



Apteco

Event-Triggered Marketing: 25 real-life examples of triggers

This article originally appeared on our German site, and as such cites a number of German sources and references. To maintain the article's integrity, we have left in these references in this translated version.



What is event-triggered marketing?

Event-triggered marketing, sometimes also called event-driven marketing or trigger-based marketing, is a marketing method that involves responding to measurable changes in customer behaviour, customer actions or a particular event ([DIM, 2013](#)).

This method enables businesses to ensure they send the right message to the right person at the right time.

Why is event-triggered marketing important?

From data protection to new technologies, marketers face many challenges. But one of the biggest and toughest is to capture the attention of their target audience.

This is not so easy when, on average, each of us is exposed to some 10,000 to 13,000 advertising messages every day ([WirtschaftsWoche, 2018](#)).

The key lies in personalising the message to create a special customer experience, thereby rising above the noise of the sheer volume of messages. Content is an important element of personalisation.



You are doubtless familiar with the expression “**content is king**” – this is still true.

Interesting content forms an essential part of any successful marketing communication.

But content does not reign alone, because “**context is king**” too – the content must match the target person’s current needs, or the person will not find it interesting.

Our example shows:

Good content is important, but it is equally important to consider the context. This means factoring in the right target audience, the right channel, the right timing, and previous behaviours.

These generate the basic principles of personalised marketing:

- ✓ **Send the right message**
- ✓ **to the right person**
- ✓ **by the right channel**
- ✓ **based on their previous behaviour**
- ✓ **at the right time.**

An example

You are a tour operator and you want to advertise an attractive special offer with your travel cancellation insurance, so you send a newsletter to all your subscribers.

Despite the good offer, the campaign is only moderately successful and the offer is not really taken up.



The reason?

For customers who do not currently have a trip booked and who have already taken out travel insurance, this offer is not currently relevant and it is probably being ignored.

This leads to low open and click rates, diluting your success metrics. To avoid this type of situation, this newsletter could instead be sent only to those customers who have made a booking or taken out an insurance policy during the previous month, or whose departure date is within the next six weeks.

Taking a transaction or a particular point in time into account thus ensures that the communication is relevant to the customers.

At this point, event-triggered marketing makes a vital contribution, because who receives a particular communication and when is determined by a defined event trigger, which ensures the ideal time is selected for sending a message. This has a great impact on campaign success.



5X

—

According to Adam Sarner, Research VP at Gartner, marketing messages based on event triggers get five times higher response rates than messages that do not use this method ([OnetoOne, 2016](#)).



Traditionally, event-triggered marketing is linked to email communication. A customer triggers a particular event and then gets an email message.

This is still a common application, but because of the increase in mobile device usage, other channels, such as mobile push messages, need to be integrated in order to provide an optimal context and create what are known as micro moments.

Responses to a trigger can also take the form of a phone call or direct mail. Campaigns based on event triggers have response rates that are five times higher.

What event trigger types are there?

Event triggers fall into different categories depending on the type of trigger. There are several different approaches, but we differentiate between time-based, internal, and external triggers:

Time-based triggers:

—

These triggers usually relate to a date in the customer's personal profile. Common examples of these triggers are birthdays and anniversaries, or the date of their last purchase.

Internal triggers:

—

These triggers are based on specific customer actions. They can be based on behaviour or a transaction. Examples include checkout abandonments or contact enquiries. Customer behaviour resulting in a particular value being reached may also be an internal trigger. This may be, for example, a particular number of bonus points, an amount spent or a total number of purchases.

External triggers:

—

These relate to external events such as a mobile push message triggered by a geofence while a customer is in the store.

Event triggers used in practice

Having clarified the theoretical background, there is, of course, the question of how all this looks in practice. We can now take a look at some cross-sector and sector-specific examples of event triggers.

Cross-sector event triggers

Digital interaction

—

The classic application of event-triggered marketing is a response to a digital interaction. The customer has demonstrated interest, for example by opening an email or clicking a particular link.

