



When is Big Brother Helpful?

At some time or another, most Internet users—especially those who make purchases on e-commerce sites—ask themselves just how much personal information is “out there.” Are we coming dangerously close to living with a Big Brother who knows everything about us? It’s a valid concern; but as e-marketers are aware, the more that you know about a customer, the better you can serve that customer – be the Big Brother who looks out for the customer’s best interests.

Engaging—and reengaging—customers in a way that meets their needs is essential. Seeing what opt-in customers do while visiting a website, and following up with them via e-mail after they leave is a significant tool that when used respectfully provides customers with the highest level of service, and ultimately, satisfaction.

For example, a regular customer visits a website and leaves again without making a purchase. Traditionally, companies have only tried to reengage that customer if he or she placed items in a shopping cart. The method of reengagement typically used is an intrusive pop-up offer. This is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons: in addition to the offending of the pop-up, more than 90 percent of website visitors never reach the shopping cart stage!

So what if you could contact customers after leaving your website without making a purchase—without even starting a shopping cart—and offer them the opportunity to return and complete the shopping process? What if you could do it via e-mail, a method of communication they have already opted in to receive from your company? Would that feel a little too much like an evil Big Brother, or is it the Big Brother there to lend a helping hand?



Most people appreciate the help. The proof is in the numbers:

1. Typical website reengagement campaigns generate open rates greater than 50 percent, click-through rates greater than 35 percent, and sales per e-mail four to ten times higher than those generated by standard e-mail programs—including those going to carefully segmented lists.
2. Unsubscribe rates, complaint rates through feedback loops, and direct-to-company complaint rates are not significantly different coming from these reengagement e-mails as they are from the company’s monthly newsletter or other e-mail campaigns.

	Standard Email	Website Reengagement
Company 1	\$.04 per email	\$.36 per email
Company 2	\$.11 per email	\$ 1.42 per email
Company 3	\$.08 per email	\$.60 per email

How does website reengagement work?

Tracking pixels and cookies enable marketers to identify customers returning to the company website.

If a customer has merely visited the site, possibly landing on more than one page, and has subsequently left, he or she receives a timed e-mail message that thanks them for visiting the website and reminds them of current promotions.

If a customer gets as far as the shopping cart before abandoning it, the marketer may send a more focused message, targeting items that were in the abandoned shopping cart with additional incentives. The marketer may also create specialized messages for any particular page or pages on the site that a customer visits, with a specialized message for that page or product, explaining the product benefits in greater detail.

The goal for the company is to be sure the customer is getting all the information he or she needs to achieve specific goals pertaining to that visit.



But what about CAN-SPAM?

The program is only activated for customers who already opted in to an e-mail list. They always have the opportunity to opt-out of website reengagement e-mails separately from regular e-mail campaigns. The entire process is permission-based.

Is reengagement Big Brother looking out for your customers' best interests?

Reengagement enhances customers' shopping experience by reminding them of unfinished business on the site, providing additional product feature information, delivering information on current promotions, and enabling them to complete purchases in a timely manner.

Website reengagement is an ideal way to help customers achieve their site visit goals without abusing the customer relationship, and that isn't just an edge—it's the whole purpose and essence of responsible marketing.

Big Brother can watch, or Big Brother can help, and that's where all the difference lies.