to recognize users beyond your owned channels. This broader visibility allows them to track trillions of behaviors from billions of consumers, helping you identify anonymous traffic and understand who's on your site—even when cookies fail. The real power lies not just in knowing what someone does on your site, but in understanding their journey across the wider digital ecosystem.

## This means:

- A cart abandoner can be retargeted with a personalized email or text
- A lapsed buyer browsing your site can receive loyalty-based incentives
- A subscriber using a new device won't fall through the cracks

The result? More consistent recognition, higher engagement, and stronger retention.

## 95%

About 95% of website traffic is typically anonymous

## 3-6x

Wunderkind recognizes 3-6x more website traffic than your ESP without relying on cookies



## Putting the Theory Into Practice

An electronics retailer could identify high-intent shoppers browsing headphones and trigger personalized follow-ups with product comparisons or limited-time bundle offers. If the item comes back in stock or drops in price, the customer could receive an alert. Replenishment reminders for accessories like chargers or batteries could further boost retention by delivering timely, relevant messages that drive repeat purchases.

# The Engine Behind Retention That Converts

What if you could recognize who's on your site — even before they opt in — and use that data to deliver perfectly-timed messages that bring them back to buy? That's the power of identity resolution.

More sophisticated identity partners don't just help you identify returning contacts, they help you build rich behavioral profiles on anonymous visitors, turning passive browsers into known, high-intent customers. And once you know who's who, you can activate retention strategies that are rooted in real-time intent.

## Unlock Anonymous Browsing Data

When an anonymous shopper browses your site, their clicks, scrolls, and bounces aren't lost. Identity resolution captures these behaviors to inform future campaigns the moment they opt in. It's like having a playbook of what they love, before they ever tell you.

## Trigger the Next Best Message, Automatically

Everyone knows the classic abandoned cart reminder. But what about the customer who browsed three high-margin product pages and bounced without adding to cart? A sophisticated identity resolution partner sees that too. It can

instantly trigger a hyper-personalized email or text with curated recommendations, tailored offers, or optimized calls-to-action — maximizing your chance of converting browsers into buyers.

## Cross-Device Recognition Means No Missed Moments

Whether Jane Doe is scrolling on her work laptop, revisiting on her phone during her commute, or checking out on her iPad before bed, an Identity Network recognizes her. This ensures continuity across devices — and allows you to send your offer to the email or phone number that's most likely to drive a conversion.

## Precision Timing for Every Shopper

Identity resolution also informs when to send. With historical data on open and conversion patterns across properties, an identity resolution partner knows that Jane is more likely to click at 8:30 PM — so that's when your email hits her inbox.

**14%**

Just 14% of consumers are logged into branded apps

# Personalization That Performs

Generic messages don't drive retention — contextual ones do. By recognizing more website traffic and pairing it with intent signals, brands deliver “next best messages” that reflect real customer behavior. By combining behavioral data with identity resolution, brands can deliver one-to-one campaigns that feel intuitive, timely, and tailored to each individual customer.

Retention strategies rooted in first-party data, behavioral insights, and identity resolution empower brands to create personalized experiences that strengthen customer relationships. By delivering hyper-personalized messaging at the right moment, brands can boost retention rates, increase repeat purchases, and drive long-term loyalty with experiences that truly resonate.

- **Cart Abandonment:** Trigger personalized reminders with product imagery, urgency messaging, and dynamic discounts.
- **Browse Abandonment:** Recognize what they viewed, and serve content that helps them return and convert.
- **Back-in-Stock & Price Drop:** Use real-time inventory data to drive urgency and excitement.
- **Replenishment:** Predict when a customer needs to restock and prompt action before they run out.

25%+

increase in repeat purchases and a 10x ROI from personalized retention campaigns

## Putting the Theory Into Practice

An online shoe retailer could use identity resolution to recognize returning visitors and track behavior across devices. If a shopper browses boots but doesn't purchase, they could receive a personalized follow-up with product imagery and a limited-time offer. Later, replenishment messages for accessories or alerts on price drops could drive repeat purchases and long-term loyalty through well-timed, contextual engagement.



# Journey Orchestration at Scale

True retention is about journey orchestration, not just one-off messages. That's bringing identity and timing together across channels, brands can build entire lifecycle journeys that are:

- Cross-channel (email, text, web)
- Event-triggered (e.g., cart, product view, inactivity)
- Preference-aware (honoring opt-ins, suppressions, and messaging cadence)

Identity resolution paired with real-time intent signals is a powerful foundation for retention. It allows brands to deliver personalized, targeted messages that not only enhance the customer experience but also drive meaningful revenue.

To maximize retention impact, it's essential to think beyond the message itself – and consider how, when, and where it's delivered. Whether you're engaging through email, SMS, or MMS, consistency is key. A unified decisioning framework ensures your messaging feels cohesive across every channel, adapting to each customer's preferences and behaviors.

Adding new tools like a second ESP or text platform may seem like a solution, but can quickly introduce complexity, siloed data, and fragmented customer experiences. Instead, brands should look for solutions that integrate with existing systems while enabling centralized decision-making – so every touchpoint feels intentional, aligned, and customer-centric.

## How a Lifecycle Journey Might Look Like

Stage	Trigger	Channel	Message
Cart Abandonment	Item in cart, 30 mins idle	Email	"Still thinking it over?" with product image
2 Days Later	No open	Text	"Still in stock—don't miss out!"
Purchase	Order placed	Email	"Thanks! Here's how to earn rewards"
30 Days Later	No repeat purchase	Email + Text	New arrivals + loyalty reminder

# Tying Performance to Revenue, Not Just Opens

Retention isn't about sending more messages, it's about sending the right ones. And in today's performance-driven landscape, marketers must prove the revenue impact of every message, not just track surface-level engagement.

