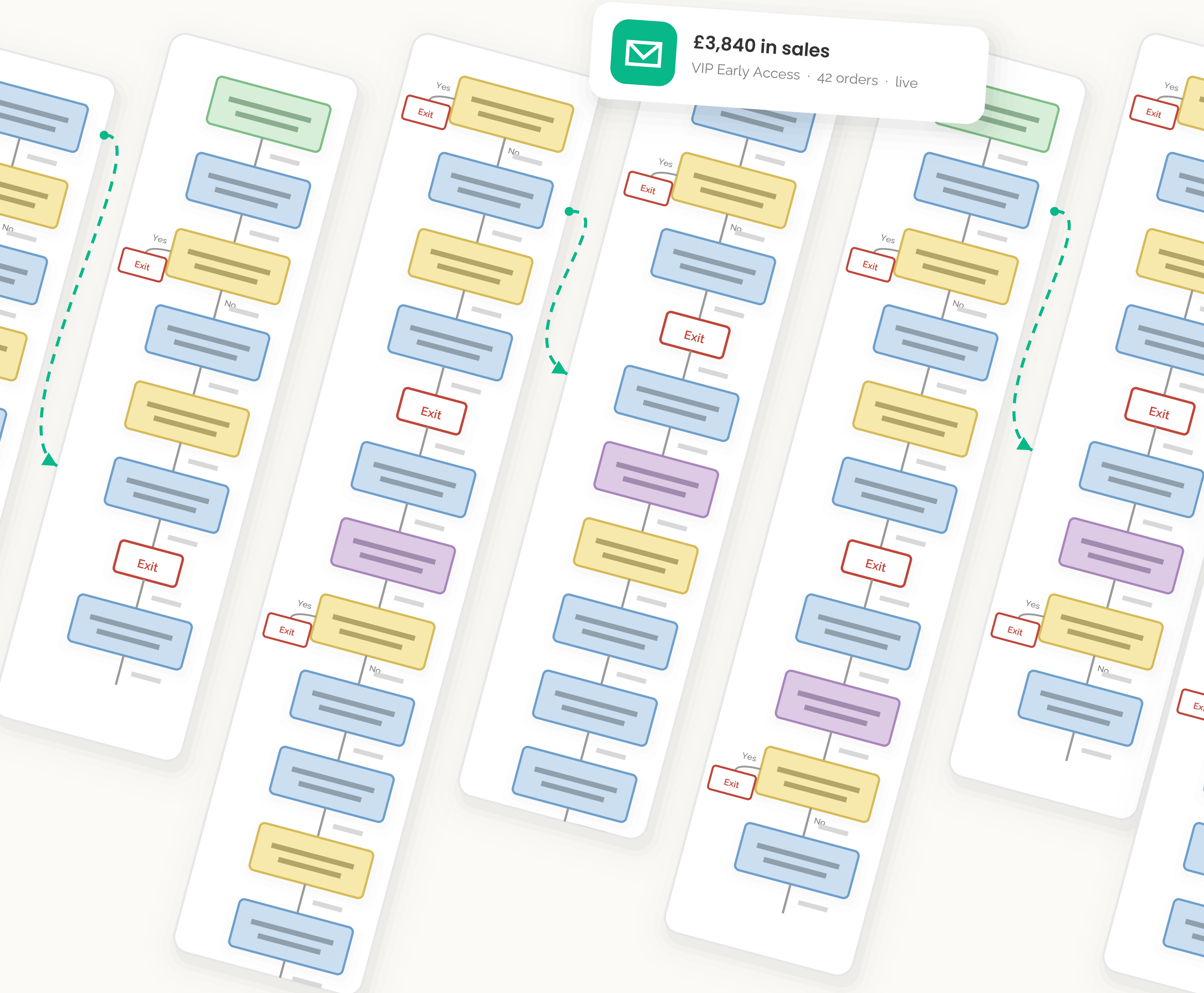
ENGAGE COMMERCE

Email marketing for ambitious DTC brands

The Black Friday Email Marketing Playbook

Every flow, campaign and cutoff for the biggest weekend in DTC retail, from September warm-up to December retention. Built in Klaviyo.



Introduction

Thanks for downloading the Engage Commerce BFCM Email Playbook. Black Friday weekend routinely drives 20-30% of a DTC brand's annual email revenue, and the brands that win it start in September, not November.

The flows on the following pages are what we set live across our client accounts every Q4: the list-building, the early access, the sale-period recovery and the December retention that turns sale shoppers into repeat customers.

Use the timeline below to see when each play begins, then follow the flow diagrams to see exactly how each one works.

The BFCM Timeline

SEPT	OCT	EARLY NOV	BFCM	CYBER MON	DEC
Warm up sending & clean the list	Build the early-access list	Tease, segment & tag VIPs	Launch, resend, recover carts	Extend for the final hours	Cutoffs, gifting & winback

How The Campaign Flow Diagrams Work

Each campaign is laid out as a flow chart, a decision tree where one thing leads to another based on Yes / No decisions or time delays. Most are straightforward, but it's worth noting the following:

Time Delays The time delays used are based on best practices. Every company needs slight differences, and these are elements we discuss once we start working with a new brand.

Red Exit Boxes Everyone in a flow eventually needs to exit and be removed from it. Exiting means no more emails will be sent to them in that flow.

Subject Lines The subject lines are based on what we see perform best for open rates. We change the messaging to fit a brand's voice, but the theme and ideas stay the same.

