Here’s a familiar scenario. Whether through search, a social media referral or a banner ad, a customer arrives at your shop website. But after a few minutes, sometimes seconds, he bolts out. Perhaps he’s distracted, due to caffeine withdrawal, or maybe the boss walked in.

Don’t lose too much sleep over this phenomenon, because it is very common. On average, more than 96 percent of customers don’t click “buy” when they visit ecommerce websites, according to Monetate, an online marketing technology company.

So, are those 96 percent or more of customers lost forever? Not if you employ remarketing or retargeting techniques that let you tag these shoppers and barrage them with ads aimed to entice them back to your website, as they continue their online shopping quest.

**How Remarketing Works**

Most floral websites have hundreds of visits a day, but nine out of 10 of those visits don’t result in purchases. So how do you follow those nine after they leave your website?

When you set up your website to remarket visitors, code is written that sets an anonymous cookie in their browser that tags them as a previous visitor. With the cookie embedded, you can strategically place ads to appear in front of these shoppers in subsequent searches and visits to other websites.

As an example: I recently visited PetSmart, where I browsed their Aquarium section for a fish pump for my tank (see top graphic). I added a specific product to the shopping cart. But then I abandoned the shopping cart — like more than 65 percent of people (according to e-commerce experts at the Baymard Institute).

On a subsequent search for “fish pumps for tanks” (see bottom graphic), PetSmart’s ad appeared in the sponsored section and it came up first in an organic search with a link straight to the pump section. This is not magic or happenstance; this is remarket technology.

**Why Remarket?**

For optimists, the answer is obvious: Anyone who visits your website is a prospect worth pursuing.

One of the top reasons customers leave a site, even after placing items in a shopping cart? Comparative shopping — they are still in the hunt! Remarketing ads continue to put your brand in front of the consumer and increase the opportunity for his or her return.

To find vendors that set up remarketing ads, start with an Internet search using the terms “retargeting,” “remarketing” or “demand side platform.” Some well-known remarketers include AdRoll, Retargeter, Fetchback, Criteo and Chango. Here’s a great post comparing services: [http://www.getelastic.com/retargeting-vendors/](http://www.getelastic.com/retargeting-vendors/)

If you already have a Google Adwords account, consider Google’s self-serve remarketing service to keep things simple. Check it out here: [http://www.google.com/ads/innovations/remarketing.html](http://www.google.com/ads/innovations/remarketing.html)

How vendors charge for their remarketing services can get complex, but it basically breaks down to the following three measures: **cost per action** — the safest option, since you’re not paying unless someone makes a purchase; **cost per click** — the standard measure, but one that’s susceptible to click fraud; or **cost per 1000 impressions** (the number of times a consumer is exposed to your message) — which may range from $1 to $6 per thousand.

Is remarketing really right for you? If you have a website that gets a lot of traffic, you will certainly benefit from remarketing, since you have a large “cookie pool” of potential customers. However, if you only have a trickle of visits a day, don’t expect remarketing to produce a deluge of return customers. Regardless of web flow, understanding and evaluating remarketing as part of your online ecommerce strategy is an absolute must.

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