Vanity metrics like open rates and clicks can be helpful, but they rarely tell the full story. To drive growth through retention, brands need to align their measurement strategy with business outcomes, namely, conversions, revenue lift, and customer lifetime value. Performance marketing means measuring what truly moves the needle.

**1. Attribution Modeling:** Directly tie campaigns to revenue, not just clicks  
It's not enough to know whether a message was opened. Modern attribution modeling ties specific campaigns—such as cart abandonment reminders or re-engagement messages — to actual conversions and revenue.

**Pro Tip:** Use revenue-per-message as a baseline metric for campaign effectiveness, and compare performance across customer segments to identify high-ROI retention strategies.

**2. Lift Analysis:** Measure the incremental impact of your campaigns — versus doing nothing at all. Lift analysis compares performance between audiences that received your messaging and those that didn't, showing the true incremental value driven by your retention efforts.

This is especially important in always-on triggered campaigns, where performance may look strong at face value, but only lift analysis reveals how much additional revenue you're actually generating.

**3. Multivariate Testing: Test everything**

Retention success is driven by continuous optimization. A/B and multivariate testing allow you to experiment with different versions of a campaign, uncover what resonates, and improve results over time. Common test variables include: subject lines and message copy, send times and frequency, Incentives or offers, channel sequencing, audience segmentation logic.

Multivariate testing allows for more complex combinations, enabling you to understand which elements work best together — essential for scaling personalized experiences across your lifecycle programs.

**4. Key Metrics for Retention Campaigns:** Beyond revenue, here are core metrics retention marketers should track

Metric	Why It Matters
Conversion Rate	Tells you how effective the message is at driving action.
Revenue per Message	Measures total impact, factoring in volume and value.
Repeat Purchase Rate	Indicates retention strength and customer loyalty.
Churn Rate	Helps track how many customers drop off and when.
CLV (Customer Lifetime Value)	Measures long-term impact of your retention efforts

**5. Using Data to Drive Smarter Retention**

Once you have the right measurement framework in place, your retention efforts can shift from reactive to proactive. Use campaign performance data to:

- Refine lifecycle journeys
- Adjust trigger timing
- Optimize offers by segment
- Suppress overmessaging
- Identify high-value cohorts for more investment

Ultimately, the goal is to create a retention engine that gets smarter with every message – learning what works, refining what doesn't, and continuously improving ROI.

**2-4x**

Brands leveraging performance testing see 2-4x higher revenue per message and significant conversion rate lifts across their retention journeys.



# How AI Supercharges Identity's Impact on Revenue

At the core of modern activation strategies is decisioning: how, when, where, and what you communicate to each customer. AI removes the guesswork and replaces it with real-time optimization powered by rich behavioral data and intent signals.

Gone are the days when marketers manually mapped out journeys or relied solely on static segmentation. AI-powered systems can now dynamically respond to each shopper's unique behaviors across channels, automatically choosing the right message, the right moment, and the best channel for conversion.

## AI excels at the things retention marketers need most:

- Predicting churn before it happens
- Triggering personalized re-engagement messages
- Optimizing message timing across devices
- Recommending products based on purchase patterns
- Adapting content based on past behavior and preferences

AI dynamically optimizes when, where, and how to engage each customer, across email, text, and web. By predicting churn risk, identifying high-propensity buyers, and recommending relevant products, AI ensures every message feels timely and personal. With capabilities like precision audience targeting, brand-aligned content creation, and cross-channel experience optimization, AI empowers marketers to scale one-to-one retention strategies with greater efficiency and less guesswork.

## Putting the Theory Into Practice

A customer who browses dresses during lunch, revisits accessories on mobile during their commute, and purchases a week later can be recognized across all touchpoints. AI ties this journey together and knows when to prompt, what to recommend, and how to bring them back, without manual setup.



# Conclusion

## Fueling Retention With Identity and Intent

Identity resolution and customer intent signals are at the heart of modern retention strategies. By understanding who your customers are, what they care about, and how they behave across channels, brands can deliver timely, personalized experiences that deepen engagement and extend customer lifetime value.

From re-engagement journeys and replenishment reminders to browse abandonment and loyalty-focused campaigns, identity and intent data allow marketers to craft one-to-one messaging that feels relevant and drives action.

This isn't just about better targeting, it's about building long-term relationships that lead to higher retention rates, more repeat purchases, and greater customer satisfaction.

Brands that prioritize these capabilities are better equipped to meet evolving expectations, reduce churn, and unlock sustainable, revenue-driving growth through their owned marketing channels.



# Wunderkind

Wunderkind is the leading AI-driven performance marketing solution that collects consent-based, first-party data and identifies anonymous traffic for brands in order to scale hyper-personalized one-to-one messages. Leading brands lean on the Wunderkind Identity Network, a proprietary database recognizing 9 billion devices and 1 billion consumers, and observes 2 trillion digital transactions every year, to trigger the most impactful offers and rewards to their target audience at the right moment and in the right channel. This proprietary data is accessed by Wunderkind's Autonomous Marketing Platform, an AI engine that integrates seamlessly into a brand's existing ESP to boost performance across email, text and advertising channels.

Wunderkind is the only performance solution that guarantees a lift in revenue for its clients and delivers over \$5 billion in directly attributable revenue annually for brands across a number of industries, often ranking as a top 3 revenue channel in clients' own analytics platforms. Brands such as Clarks, HelloFresh, Harley-Davidson, and Perry Ellis International partner with Wunderkind to drive top-line revenue through its guaranteed results.



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