Number of Emails Per Flow Every company has different levels of how aggressive they wish to be. The number of emails is based on best practice and can be modified per brand.

Your Evergreen Flows In Sale Mode

Your everyday flows don't pause for BFCM, they flex. The welcome, cart and browse flows you already run need tweaking on the way into the sale, and reverting on the way out. Diary both dates: the switch-over is where most brands leak revenue (or worse, send a 10% welcome code into a 30%-off sale).

FLOW	DURING THE SALE	AFTER THE SALE
Welcome Flow	Swap the welcome offer for the sale: a 10% code is an insult next to 30% sitewide. Point email 1 at the sale.	Restore the standard offer and delays on the Tuesday after Cyber Monday.
Cart & Checkout	Run the compressed version (p.7): 20-minute trigger, no coupon split, urgency only, the discount is already live.	Reinstate standard delays and the coupon-sensitivity split.
Browse Abandonment	Compress delays, quote live sale pricing, and tighten the browse guard from 7 days to 24 hours (p.8).	Back to standard cadence; re-widen the guard to 7 days.
Post-Purchase	Lead with delivery expectations, carriers slow down. Soften cross-sells to a gifting angle (p.11).	Resume the standard first-purchase and cross-sell series.
Replenishment & Cross-Sell	Keep live, but exclude BFCM purchasers for 7 days, nobody needs a top-up nudge after stocking up.	Re-include the segment; recalculate lifecycle timing from BFCM orders.
Winback	Suppress it: the sale IS the winback. Let lapsed customers get the campaign calendar instead.	Hand over to the post-BFCM winback flow (p.13) through December.

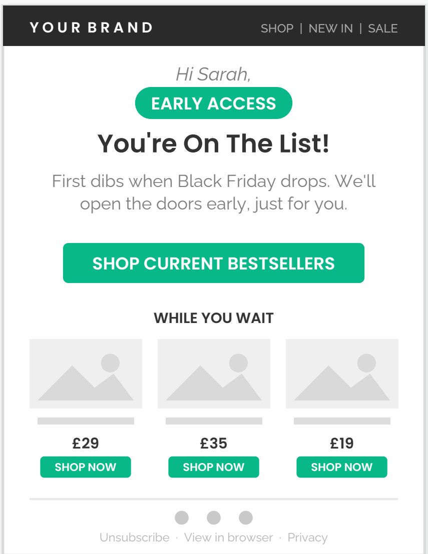
The discount changes. The brand doesn't.

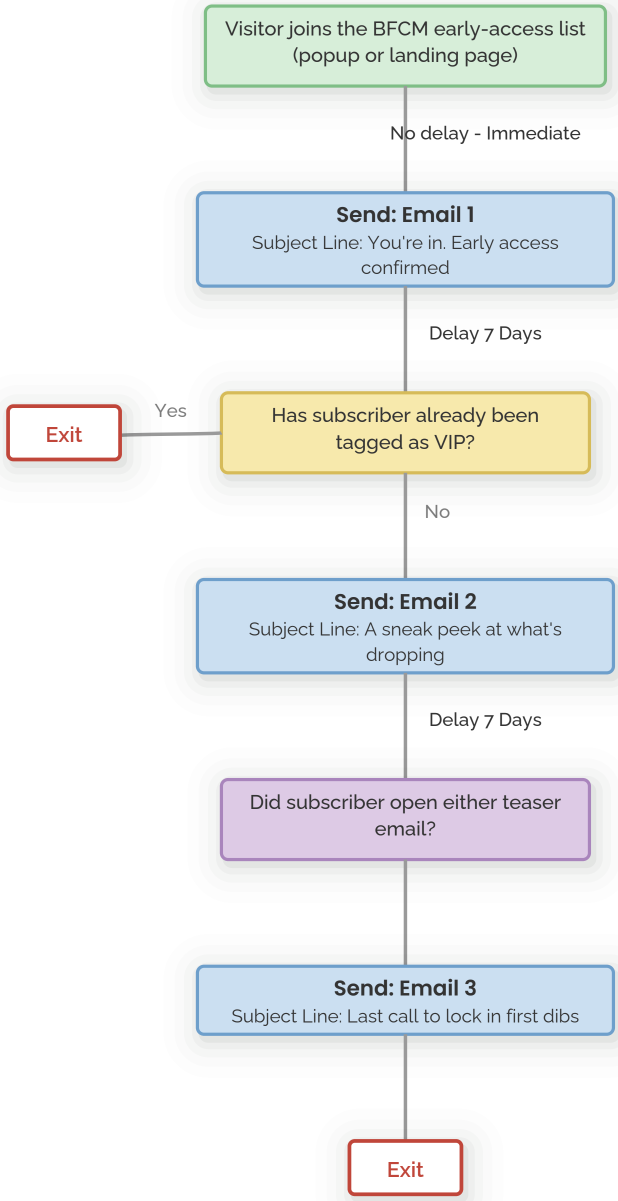
Same voice, same design system, same standards, just faster and louder. If an email wouldn't feel like you in March, it doesn't send in November.

Early-Access List Build

The brands that win BFCM build the audience first. From early October, a dedicated waitlist popup and landing page collect subscribers who want first dibs, then a short nurture keeps them warm until the doors open.

