

RETENTION PLAYBOOK

Win-back Playbook

Reactivating a customer who already trusts you is cheaper than acquiring a stranger. Most win-back programmes fail not because the customer left, but because the message assumes the only reason to return is a discount.

At a glance	
Trigger	No purchase or activity beyond your threshold
Goal	Reactivate the customer
Primary KPI	Reactivation rate
Messages	2–3
Setup time	Under 25 minutes

What is a win-back campaign?

A win-back campaign targets customers who have stopped buying or engaging beyond a defined period. On WhatsApp it works as a short two-way conversation: acknowledge the gap, give a specific reason to return based on what they bought before, and let the customer tell you why they left.

Key takeaways

- Set the inactivity threshold from your actual purchase cycle, not a round number.
- Segment by past value before you decide what the offer is worth.
- A win-back that asks why they left is worth more than one that converts silently.
- Two messages, then stop. Persistence here damages the brand.

Why this leaks revenue today

1. The threshold is guesswork

Ninety days means something different for coffee than for furniture. A generic window messages the wrong people at the wrong time.

2. Everyone gets the same discount

Your highest-value lapsed customers get the same 10% as someone who bought once, two years ago, on sale.

3. Nobody learns why they left

One-way win-back campaigns recover a little revenue and zero information. The second one performs no better.

Entry conditions

The journey only starts when all of these are true. Entry conditions matter more than message copy — most underperforming journeys are mistargeted, not badly written.

- No purchase for 90+ days
- No engagement across channels
- Previously purchased 2+ times
- Lifetime value above threshold

What has to be connected

Purchase history	Last order date, frequency, categories, lifetime value
Product cycle	Expected repurchase window for what they actually bought
Engagement	Whether they are ignoring you everywhere or only on one channel
Offer rules	What you are willing to give, and to whom

The journey

Inactive beyond threshold → Lifetime value check → Send personalised return message → Wait 5 days

Then it branches on what the customer does:

Replies with a reason	Route to a human — this is the valuable outcome
Clicks through	Straight to the relevant category, not the homepage
No reply	One final message, then suppress for 6 months

Goal: Order placed or reason captured — journey stops

A journey without a stop condition is a journey that gets your number blocked. Set the goal event before you write a single message.

The messages

Starting points, not scripts. Rewrite them in your own voice — and note the reasoning, because that is what transfers to your catalogue.

Day 0

It's been a while since your last {category} order. Anything change, or just busy?

Why: Asks rather than sells. The reply is often more valuable than the order.

Day 5

If it helps, here's what's new in {category} since you last looked: {links}

Why: Gives a reason to return that is about the product, not a discount.

Day 12

Last one from us — we'll stop here. If you'd rather not hear from us at all, just say stop.

Why: Ends cleanly and offers the exit. This protects the channel and your sender reputation.

What it looks like to the customer

It's been a while since your last coffee order. Anything change, or just busy?

Switched to a subscription elsewhere honestly

Fair enough — good to know. We do subscriptions now too, with pause any time. Want me to show you the closest match to your old blend?

Go on then

Here it is. Same roast profile, fortnightly delivery, cancel whenever.

Illustrative conversation. Not a customer transcript.

What to measure

Metric	Definition
Reactivation rate	Lapsed customers who place an order inside the agreed window.
Recovered revenue	Revenue attributed to reactivated customers.
Reason captured	How many customers told you why they left. Track this deliberately.
Opt-out rate	The health check. A rising opt-out rate means the threshold or the tone is wrong.

Keeping the numbers honest. Agree the attribution window before launch. Report direct and influenced conversions separately. Where volume allows, hold out a control group. Do not claim every order that happens after a message.

Set it up

1. Define inactivity from your own data

Use the actual purchase cycle for each category, not a single site-wide number.

2. Segment by past value

Decide which lapsed customers justify an offer and which get a product-led message.

3. Write a message that asks

The question is the point. A win-back that only sells learns nothing.

4. Set the suppression window

Anyone who does not respond should not be contacted again for at least six months.

5. Launch on one segment

Start with high-value lapsed customers where the message can be most specific.

Then tune it

Move the threshold before you change the offer

Most underperforming win-backs are mistimed rather than under-incentivised.

Test product news against discount

For repeat-purchase categories, what is new often beats what is cheaper.

Read the replies weekly

The reasons customers give here are the highest-quality retention research you will get for free.

Questions this raises

How long should someone be inactive before a win-back?

It depends on the purchase cycle. Consumables might justify 60 days; considered goods might need 12 months. Derive it from your own repeat-purchase data rather than a benchmark.

Should I lead with a discount?

Not by default. Discounting every lapsed customer trains the profitable ones to lapse deliberately. Reserve offers for segments where the maths supports it.

Isn't WhatsApp too intrusive for a lapsed customer?

It is more intrusive than email, which is exactly why the frequency has to be lower and the message better. Two messages, then stop, and always offer the exit.

What if they reply that they are unhappy?

That routes to a human immediately. A complaint recovered well is worth more than a discounted reorder.

How do I avoid messaging people who are still active elsewhere?

Check engagement across channels, not just purchases. Someone reading every email but not buying is a different problem.

What counts as a successful win-back?

Agree it before launch. Usually an order inside the attribution window, but capturing the reason for churn is a legitimate secondary goal.

Want this built with you?

ConvoHut is working with a small group of early access customers. We configure the first journey together, review it weekly, and agree the success metric before anything goes live. convohut.com/early-access

ConvoHut is pre-launch. This playbook contains no customer results, and any interface figures shown on our website are sample data. Version 1.0, August 2026.