These activities are specified as triggers to initiate a campaign path, usually with multiple stages, which deepens the customer's commitment.

It is usually advisable not just to specify an active interaction as the trigger, but also the absence of such an interaction, e.g. a reminder email is sent if a particular link has not been clicked.

Welcome path

—

Use your customer's first transaction as a trigger to send a few welcome emails with useful information about your product.

For example, these may be tips and tricks that include the answers to frequently asked questions, or the numbers of key contacts.

Bonus schemes

—

Loyalty is rewarded. That is the basic thinking behind bonus schemes.

It's a win-win situation – bonus schemes demonstrably increase customer loyalty, while businesses get important insights into their customers' buying behaviour.

In Germany, these schemes are extremely popular:

On average, every German is registered in 4.6 bonus schemes

([Absatzwirtschaft.de](https://absatzwirtschaft.de), 2019).

In campaign management, various triggers can be specified here. For example, customers who have reached a certain number of points, or a particular status, or whose points are expiring, can be notified.

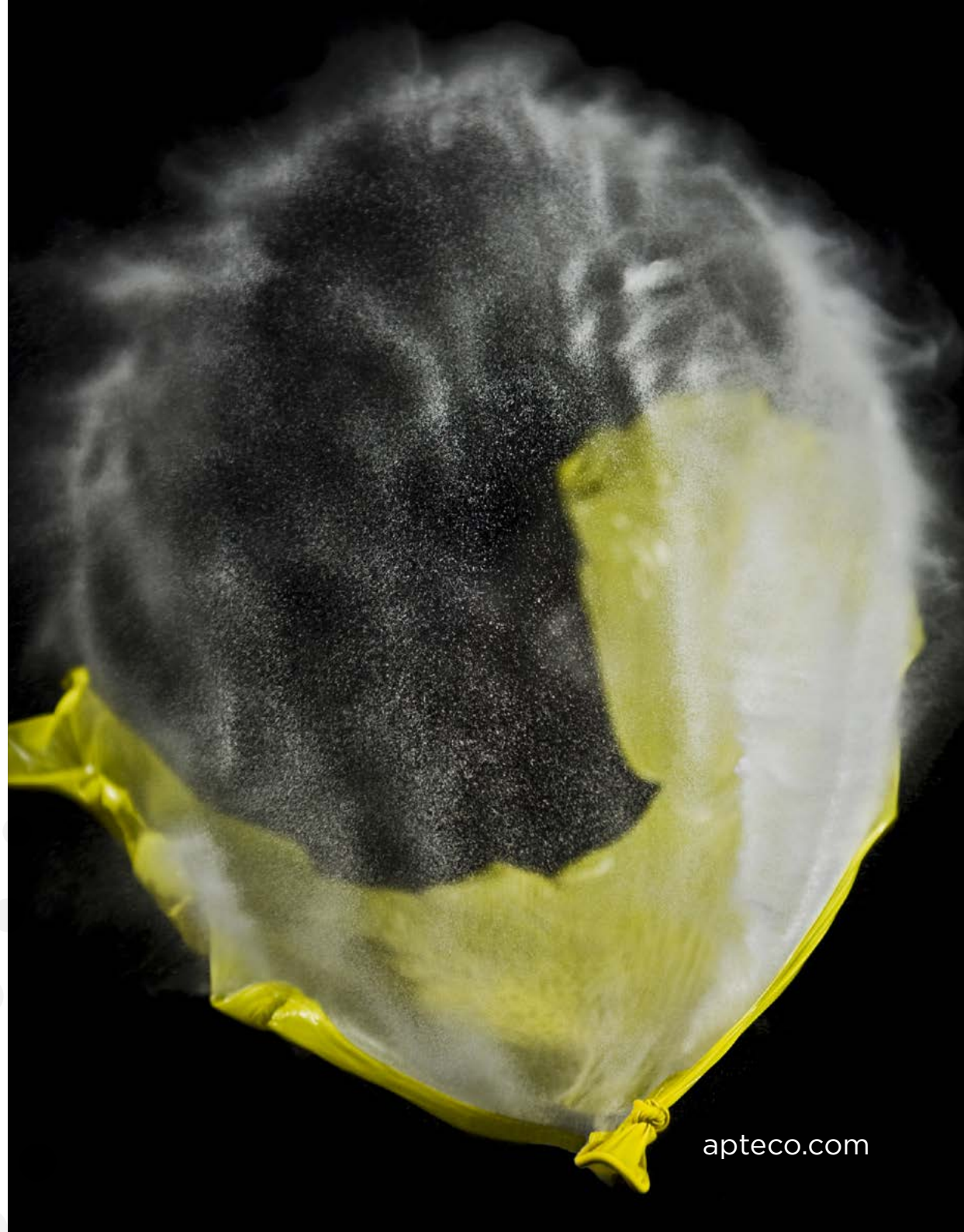
You can also regularly notify your customers of the bonus products they can get by redeeming their points, and thus motivate them to go on collecting them.