Example Template:





VIP Early Access

Open the sale 24-48 hours early for VIPs and the waitlist. It rewards your best customers, spreads server and support load, and banks revenue before the inbox chaos of Black Friday itself.

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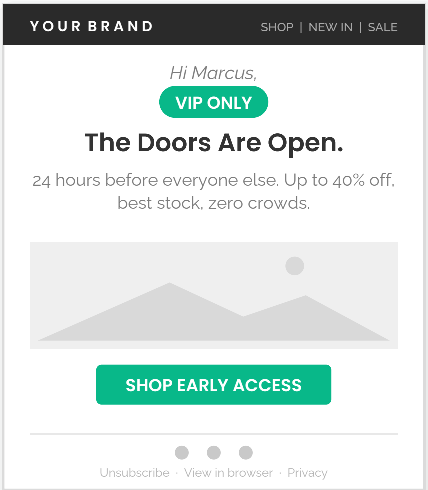

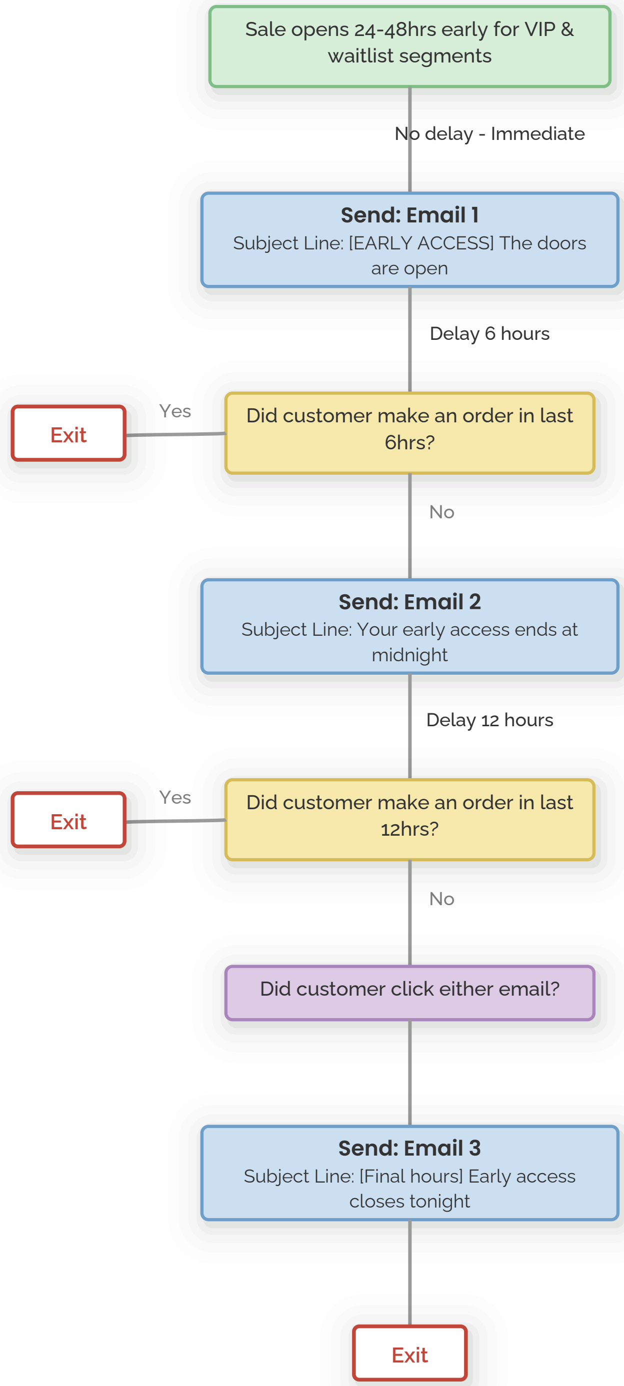

BFCM Launch Sequence

Launch day is a campaign cadence, not a single send. Launch, resend to non-buyers with a fresh angle, then close the day differently for VIPs and new prospects.

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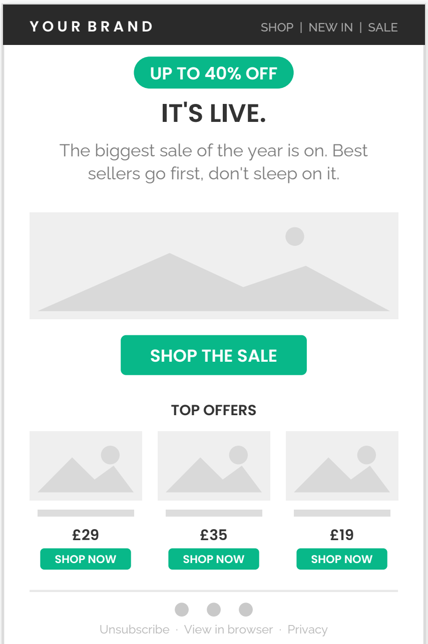

