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December 15, 2017

# How to Take a Page From Sephora's Subscription PLAY! Book

**Play!** BY SEPHORA

Your monthly beauty game plan, delivered

Uncover the most sought-after products around with a monthly selection of stellar samples handpicked from our shelves—and learn how to get the most out of each and every product.

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By **Georg Richter**

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More and more brick-and-mortar retailers are jumping onto the subscription bandwagon. Take Sephora, for example. When the makeup retailer launched its subscription box, [PLAY! by Sephora](#), customers felt like they were pushing “play” on a customized mix from someone who knew all their favorite songs.

## Subscribe

The box spurs traffic to Sephora's brick-and-mortar stores and invites customers to join a larger community centered on cosmetics. In short, with PLAY!, Sephora has harnessed the larger retail trend of going beyond a mere transaction to build a holistic experience around its products. Other retailers are following suit.

### Benefits of Subscription Box Programs for Omnichannel Retailers

Subscription boxes, especially those involving cosmetics, apparel or pet products, are hot. A study from Crimson Hexagon found that subscribers made more than [30,000 social media posts](#) between 2010 and 2015 expressing their love for being tuned in to a network of beauty influencers. The excitement goes beyond merely receiving products. Subscription boxes let customers join a community in the know.

Subscription boxes also increase brand exposure. Many Sephora customers don't drive or live near a store, but they're still excited about beauty. With Sephora's Subscription PLAY!, every time someone opens a box, clicks on video content, or simply shares her excitement with a friend, it's a branding moment for the beauty retailer.

Not all retailers offer subscriptions (yet), so boxes like PLAY! are also effective marketing tools that can drive store traffic. On average, [box subscribers spend 14 percent more](#) at a store after their first subscription purchase. But it's not just about sales, it's about stickiness, especially when the box provides points toward future purchases.

Furthermore, subscription boxes provide exclusivity through members-only access to new products or brand events. But perhaps the biggest perk of a box is the anticipation. Because customers don't know what exactly it will contain, they [look forward to ripping open the box](#) and touching and experiencing the items.

### 4 Ways Retailers Can Think *Inside* the Box

Subscription boxes offer retailers new avenues to reach customers. Unsure how to start your own program? These four tips will help you create a successful subscription box:

#### 1. Find a hook.

Just sending out samples isn't enough anymore. Think holistically about your customers and the products they love. Is your box all about new and hard-to-find items? Does it mostly fill a need for replenishment, but also keep subscribers interested through gifts and surprises? Or does your box serve a special purpose as an ongoing gift? Define your hook right away.

#### 2. Pay attention to pricing.

We live in an omnichannel world. Customers might buy online but return items to a store or check prices online before heading to the mall. Your distribution channels might not stay clean, so sync up your in-store and online promotions with your subscription box pricing. If even one doesn't match, customers will complain, and you'll lose their trust.

#### 3. Build suspense.

Television isn't the only medium for successful cliffhangers — they work just as well in the subscription business. Capitalize on the human need for completion by including in each box educational and inspirational content that points to the next shipment. Make sure that customers who receive your products want to stay tuned to complete the set next month.

#### 4. Customize the experience.

Don't think of your subscribers as one group, but rather as individuals with different wants and needs. Identify several subgroups in your subscriber base, whether on the basis of product categories, ideal price points or engagement levels. The more personalized the experience, the longer subscribers will stick around.

Subscription boxes are about more than the products included. Brick-and-mortar retailers need to recognize that a subscription box provides a whole new way to connect with customers in this ever-evolving digital world.

*Georg Richter is founder and CEO of [OceanX](#), a subscription commerce platform.*

In this second review, 49% of retailers improved their scores, while 51% saw a decrease. Download to learn which retailers performed best and why along with actionable insights on how to improve the in-store customer experience.

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**Georg Richter**

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[Georg Richter](#) is founder and CEO of [OceanX](#), which makes it easy for large brands to engage customers in a direct-to-consumer model by offering solutions that include a modern, high-volume fulfillment-only option and an end-to-end option that combines order management (including subscriptions), personalized fulfillment, customer care, and rich customer analytics.

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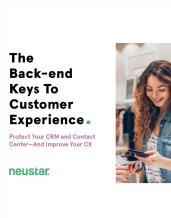
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