Birthday

—

The birthday campaign is a must-have when maintaining customer relationships. Show your customers that you are thinking of them on their birthday.

As well as congratulating them, you can send things like different discount vouchers depending on their age, to personalise the greeting. If you do not have your customers' dates of birth, you can set up a customer anniversary campaign to highlight the length of time you have had a relationship with your customer.



Registration

—

Signing up for your newsletter or downloading a white paper – you undoubtedly have various options for registering customers on your website. But use them to stay in direct contact and send an appropriate greeting message.

Reactivation

—

Analysing your customers' behaviour patterns can predict the likely time of their next activity. A classic example from the leisure sector is visiting the gym. Has the customer attended far less regularly than in the previous month?

Specify this as a trigger and send them a reminder message with additional discounts, such as reduced personal training rates, to reactivate them.

Cross-sell

—

Offer suitable products. Common product combinations can be identified by analysing shopping baskets. When the customer purchases a product from a particular combination, other suitable products can be offered, including the appropriate discounts or vouchers.

Voucher expiry

—

Discount vouchers and coupons are a popular way of encouraging customers to buy. But they often have a limited validity and customers forget to redeem them in time.

Use the voucher's expiry date as a trigger to remind your customers a few days beforehand.

Churn prevention

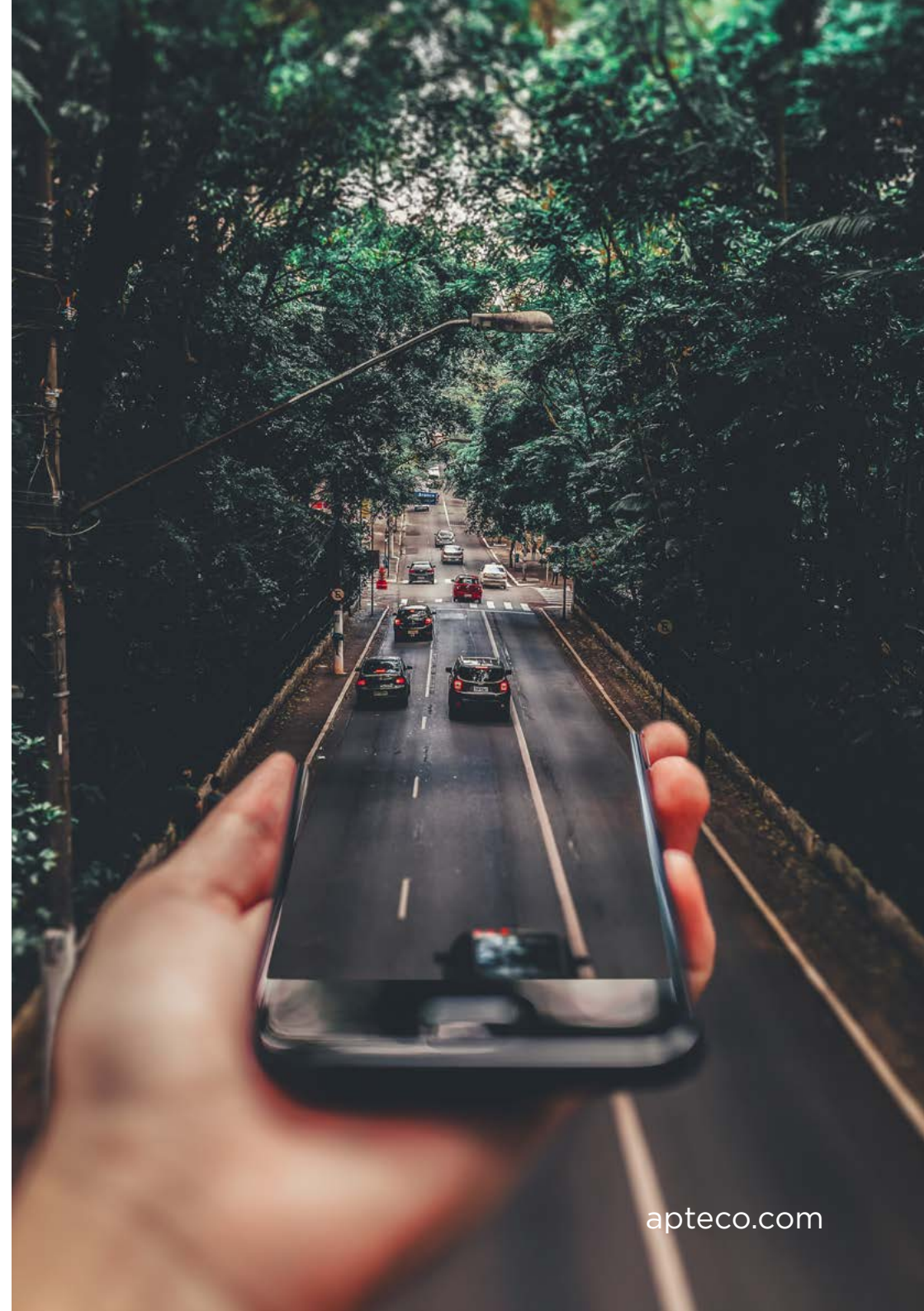
—

Some events are indicators that there is a risk that a customer will move to a competitor. One example of this is complaint calls to the call centre. Define this type of event as a trigger so that a customer support person contacts affected customers again and asks whether they are satisfied.

Account closure

—

Even when the customer appears to have been lost, send a message with the option of giving feedback and find out more about the background to their departure. This will help improve the customer experience for your other customers and thus prevent further cancellations.