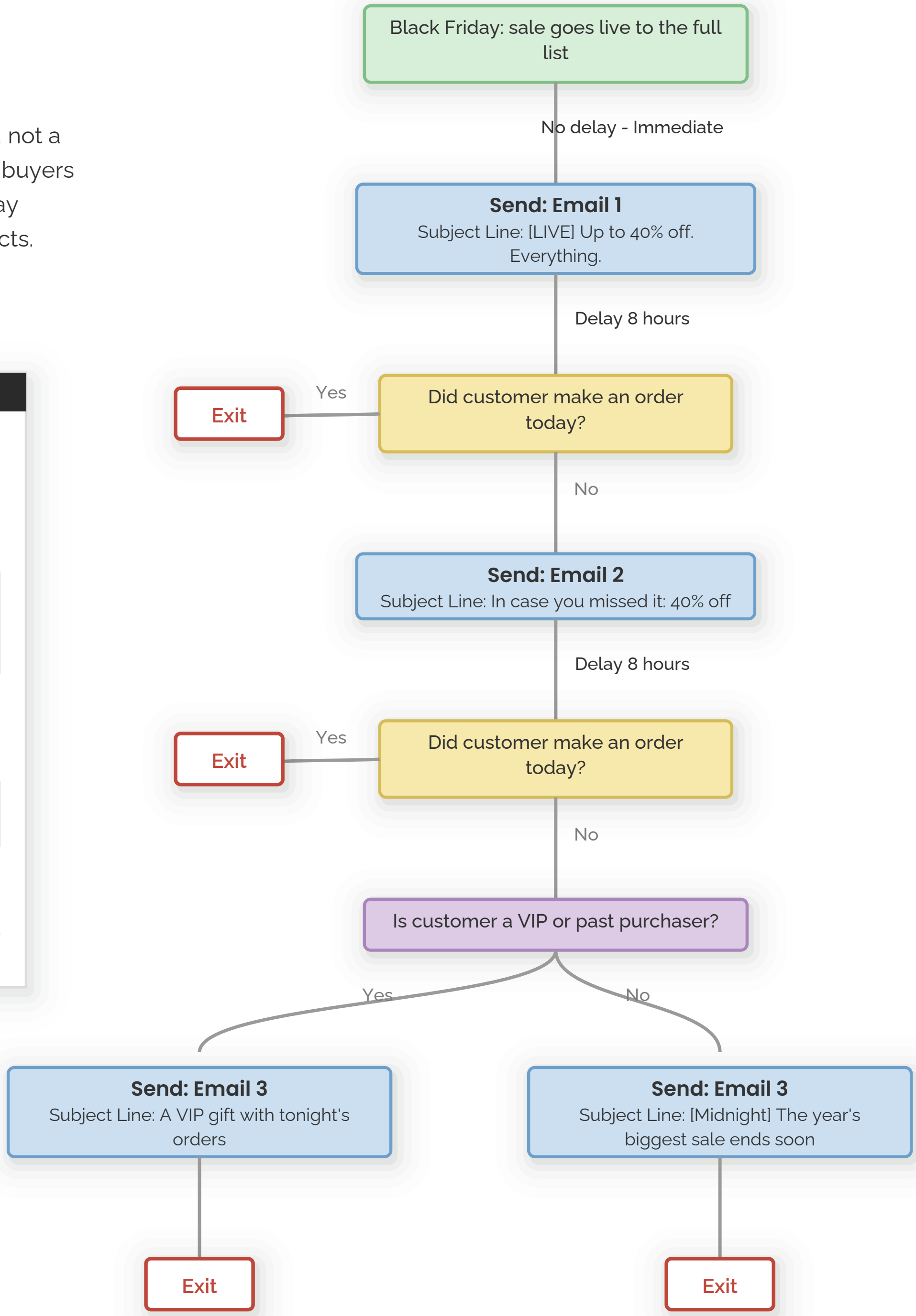

Sale-Period Cart Abandonment

Your normal cart flow is too slow for BFCM. Compress the delays, drop the discount logic (the discount is already live) and lean on urgency and stock scarcity instead.

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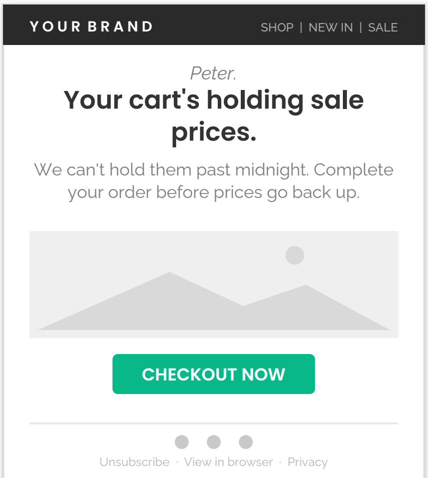