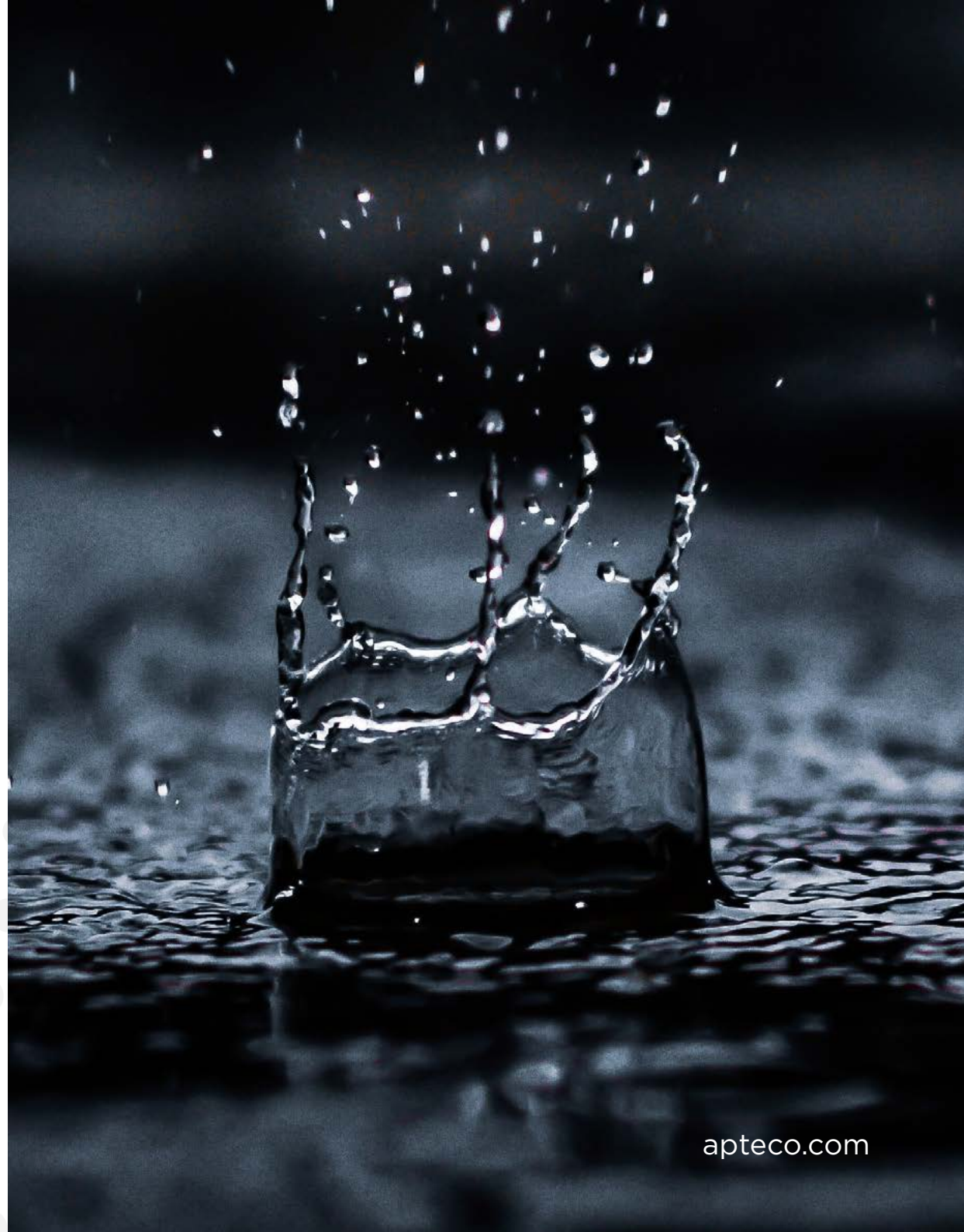


Weather

—

The current weather status can also be fed into your campaign management and have a big impact on customer behaviour. Examples are:

- In the retail sector, if a storm is due – a push message with offers on rain jackets and umbrellas can now be sent to all customers in the vicinity of your store.
- In the travel sector, long rainy periods in the summer can be used to trigger the sending of last-minute offers to the sun, while fine weather is good for promoting domestic holiday offers.



Sector-specific event triggers



Retail

Back in stock

—

Sold out – this often occurs when demand is surprisingly high or there are supply problems. Use a suitable trigger to ensure that all the customers who wanted to buy the product while it was out of stock are automatically notified when it is available again, in order to conclude the buying process.

Shopping basket abandonment

—

A frequent phenomenon in eCommerce is shopping basket abandonment. Depending on the sector, the abandonment rate is between 40 and 80% ([t3n, 2017](#)). Reasons for this may be, for example, a complicated checkout process or additional costs which are only indicated when checking out.

To motivate customers to conclude their purchase nonetheless, send a reminder email with an offer on their current basket. This can also be applied to products that have been put on the wish list.





Publishing

Subscription expiry

—

Define a trigger, six weeks prior to the expiry date for example, and send a renewal reminder. If the subscriptions are automatically extended if not cancelled, offer an upgrade to the next level on favourable terms.