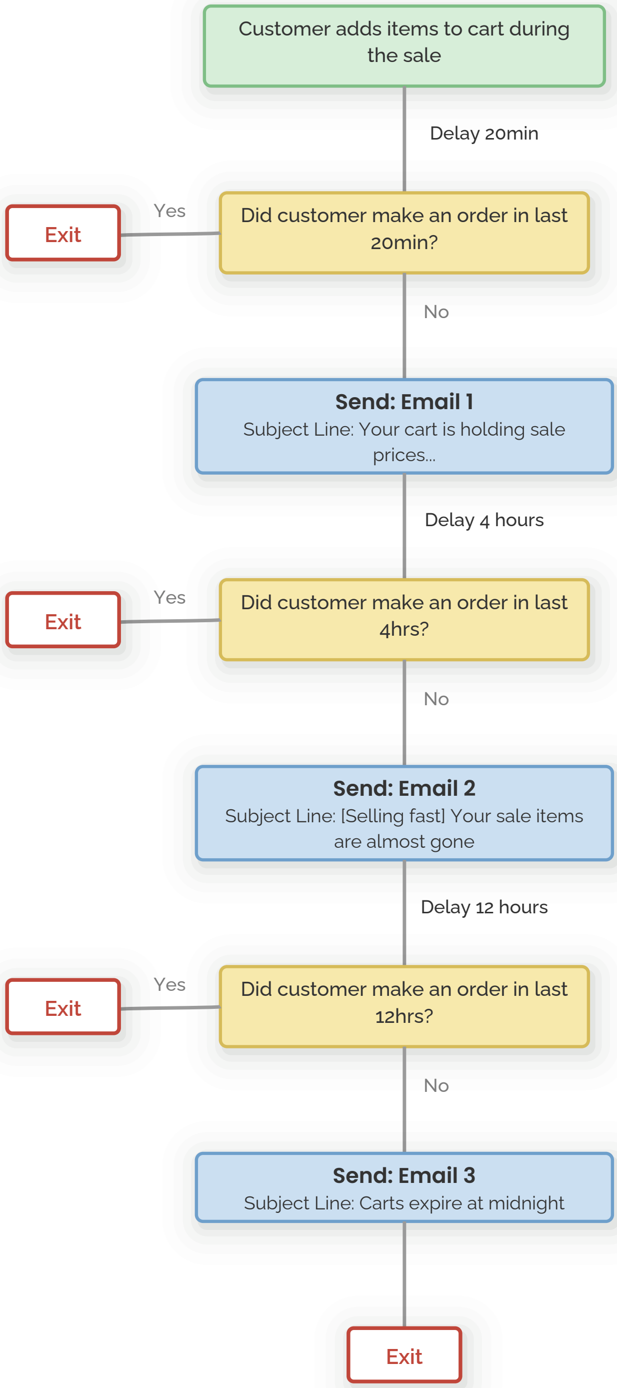

Sale-Period Browse Abandonment

Sale traffic browses hard and buys later, so this flow shortens the gap. Tighter guards stop over-mailing during the busiest inbox weekend of the year.

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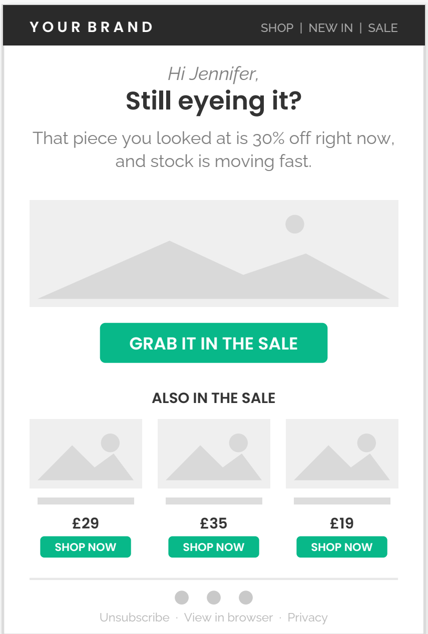

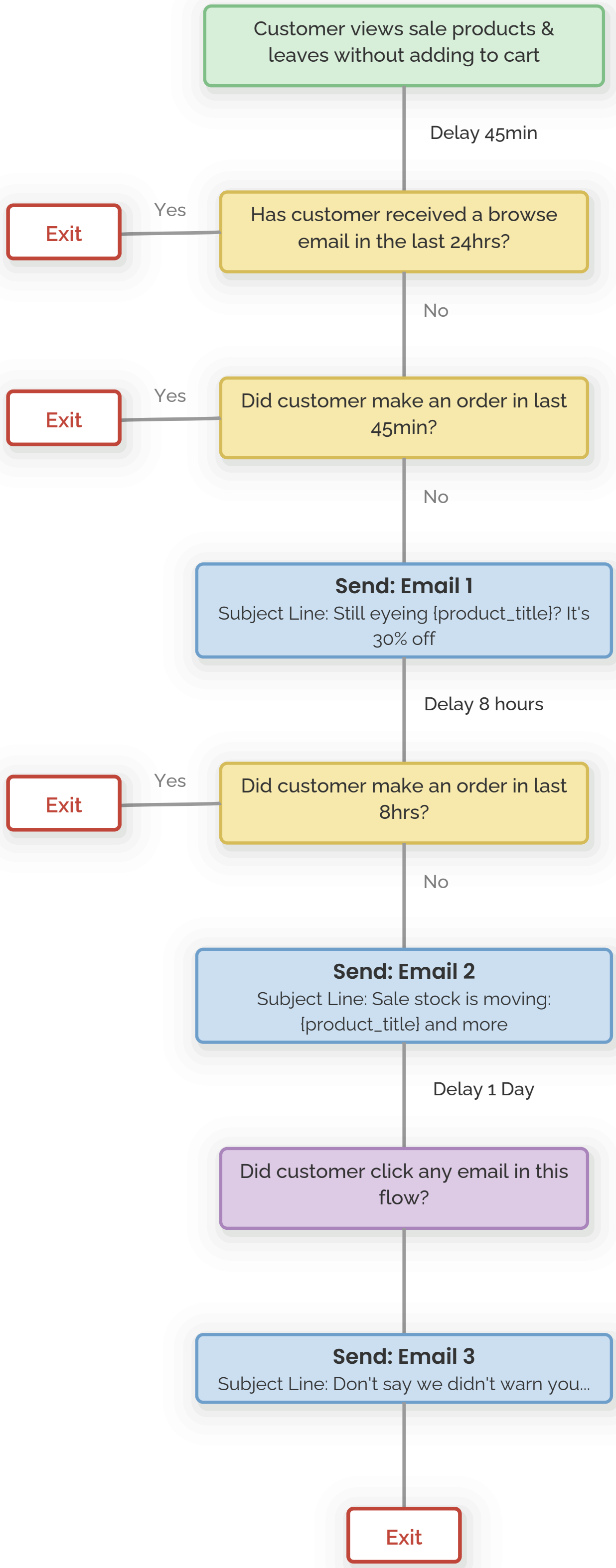

Back-In-Stock & Low-Stock Alerts

Sold-out products are demand you've already earned. Restock alerts during the sale convert at some of the highest rates of any email, and low-stock urgency is real, not manufactured.

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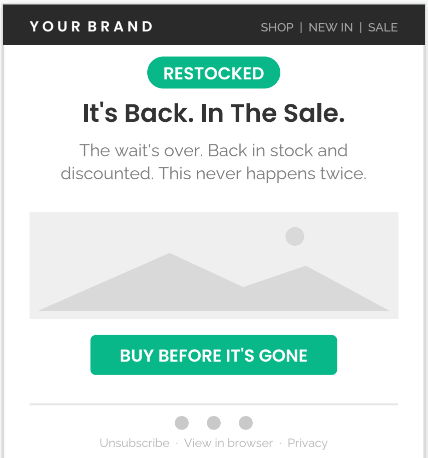

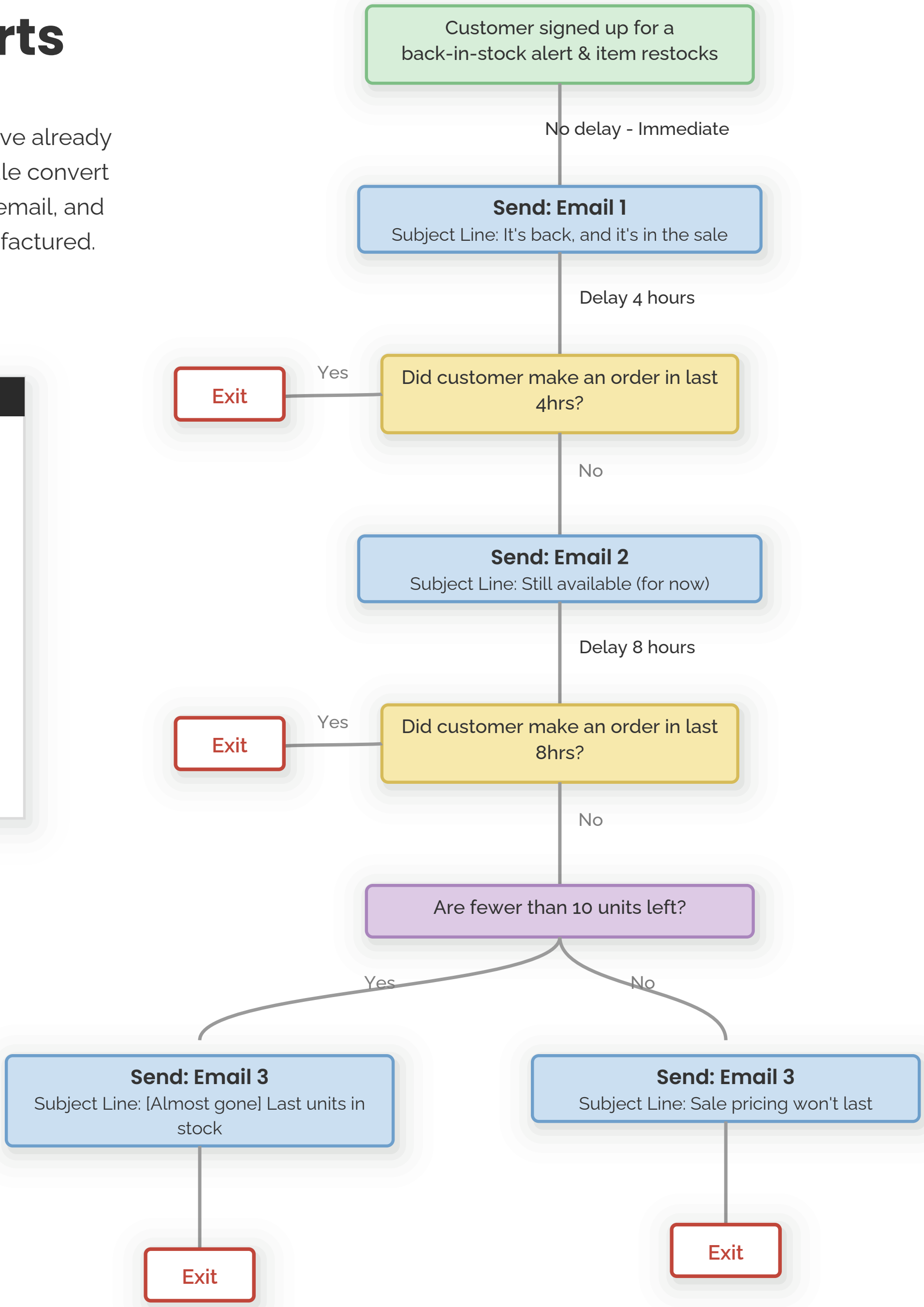

Cyber Monday Extension

Cyber Monday is a second launch, not an afterthought. Frame it as the encore, target the weekend's window-shoppers, and be honest about the final deadline, then actually end it.