New publications

—

Shopping basket analyses can be used to determine which customer groups prefer which authors.

Have a new book coming out? Send a notification to all customers who have bought more than one book by this author, along with an attractive pre-ordering offer.



Cars

Test drive

—

You are undoubtedly familiar with this scenario: Customers have had a test drive, then ask for some time to think and fail to get back in touch.

Specify a period of a week, for example, after the test drive and send a message asking them to get in touch, providing them with your phone number.

Car configurator

—

Many car manufacturers offer the option of designing their dream cars online. Use this to then let your customer know which local dealers can provide the relevant model for a test drive.





Car component wear-and-tear

—

By analysing a customer's driving behaviour, it is possible to identify when parts such as tyres, brake pads, and clutches are wearing out.

Use this data to send your customer a reminder to arrange a service appointment a few weeks in advance. This is also ideal for MOT appointments.



Insurance

Age

—

Not every insurance policy is relevant to every age range.

Reaching a particular age can be used to offer particular insurance products, for example offering work disability insurance for all students who are turning 22 and about to start working life.

Life event

—

Some customer life events can be read straight out from the data. For example, a house move when address details are changed, or a marriage if a surname is altered.

Changes to such details can be used as a trigger to, for example, offer a new homeowner's insurance policy or favourable terms when taking out insurance for both spouses.





Travel

Holiday period

—

The holiday period is time to travel... or is it? Previous booking details can be used to identify who is and is not travelling with school-age children. Holiday dates can be used as a trigger to send suitable offers in advance, during, and after the holidays to both target groups.

Booking interval

—

Comparable with the retail sector, previous booking behaviour can be used to identify when a customer is likely to book. Use this point in time to send bespoke offers.





Energy

Supplementary payment

—

Nobody is really happy about a supplementary payment but you can use this as a trigger to send the affected customers energy-saving tips or offer an appointment with an energy adviser.

Energy saver reward

—

Customers who have managed to save energy compared with the previous year can be appropriately rewarded, e.g. with a discount voucher.

Reading/service reminder

—

Because of their regularity, approaching appointments such as meter readings or service calls are also suitable triggers. Make use of them to notify customers of the existing appointment in advance.

To avoid your meter reader coming up against a closed door, you can include a link the customer should click on to confirm the appointment.

Prerequisites for event-triggered marketing

1. Business

To be able to exploit the benefits of event-triggered marketing, certain strategic issues need to be taken into account and technical requirements satisfied. First it has to be decided which triggers are relevant to your business.

Transactions, downloads, store visits, subscription expiries, agreements, points collected – a company often has multiple potential triggers, but not all of them will help the company's objectives. So priorities need to be set so that campaign paths and their execution can be scaled.

5-7

event triggers should usually be chosen
([OnetoOne, 2016](#)).

In terms of technical requirements, the available data is the basis. Primarily, there must be detailed transaction data to provide the triggers. But the data often comes from different sources, e.g. the CRM system or the newsletter tool.

This data should be accessible in a consolidated 360° customer view so that event-triggered marketing can be used optimally.

Triggers can only be monitored and detected when all the relevant data is available. A suitable mechanism is required for this monitoring and to trigger follow-up actions. This can be mapped by a modern campaign management system (CMS).

As some triggers require a response in real time, or almost real time – for example, when sending mobile push or web push messages, or when a shopping basket is abandoned – a system also has to be capable of taking the timeline of the trigger event into account.

A CMS also provides bespoke, automated, multi-stage customer communication that can be delivered via different channels. At the same time, this system gathers the responses and identifies new triggers that can be directly converted into a suitable follow-up communication.

A step-by-step guide towards event-triggered marketing:

—

An implementation guide. Now, to round things off and get started with event-triggered marketing in practice, we have put together a guide to implementing the first steps.

Create the basic data

As mentioned previously, merging all the relevant data from various channels into a 360° customer view is important for getting started with event-triggered marketing. Your own IT department or a specialist service provider can help develop this.

At the very beginning, though, you can start with just one channel, e.g. email, and add other channels as soon as this is working well.



Create the basic data

Define rules for target audiences

For the next step, you have to define the rules for the different triggers. Which criteria have to be satisfied to start a particular campaign path? This can be done in different ways.

Triggers that are response-based, i.e. triggered based on a particular customer action, such as by clicking a particular link, can be set in the campaign management tool itself.

However, for some triggers, the target audience to which the

trigger is to be applied needs to be defined in a previous step.

This applies particularly to time-based event triggers. To do this, you can use a tool for initially analysing the data and making appropriate selections, such as “all people who turned 22 in the last four weeks”. These target audiences can then be linked to the appropriate campaign path.



Define rules

Create and trial the first campaign paths

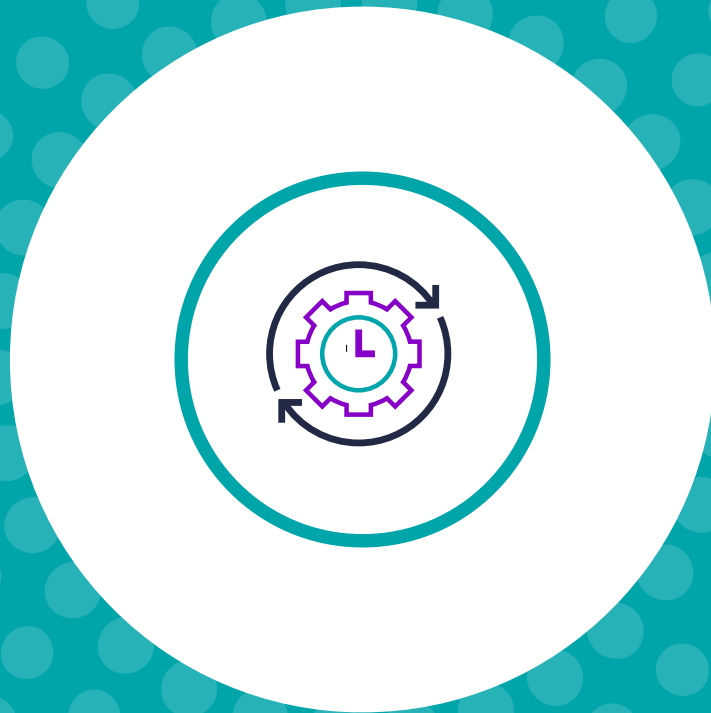
Certain considerations need to be taken into account when creating a campaign path:

- ☑ **How many steps ought it to involve?**
- ☑ **Which channels ought to be involved?**
- ☑ **Which different content variants ought there to be for personalisation purposes?**

In the beginning, setup is time-consuming and requires resources, but the time subsequently saved by automation will be the payoff. Start off, initially, with one or two test paths, to obtain some initial results.

As you do this, ask yourself the following questions:

- How will the ROI in your activities be improved?
Are the necessary channels available?
- Which exclusions should be defined so that a customer does not receive two campaigns simultaneously?
Which priorities should be set?
- For example, is the birthday campaign more important than the shopping basket abandonment campaign?



Rollout

Rollout

In the next step, create other campaign paths in order to cover all the relevant triggers. As you do this, take into account the findings and considerations from the trials. At the same time, review the evolution of response rates to individual campaign elements, so that they can be continually optimised.

As a next step, different event triggers can also be combined with one another. For example, if a person has downloaded a particular whitepaper, and you subsequently publish a whitepaper on a similar subject, the previous download can also be defined as a trigger for the current campaign.

Would you like to use event-triggered marketing in your business?

Try out a no-obligation online demo of Apteco's Marketing Suite. We would be happy to show you how our campaign management solution works and how triggers can be defined.

[BOOK A DEMO](#)

Or call us on +44 (0)1926 407 565
info@apteco.com



Apteco

apteco.com