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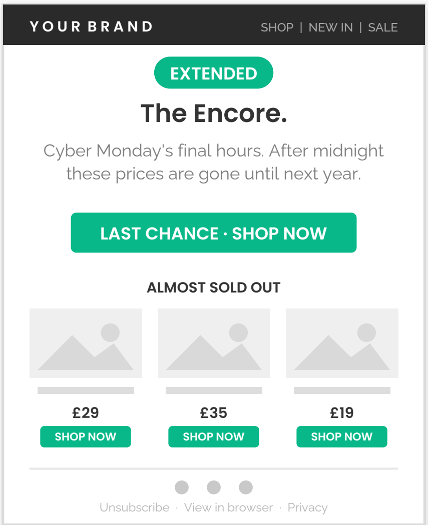

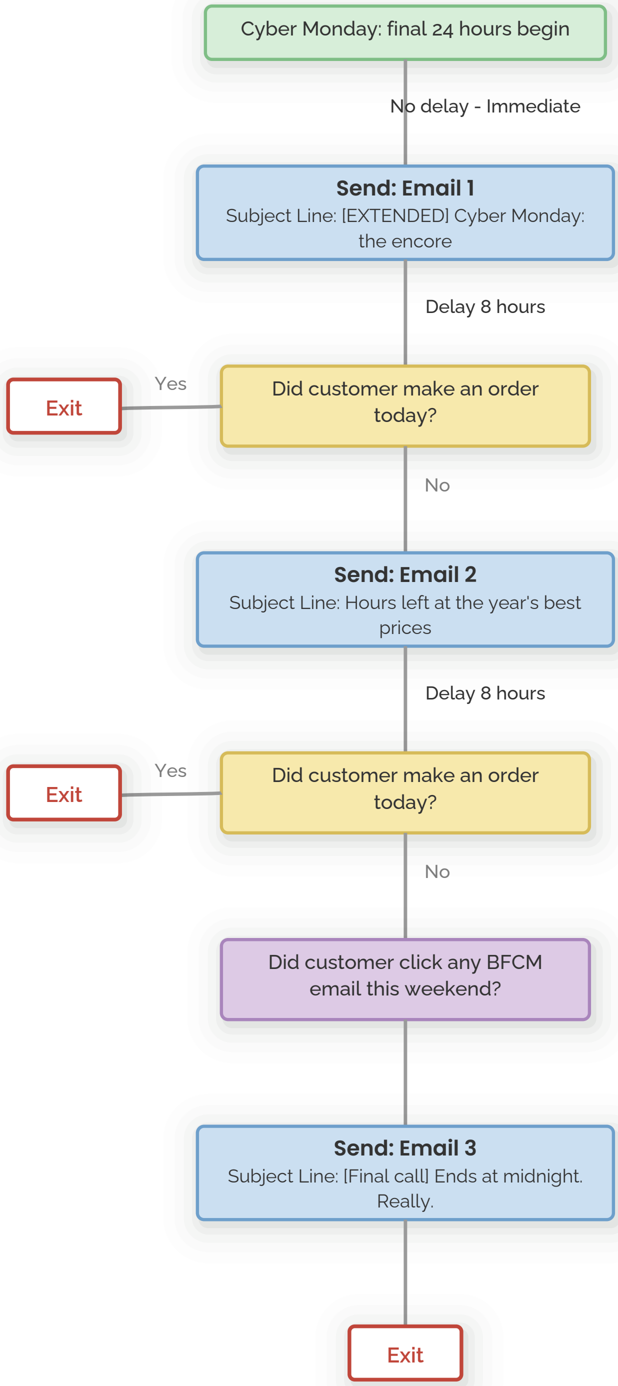

BFCM Post-Purchase

Thousands of first-time buyers arrive in one weekend, and shipping is slower than usual. Set expectations early, cross-sell before dispatch, and start the relationship properly.

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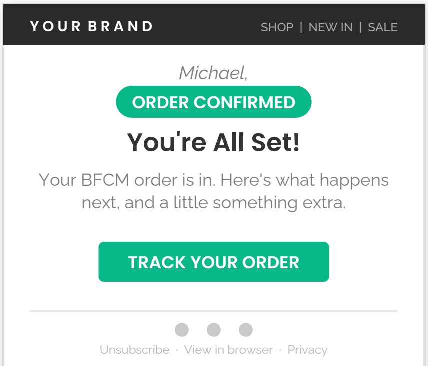
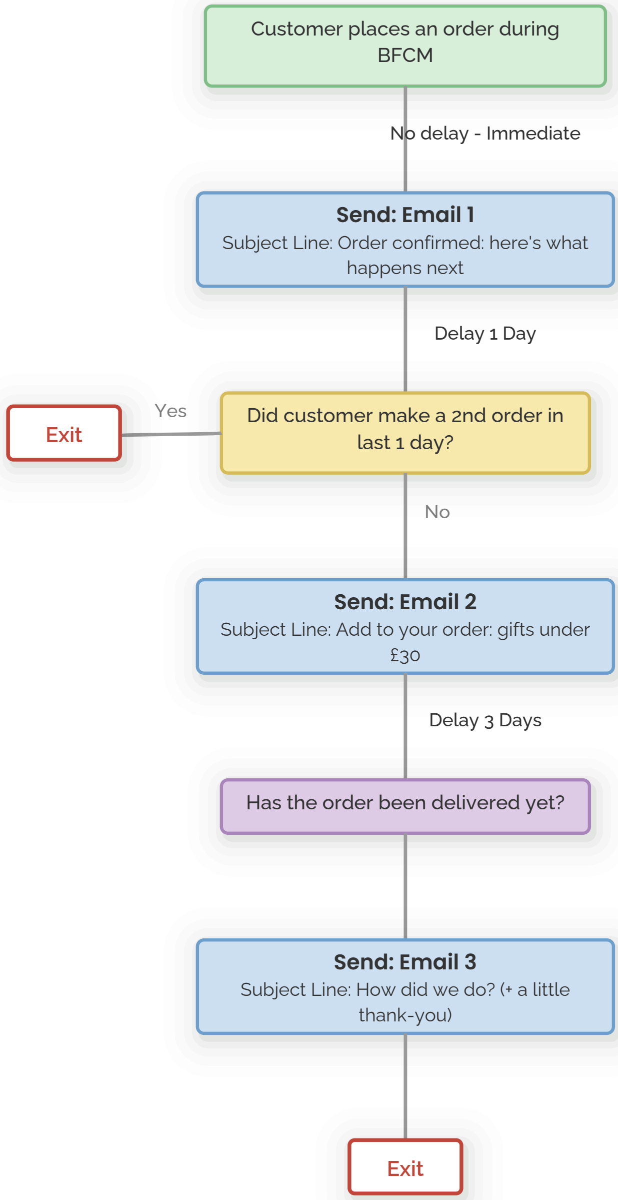
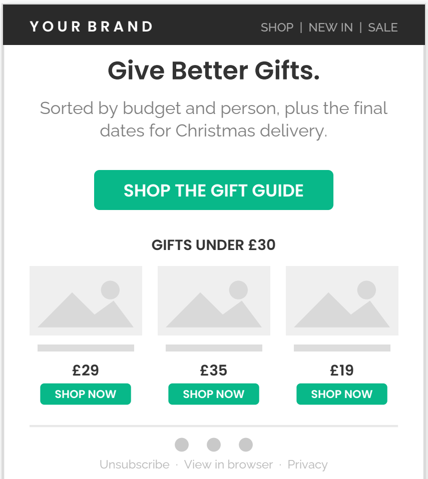


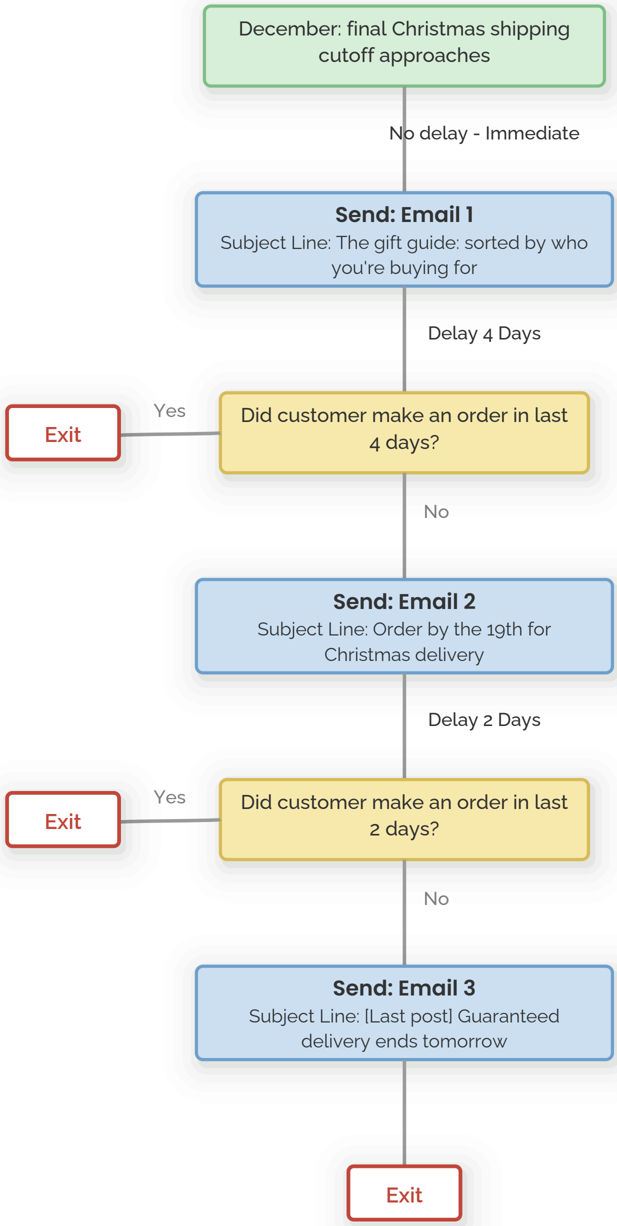


Gift Guide & Shipping Cutoffs

December is deadline season. Gift guides segmented by recipient and budget do the choosing for people, and hard shipping-cutoff reminders create the year's most honest urgency.

Example Template:





Post-BFCM Winback

Most BFCM buyers never purchase again, so this flow is where the weekend actually pays off. Thirty days after their first sale order, start the second-purchase conversation. If they stay quiet, rest and loop.

Example Template: