

7 Subscription Models To Master



It's time for your business to subscribe to subscriptions

We all subscribe to something.

Some of us subscribe to a set of morals. Some of us subscribe to a morning routine. But these days, almost all of us are subscribed to some sort of service. Whether it's media streaming, a meal box, or a recurring razor delivery, it's impossible not to notice the rise of subscriptions.

Subscriptions are changing the way consumers get products, giving businesses of all types the opportunity to build long-term customer relationships that generate long-term revenue.

It's common knowledge that repeat customers generate more income than one-time shoppers. Once people know your products are dependable, they're more willing to buy from you again. So why not put that on autopilot for them?

But subscriptions not only take one thing off their to do list; they can also provide surprise and delight through monthly boxes or access to exclusive services and offers, capturing more revenue and more customer loyalty.

In short, you have everything to gain by offering consumers the option to turn a one-time buy into an automated purchase, locking them in as a repeat customer.

But it doesn't stop there. Here are a few other reasons to consider offering subscriptions:

- Companies with a subscription model see up to 8x on their company valuation over those driven by one-time purchases only.
- Global ecommerce growth rate is about 20% per year; but subscriptions have grown 100% year over year since 2011.
- Nearly 60% of Americans have multiple subscriptions.

Whether you want to expand your existing subscription offering or are looking to start something brand new, this guide will help you evaluate what combination of subscription models will best help you launch or grow your recurring revenue business.

To help you assess what will work for your own offering, we've broken down seven common models under three core categories. Expect to find the following sections on each:

- Detailed definition
- Key industries
- Benefits
- Things to look out for
- Optimization strategies
- Real-life examples





Recurring replenishment

Providing customers with effortless, automatic refills; the simplest form of a subscription.

1. Recurring products

Automate the purchase of commodity items such as food, toiletries, household items, or anything that needs refilling.

2. Convertible subscriptions

Ease customers into your service with an introductory offer that automatically converts into a standard subscription after a set interval.

3. Build-a-box

Let customers build a custom box of products that's delivered on a recurring interval.



Curation subscriptions

Surprise and delight subscribers by providing new items or highly personalized experiences.

4. Curated boxes

Delight consumers with a unique collection or multi-brand offering they can't get anywhere else.

5. Monthly clubs

Give shoppers and loyal customers alike surprise products or a special selection of items.



Access

Provide lower prices or members-only perks for a recurring fee.

6. Exclusive

Offer subscribers lower prices, virtual content, or members-only perks for a recurring fee.

7. Brick & Mortar

Offer members an exclusive subscription program with online services, in-store experiences, and physical products.





Don't subscribe to just one subscription model

Spoiler alert: The best subscription businesses understand one size doesn't fit all.

As you're going through this guide, keep this golden rule in mind. The most successful programs have a mix of options designed to appeal to new customers, hardcore advocates, and anyone in between.

Of course, you don't want to give customers decision paralysis, but making sure you have an option for more tentative consumers is a good idea.

You might also want to layer your subscription offer with other benefits to help reduce churn. This way, members will probably be less likely to unsubscribe if they stop using just one part of it. A good example of this is Amazon Prime. It not only comes with free shipping — it also offers exclusive video streaming, music, unlimited photo storage, and other perks. Someone might not use the music service, but if they're a peak user of the shipping and video streaming options, they'll be less likely to cancel.

So get ready to discover which models are best for your business, and get inspiration from ecommerce merchants doing them right.

Even if you think one of these models isn't right for your store, give it a read — chances are there's a strategy you can adapt for your business.

When you're ready, [Bold Subscriptions](#) can help you execute a model that works for you. Let's get started!



Recurring replenishment

A recurring subscription provides effortless, automatic refills on products people need to replenish regularly. Think Amazon's Subscribe & Save, Dollar Shave Club, or a gourmet coffee subscription.

Three subscription models fit into this category.

- **Recurring subscriptions** are the most basic form of this model. They deliver your products on a recurring interval of the customer's choice. That being said, there's still room to get creative.
- **A convertible subscription** kicks off your relationship with a unique starter kit, trial, or promotional price, before converting to a more standardized product or pricing model.
- **A build-a-box subscription** lets your customers customize their subscription package on a recurring basis, like a meal kit service.

You can probably already see how you can mix and match these three models into one service. A customer could subscribe individually to a selection of chip flavors from a snack store, but they may want to take up a **build-a-box** offering that lets them pick five bags of chips on a recurring basis instead. They also may want to kick off their subscription with a **convertible offer** where they get their first order at a special price.



Recurring products

[Convertible subscriptions](#) | [Build-a-box](#)

This is the simplest model and a good one to start with. It accounts for 32% of all subscription purchases. If you're selling a consumable product that runs out or wears out, why not give people the option to automatically get the replacements they need?

One famous example of how a simple recurring model can really blow up is Dollar Shave Club. Starting with a single offering — razor blades at a fraction of the price offered by dominant brands — the company attracted over 3 million subscribers. From there, they expanded globally, started selling other grooming products, and of course, got acquired for \$1B in 2016 by consumer goods giant Unilever.

Recurring revenue is attractive for both business owners and investors because it allows you to better forecast income and lock in prepaid purchases. The trick is getting people to take the leap from one-time buyer to subscriber.

Many stores offer a discount to customers when they subscribe, simply because recurring revenue is so valuable. Amazon's Subscribe & Save is a well-known example.

The most effective way to let people know that subscribing is an option is to build it right into the product page, either in a custom widget, or right into the dropdown menu under quantity. With [Bold Subscriptions](#) you can also change the default quantity selection on a product page to 'Subscribe' — just make sure it's easy to change to a one-time purchase.



Benefits

- It's a simple way to start offering your products as subscriptions.
- When customers subscribe, they end up spending more in the long run compared to one-time purchases, even if they're getting each individual product a little bit cheaper.
- It can help you determine which products are performing well to guide expansion of your subscription offering.



Industries

This type of subscription is best suited for commodity industries with a consumable component customers need restocked. It automates delivery so they don't have to worry about buying it regularly themselves.

- Cleaning products
- Vitamins and supplements, including CBD products
- Personal care items like razors and other toiletries
- Beauty products like makeup and lotion
- Food and beverage items like protein powder, wine, or snacks



Things to look out for

No subscription model is perfect. Here's a few things to look out for with recurring products:

Leaving money on the table

The number one weakness of a recurring product subscription is you could be leaving money on the table by letting customers subscribe to just one product. Look for ways to turn them into your most valuable customer group — or even advocates:

- Use strategic upsells and bundles to get customers to make their subscription bigger and better.
- Upsell current subscribers by email, or by putting coupons in their deliveries.
- Give them a discount or other incentive if they successfully recommend the subscription to a friend.
- Offer them the option to edit future deliveries so they can easily add more to their next order.

Replenishment timelines

Customers may cancel because they find they aren't going through a product quickly enough.

- Pay attention to this feedback and adjust your default replenishment cycle so customers always feel like they're getting your product just in time and not overpaying.
- Again, give your customers the option to easily edit their upcoming orders so they can adjust their next delivery for their needs.

Becoming routine

The goal of any recurring model is to become a part of your customers' routines. But keep in mind, routine can also feel stale, especially if a competitor starts offering a similar product with a different spin.

- Shake things up and diversify; offer your customers coupons or incentives to try new products.
- Notify them about related products and new items that they can swap out or add to upcoming orders.
- Give them exclusive access to other products or services, either for free or for an additional fee.



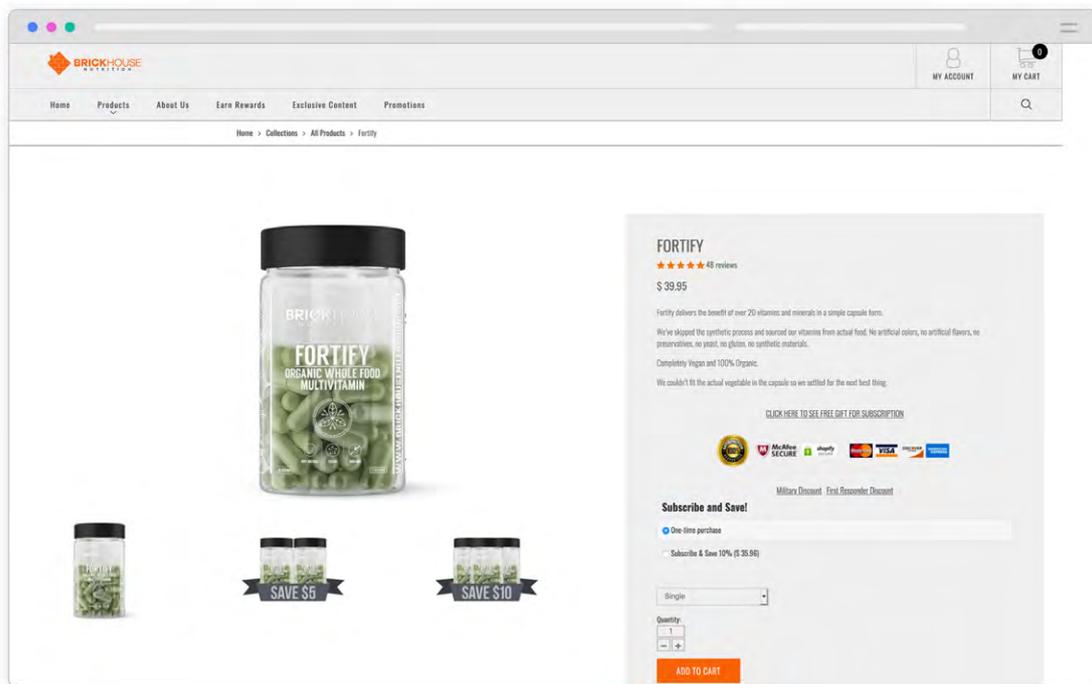
Optimization strategies

Recurring products might be relatively simple to set up, but they don't have to be boring. Use these ideas to enhance your subscription to onboard customers, retain them, or increase AOV.

Cross-sell and upsell complementary products and subscriptions

If a customer's ready to make a subscription commitment, they're also likely primed to buy more from you. Set up both cross-sells and upsells throughout the shopping experience to help your customers get more bang for their buck. Here's an example:

- With [Bold Upsell](#) a supplement company could cross-sell a one-time complementary item, like a shaker, when shoppers add a three-month subscription to their cart.
- The same company could then upsell at the cart page, like a six-month subscription that saves them 10% on every order.
- They could also give discounts exclusively to subscribers with these offers.



[BrickHouse Nutrition](#) highlights how purchasing more products at once unlocks instant savings. Add a subscription into the mix and you save an additional 10%.

Offer the right products as subscriptions

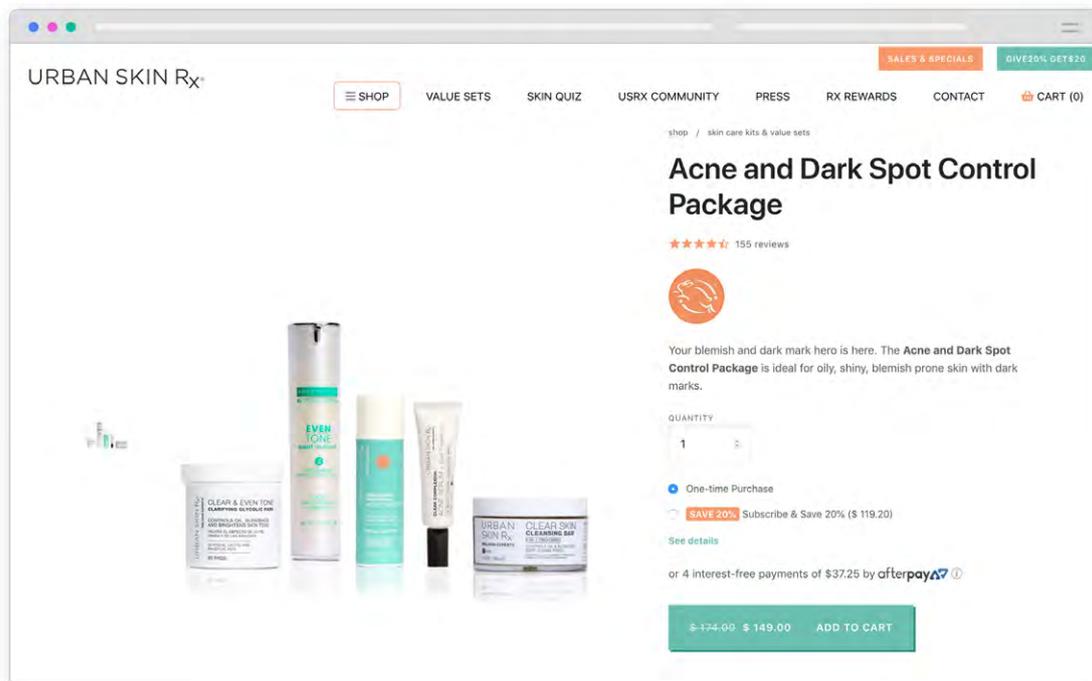
You might think your top sellers are the right products for subscriptions — but the truth can be a little more complicated. The key is to find products that customers purchase on a consistent basis.

- Try adding the option to subscribe to multiple products and see what performs best.
- Do a survey of your customers and ask them what products they'd like to get as a subscription.

Bundle products together to increase AOV

Getting customers to subscribe to multiple products is a good way to make their subscription bigger and better while increasing your average order value.

- Try bundling together packages of complementary items, like shampoo and conditioner or toothpaste and whitening strips.
- Offer a discount on the bundled items, and further discount them via a subscription to really wow your customers.



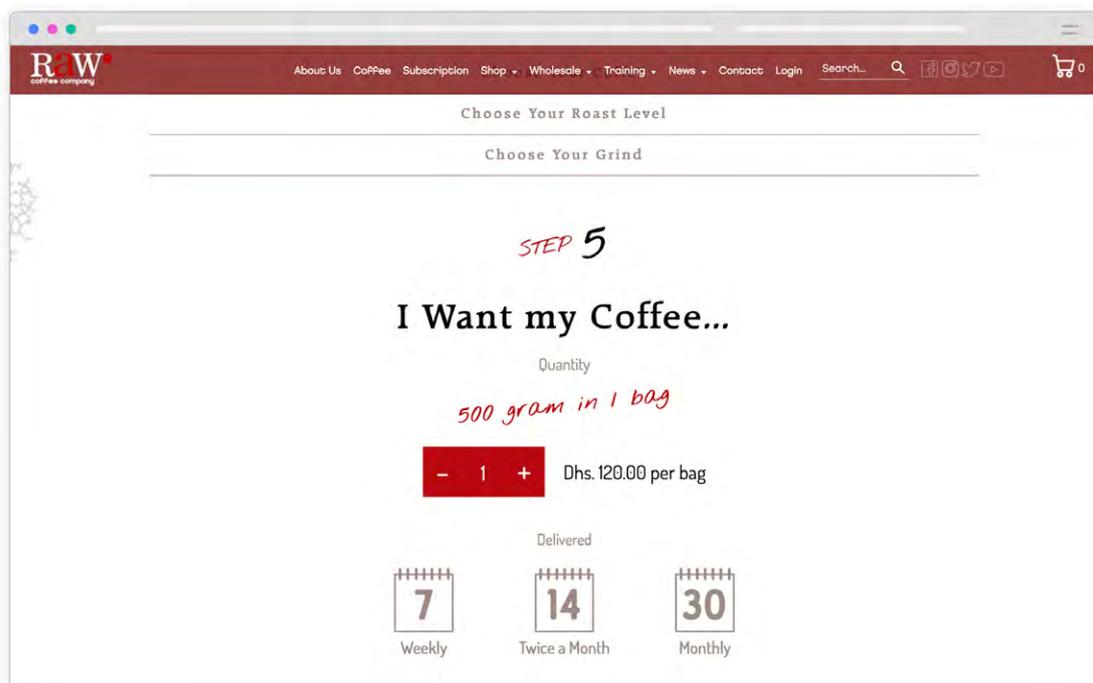
Urban Skin Rx knows their products are most effective when used together as part of a routine. They offer Value Sets for instant savings, plus an extra 20% off when subscribers order all the essentials at once.



Create an attractive onboarding flow

Even if you only offer a single product for subscription, you can still make it interesting. A custom onboarding flow gives subscribers a more memorable experience.

- It lets customers tailor their subscription with any options you offer.
- Try building upsells into the flow, like offering premium products or onboarding them into a higher tier of your subscription.
- Endear them to your products with an interactive experience unique to your brand.



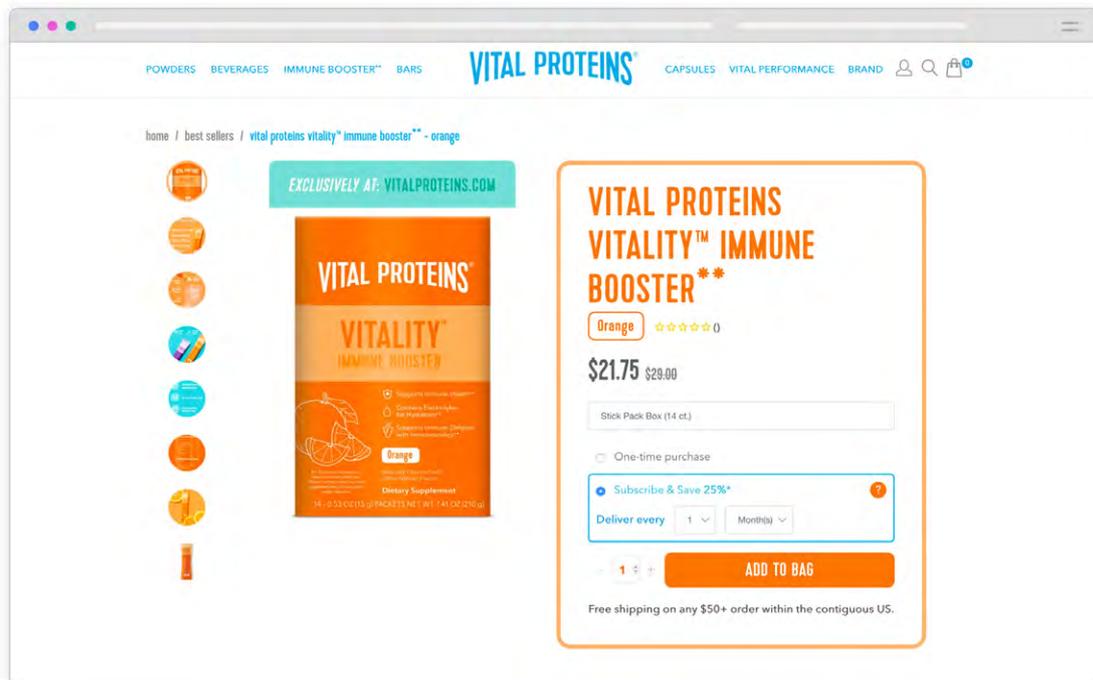
[RAW Coffee Company](#) provides a five-step process to give customers total control over their beans — including the ability to send a giftable subscription and upgrade to a premium blend.



Call visual attention to your subscription offering

People can only subscribe if they know it's available. Make sure visitors to your store and past customers know about your subscription

- Try putting a callout to your subscriptions right in your main navigation menu.
- On your product pages, make subscribable items visually pop and highlight the savings as clearly as possible.
- Also spotlight it in your other communication channels: email past customers about your subscription, feature it an Instagram highlight, or post about it on Facebook.



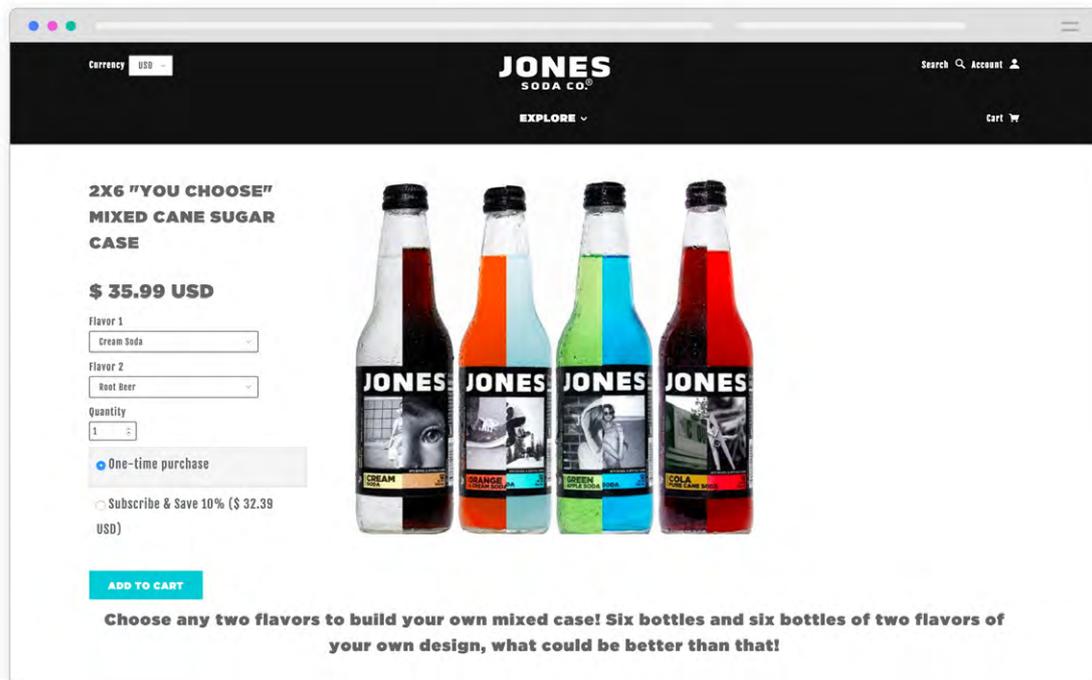
[Vital Proteins](#) puts their subscriptions right in the top navigation so it's visible to all shoppers, and further promotes it with a banner advertising a discount for subscribers. Just in case they miss the memo, shoppers can also subscribe on the product pages or cart.



Offer customization options

No matter what, your customers all have different needs, whether it's the frequency of their subscription, the quantity, or any other options you offer, so let them know about flavors, colors, and other variations.

- Use [Bold Product Options](#) to let customers pick exactly what they want in their recurring subscription with options like size, color, and more.
- Build your options into the checkout or onboarding flow so customers don't miss it.
- Charge more for premium options to increase average order value.



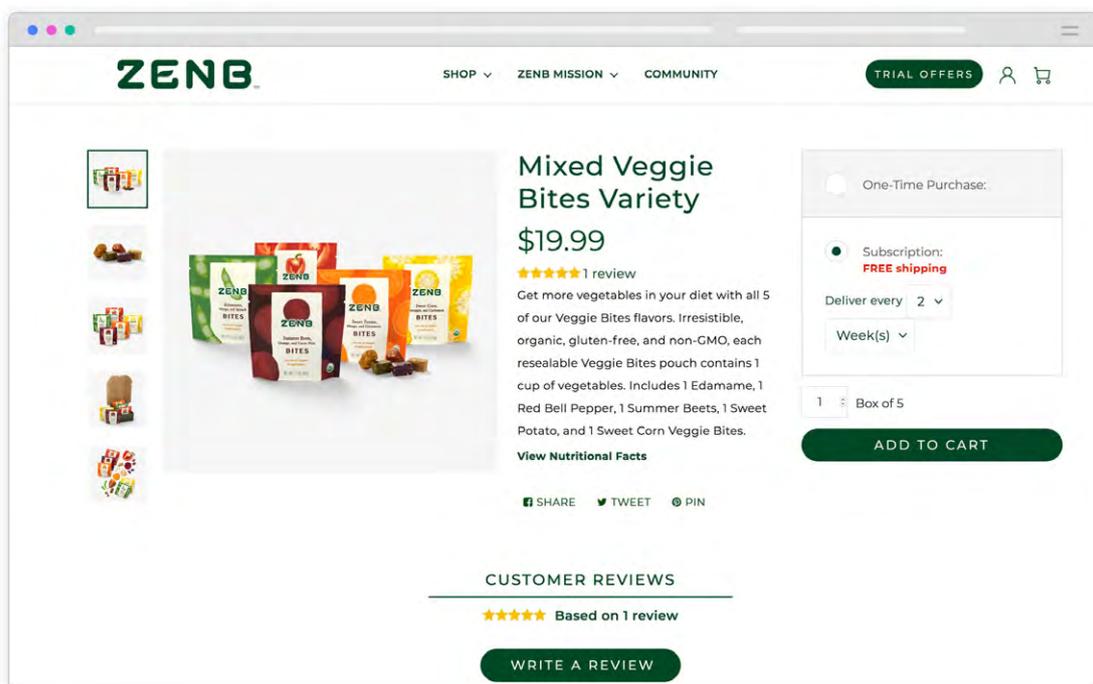
Have not one, but two flavor faves? [Jones Soda Co.](#) has you covered by letting you pick two six packs, saving 10% while you're at it.



Default to subscribe

The easiest way to get people on the subscription train? Make them feel like everyone else is doing it.

- Set your default selection to ‘Subscribe’ on the product page but, of course, make sure it’s easy to change to a one-time purchase so you don’t frustrate shoppers.
- Highlight the savings your subscription brings with banners and callouts.
- Offer the option to subscribe one more time during checkout.



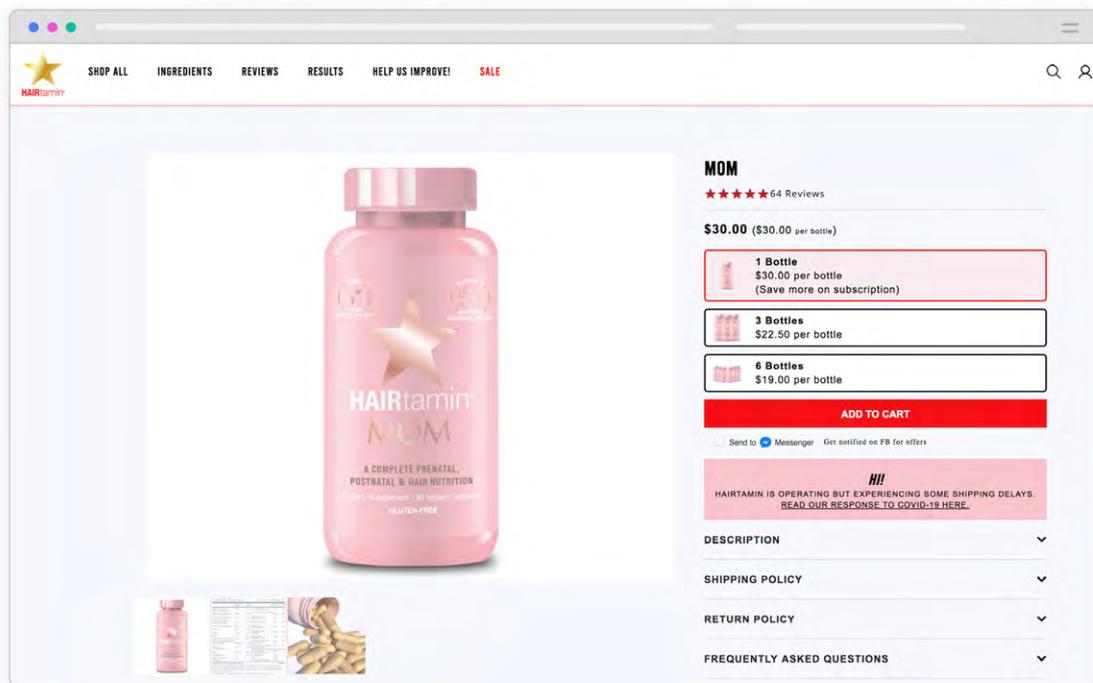
ZENB's product page not only defaults to subscriptions, they highlight free shipping and put one-time purchases in grey to really draw attention to it. There's even a banner at the top of the page to highlight the savings.



Offer more value for longer-term commitments

The true value in subscriptions is predictable revenue. The longer you can lock in your customers, the more stable your income.

- Try offering incremental discounts for customers who commit to a longer subscription upfront.
- Make longer subscriptions more appealing by offering two or more timeframes (and discounts) they can commit to, making the longer one seem more valuable.

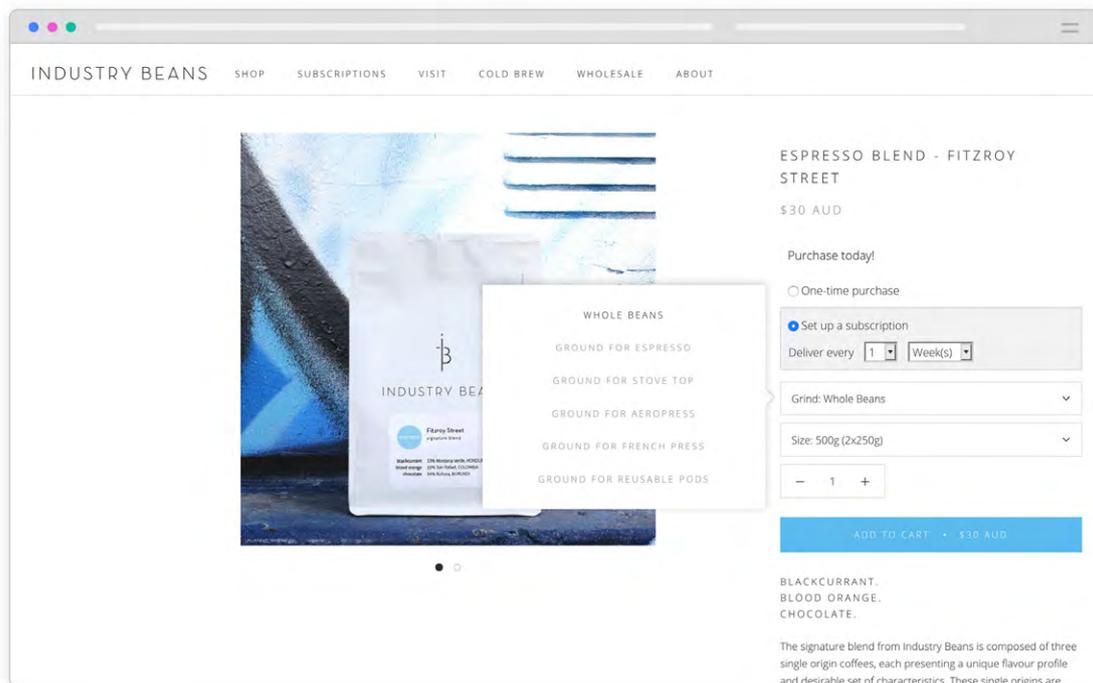


[HAIRtamin](#) gives you multiple options for subscriptions. Go for a month-to-month subscription to save 15%, or lock in for up to a year and save up to 25%.

Think about different customer types

Don't assume every customer is an individual buying for themselves. Offer different subscriptions that fit different customer types, including:

- Organizations or businesses looking for bulk needs.
- Wholesalers looking to resell.
- People who want to buy a subscription as a gift.

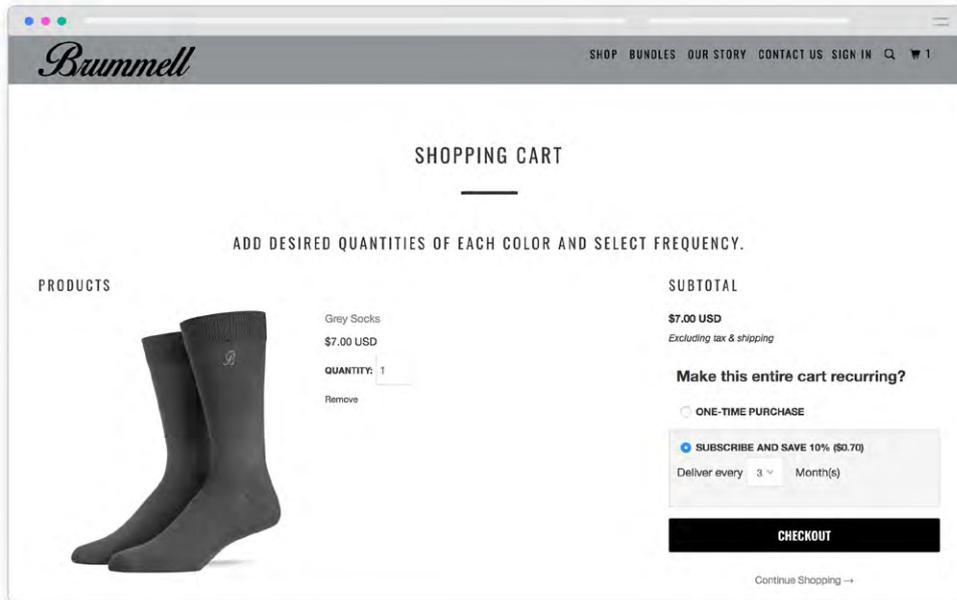


[Industry Beans](#) has a top navigation item dedicated to subscriptions, and underneath it, the option to choose between a personal, gift, or corporate subscription, along with their subscription management portal.



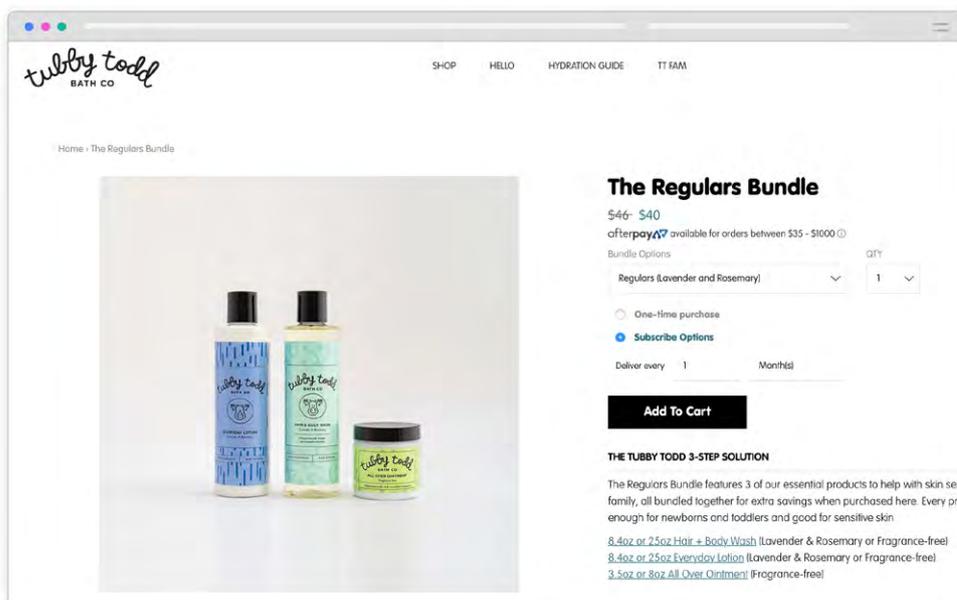


Real life inspiration



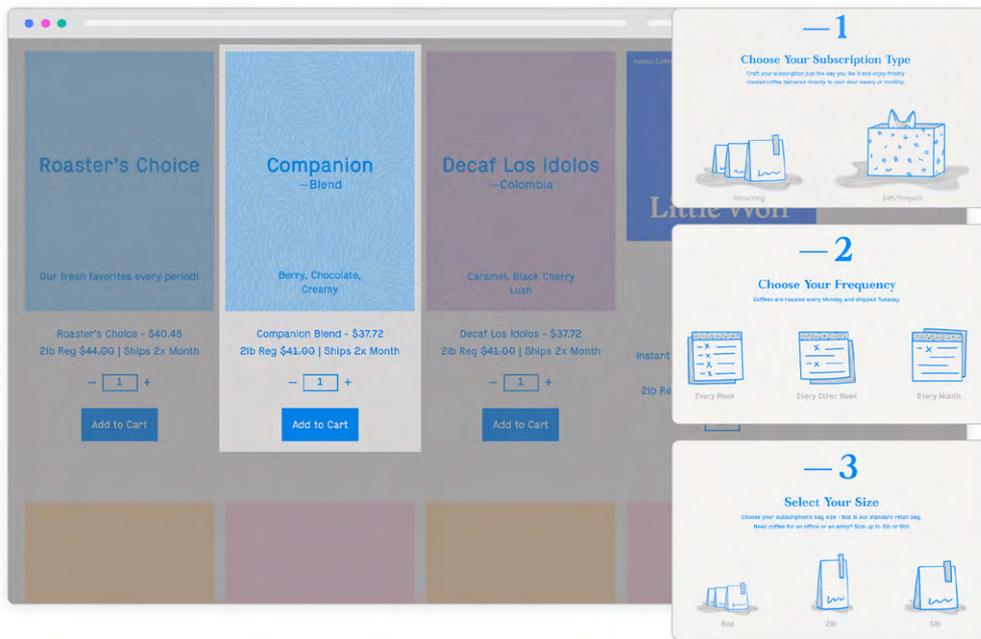
Brummell

Undershirts and boxers might not seem like an obvious category for subscriptions, but [Brummell](#) highlights it on their product page and presents it as an option right when you check out. Let's be honest — who wouldn't love receiving fresh basics on a recurring basis?



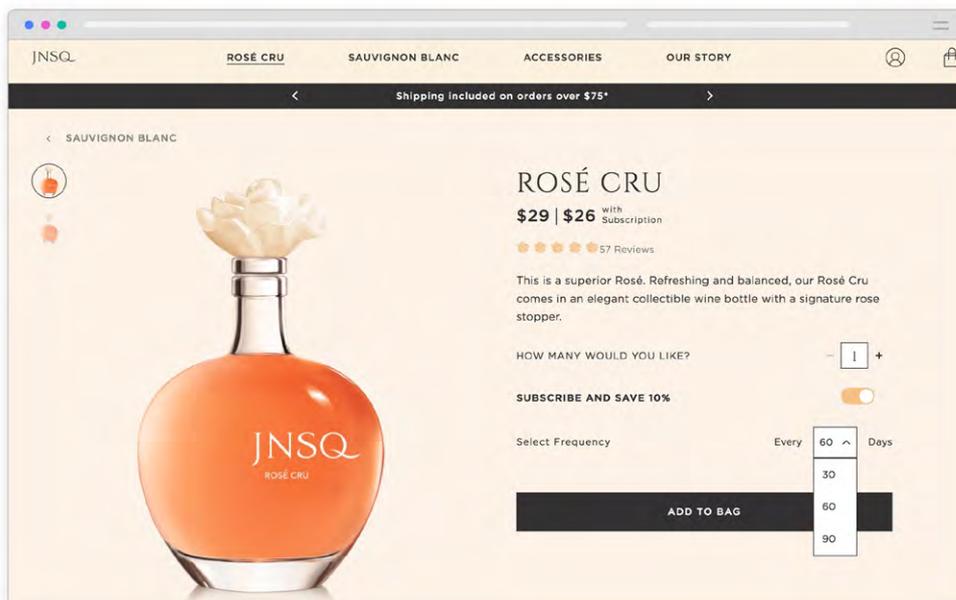
Tubby Todd Bath Co.

If you offer subscriptions, don't have your customers hunt around for them. [Tubby Todd Bath Co.](#) has an entire page dedicated to their subscriptions, including single products, dual-packs, and bundled collections. Bonus points for mixing in an entirely different subscription model with their monthly bath bomb club.



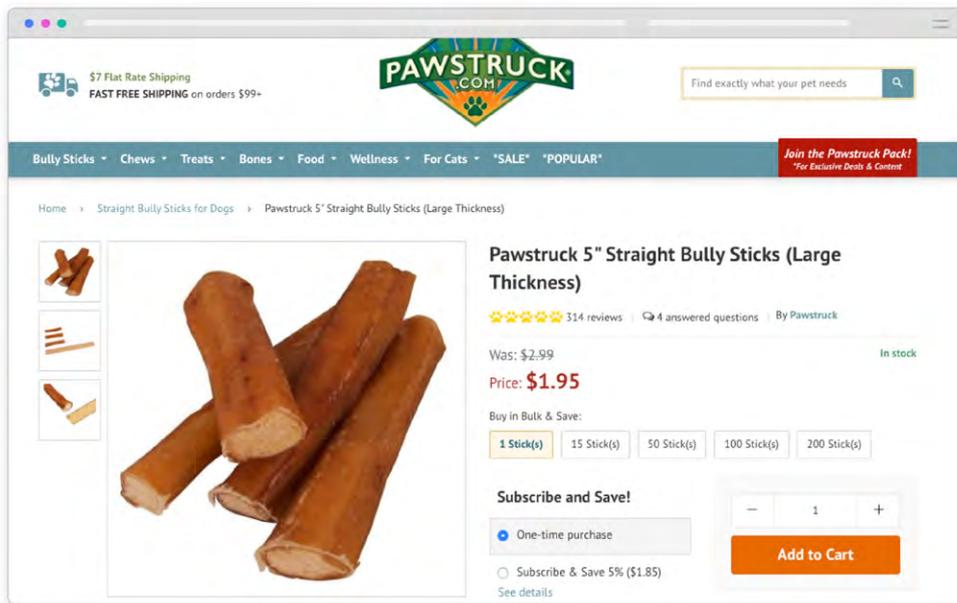
Little Wolf

A well-designed onboarding flow can keep customers from feeling overwhelmed. [Little Wolf's](#) coffee subscription only reveals the next option after completing each step. At the coffee selection step, shoppers are served instant savings. A flow like this can also gather consumer preference insights by saving selections from both subscribers and people who don't check out.



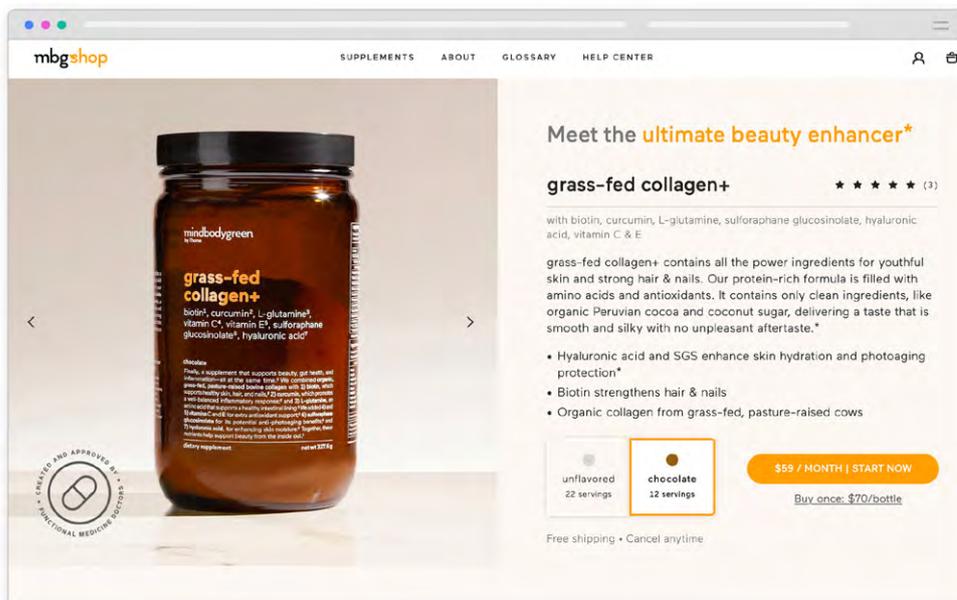
JNSQ

Get rosé all day (or at least every month) with [JNSQ's](#) clever subscription promotion. Glance at the top price and you see instant savings with a subscription, which is further reinforced when you get to the Subscribe & Save widget. The page is kept nice and clean by tucking the frequency selection behind a slider button.



Pawstruck

After using a product selector widget on Pawstruck’s home page, you’re presented with a number of items to make your pet happy. On the product pages, you’re encouraged to buy bulk to save, and prompted to save even more by subscribing. The ‘See details’ link provides a handy pop-up explaining the terms, including how easy it is to pause, edit, or cancel your subscription.



mindbodygreen

mindbodygreen has done a great job making their subscribe button stand out and feel positive with the call to action of ‘Start Now’. A “buy once” link is easy to see but doesn’t steal any attention from the subscribe button, encouraging customers to buy into these supplements as a sustainable program.



Hesitation is one of the biggest barriers to getting people to commit to a subscription. That's why some businesses go convertible: Offering would-be subscribers introductory offers, like starter kits or a discounted first order.

This approach works particularly well if you sell equipment that has a refillable component, such as a teeth whitening kit with gels, or aroma devices with refillable pods. But it can apply to other subscriptions too. For example, music and video streaming services often hook subscribers with a free month — but only after they submit their payment info.

There are generally two types of convertible offers, depending on what products you offer.

- 1. Low to high** - Give your subscribers a lower-priced offer, like their first order for 50% off, and then charge regular price for forthcoming deliveries. You can also try offering a sample or trial version of your products before converting to a full-sized (and full-priced) item.
- 2. High to low** - Get your members started by providing a higher priced entry kit. An example could be a tea subscription: First box includes a pot, infuser, and three popular blends, with follow-up orders of (lower-priced) tea refills.

Although convertible subscriptions are most often used with consumable or refillable products, they can work for just about anything. For example, a sock company could charge \$1 for the first month of a sock club then \$9.99 for future months.



Benefits

- It gives customers the chance to 'try before they buy' while feeling like they're getting huge value upfront.
- It eases the transition from one-off customer to subscriber with a strong first impression or low commitment first order, both with the comfort that people can easily cancel.
- You can test different products as subscriptions with sample sizes to measure conversions and better forecast inventory.
- Customers automatically convert into long-term sales if they like your product and want to stay on board.



Industries

If you have a refillable component or are looking to win over subscribers with a great first offer, this model could be right for you. Here are a few industries that make a good fit.

- Beauty
- Health
- Gardening
- Crafting
- Aromatherapy and essential oils
- Coffee and tea
- Household essentials like lightbulbs, water filters, or air filters



Things to look out for

A convertible subscription isn't always a slam dunk. Stop cancellations in their tracks by keeping these considerations in mind.

Provide a palatable entry point

If your startup kit costs \$50 and you recommend quarterly replenishments at \$10 a quarter, those numbers can quickly add up in a customer's mind. Frame it so customers can easily see the value, even if they've never tried the product out.

- If replenishment for your product is expensive, offer the choice of longer frequency intervals.
- If your upfront starter kit or equipment is a bigger investment, consider providing your first consumable product delivery free when they commit to long-term subscriptions.
- Give subscribers the ability to edit or skip upcoming orders if they don't need refills yet.

Minimize your payment collection

Some people freeze up at the idea of getting billed in perpetuity. Make sure you put those minds at ease.

- Highlight how easy it is to cancel.
- Collect (and securely vault) payment information upfront but guarantee you won't charge customers. Then provide an opt-in point for subscribers after they've received their trial product where all they have to do is say yes — you've already got their payment info!
- Try a "fake" convertible subscription as highlighted below.

Try 'faking' a convertible subscription

A true convertible subscription means offering up one product (and usually, price) at the outset and automatically swapping it for a different product. You can however, fake it by creating a standalone starter product and a recurring subscription product. Here's how:

- Sell your starter kit or trial subscription as an individual product.
- Convert that one-time customer into a subscriber with bounceback coupons or other promotional tactics.
- Remarket to them again with an automated email after a set time interval, even giving them an exclusive discount because of their first purchase.
- Give them exclusive access to other products or services, either for free or for an additional fee.



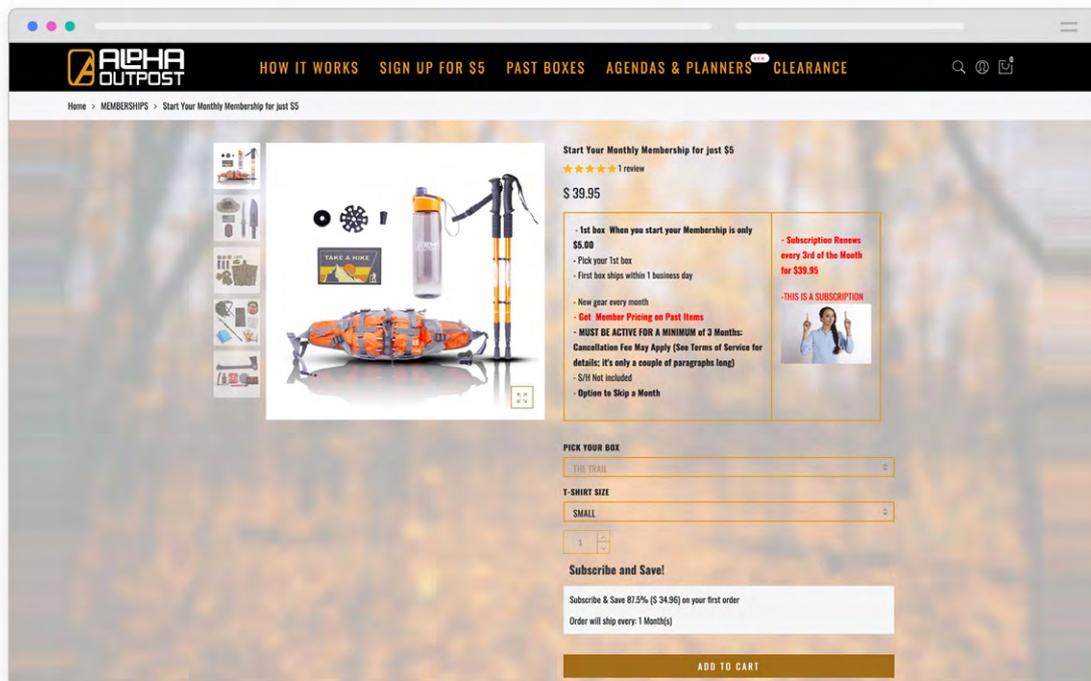
Optimization strategies

Convertible subscriptions are very flexible. Don't be afraid to try out different variations until you find a subscription offer that attracts customers in droves.

Serve up super introductory value

There's a reason why Costco serves free samples in store: Because they convert. You can try doing the same.

- Offer your customers a free trial or sample that automatically converts into a regular subscription, giving them a chance to truly experience (and fall in love with) your product.
- If you don't want to give away products, a crazy discount can work too. Offer the first order for \$1. Think of it as an investment to get payment info and that initial commitment.



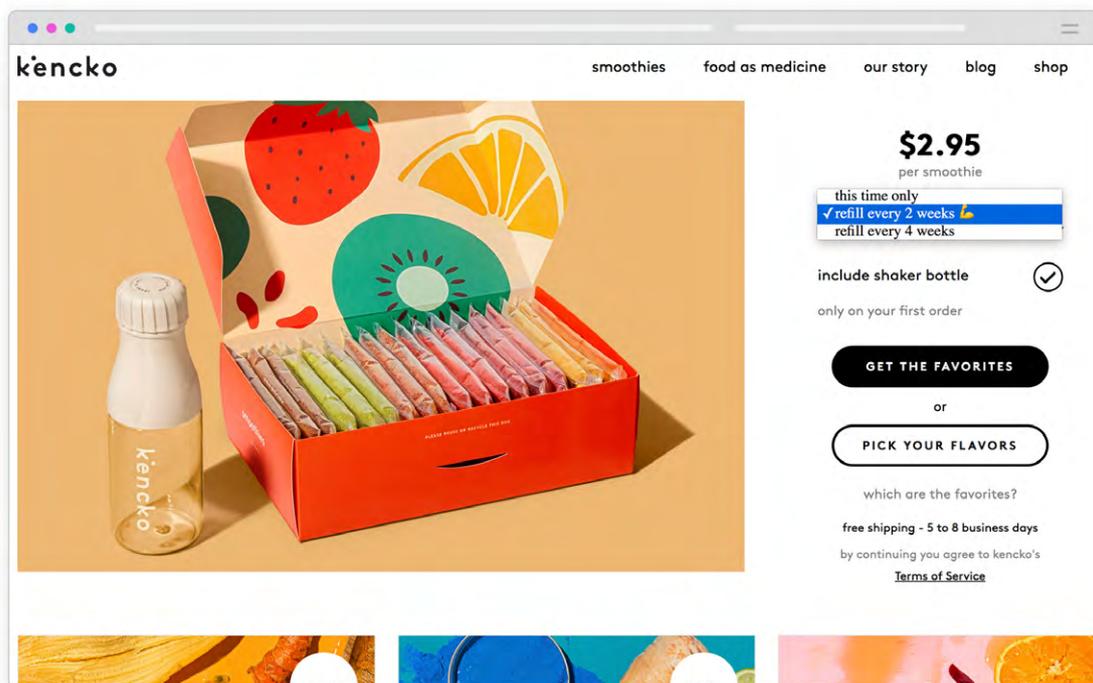
Alpha Outpost's \$39.95 monthly subscription is a hybrid of a membership program and curated box — but they offer the first box for just \$5. Members get steep discounts on other gear, but only when they commit to at least three months, giving them plenty of time to get hooked on the subscription.



Provide a gift with purchase

Offer an optional gift with the first order to entice shoppers to sign up.

- Including a gift increases the perceived value of the initial purchase without changing your core subscription offering.
- You can change the gift based on what inventory you're looking to liquidate.
- Make the gift a limited-time product to leverage FOMO.



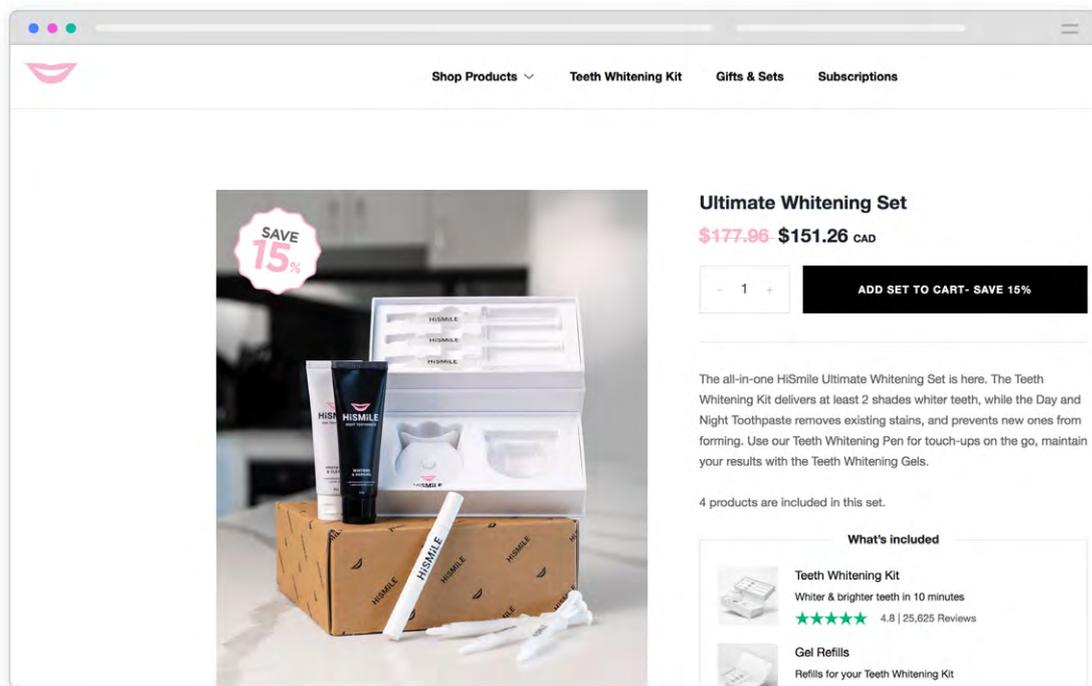
[kencko](#) offers up a shaker bottle with any first subscription order; they even offer it with their trial-sized subscription, which includes only three smoothies.



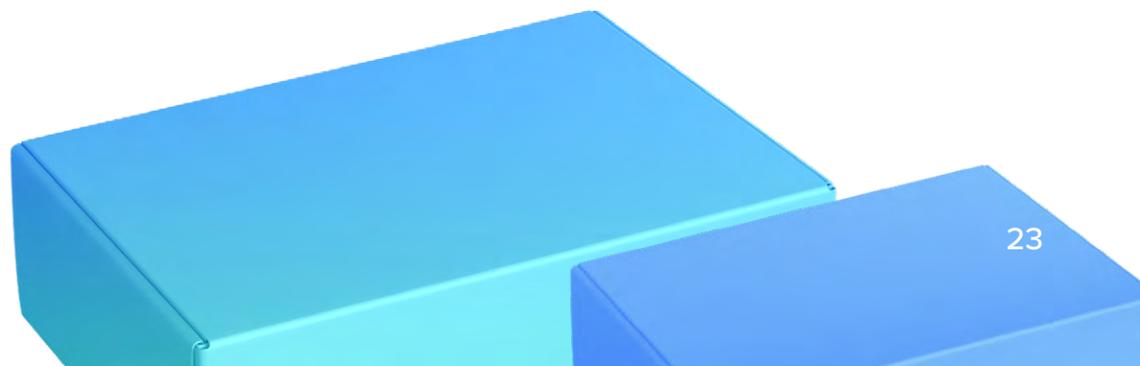
Give your starter kit better value than a la carte purchases

With simple recurring product subscriptions, a ‘subscribe & save’ approach is a common incentive to get people to buy from you on the regular.

- Position your subscription as a better deal by pricing the starter kit at a lower price than buying each item separately.
- Make any refillable parts of the subscription cheaper for subscribers than they are as one-time purchases.



HiSmile doesn't offer a 'true' convertible subscription, but they do bundle their products together in starter sets that offer upfront value over purchasing the items separately.

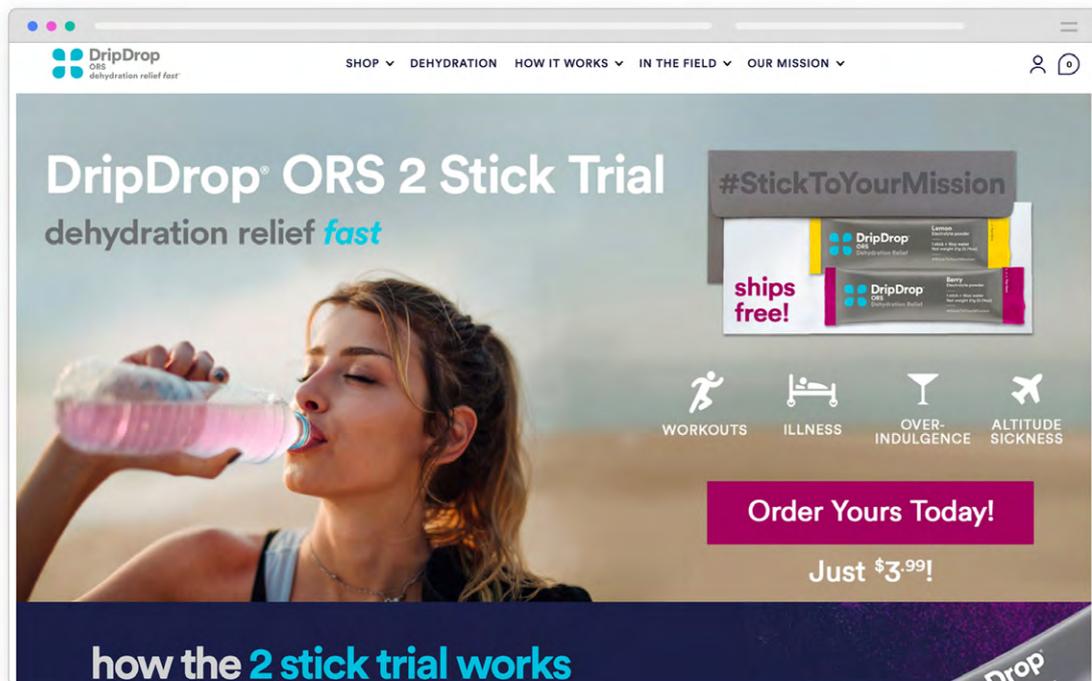




Use bounceback coupons or incentives

If your churn rate is a little high after the introductory offer, or you're using a 'fake' convertible subscription, be sure to give customers an incentive to stay on board.

- Provide a coupon equal to their initial offer to spend on a future subscription only.
- Stick a discount coupon in their physical package that they can redeem on their next order.
- Give them an offer for exclusive product add-ons for future orders if they stay subscribed.



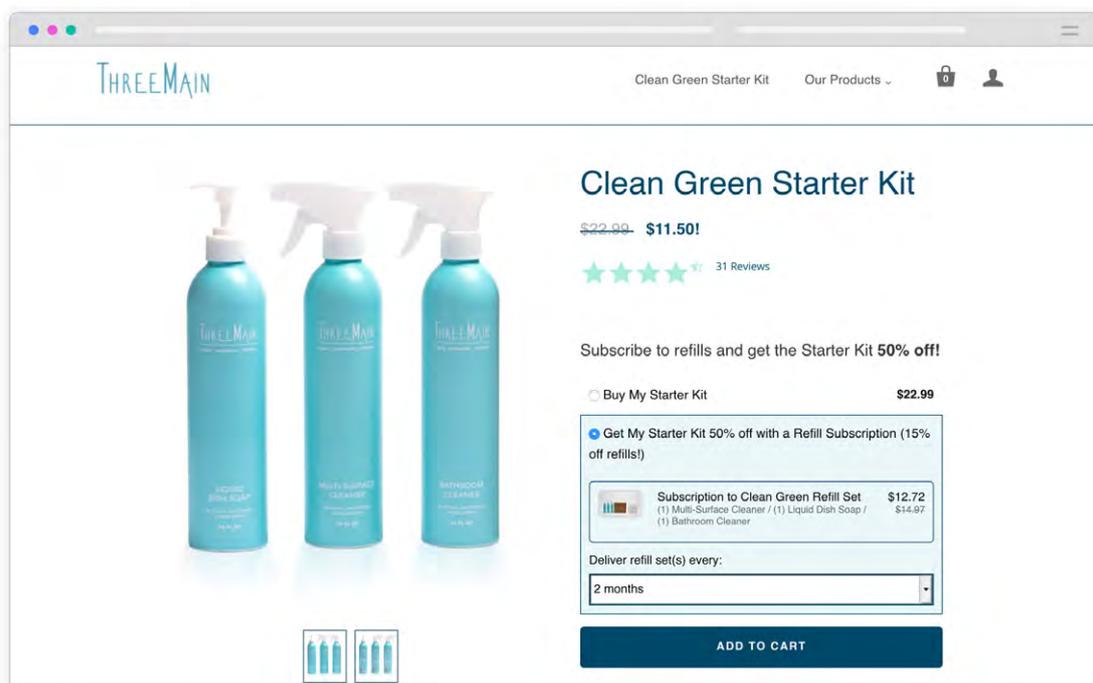
DripDrop offers new subscribers two dehydration relief sticks for \$3.99, with free shipping and a coupon for \$3.99 to use on another purchase. This basically means subscribers try the sticks for free, but only if they shop at DripDrop again to redeem the coupon.



Incentivize sign-ups with long-term savings at the time of purchase

So you've got a customer ready to check out with your starter kit — why not introduce them to a discount on your replenishable product at the same time?

- You can offer a discount on your actual starter kit if they buy more refills at the same time.
- Lock in bigger discounts for the refillable components the longer that shoppers commit to a subscription.
- Offer them the option to add extra refills to their first order at a special price.



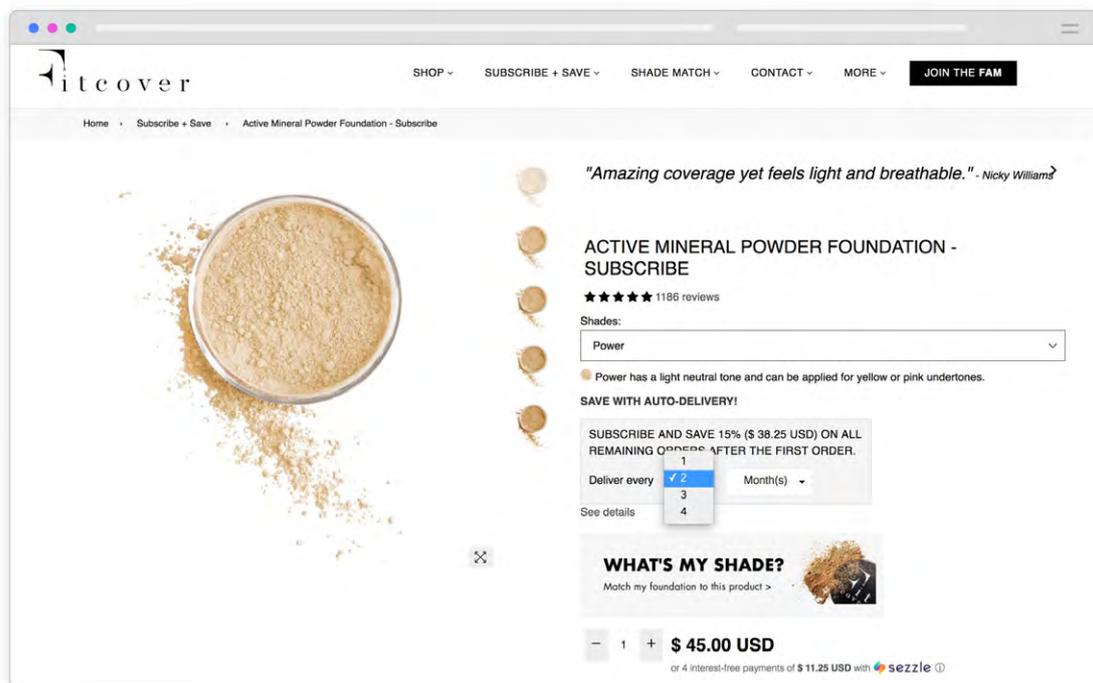
Earth-friendly cleaning product brand [ThreeMain](#) offers 50% off their starter kit plus a 15% discount for refills if you purchase the items at the same time. Plus they offer a zero waste replenishment program where subscribers can return bottles for reuse.



Get full payment upfront — and reward subscribers for their loyalty after

If you're confident customers will love your best sellers, ask for them to pay full price upfront, then kick things into a discount for as long as they keep their subscription.

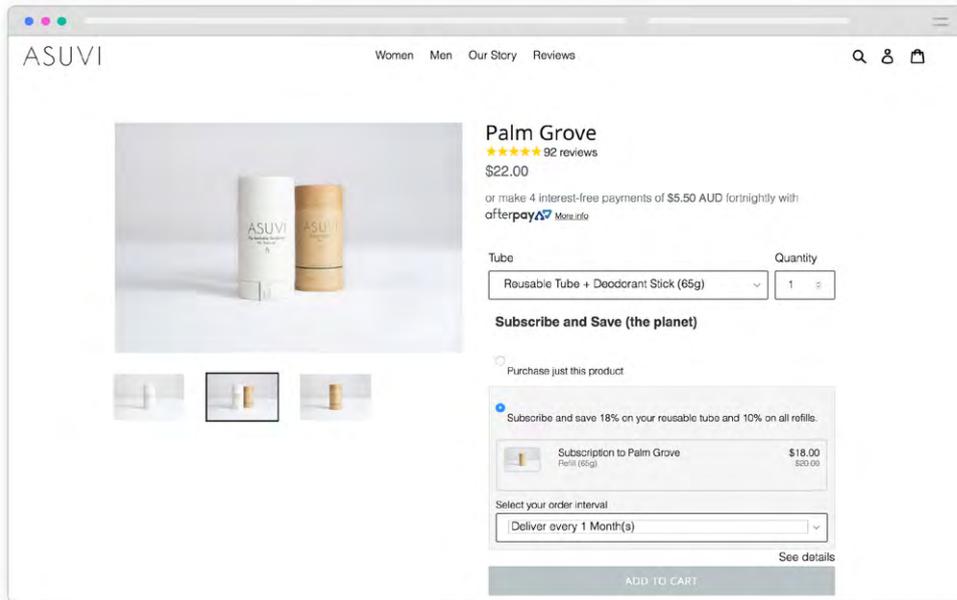
- This tactic can reduce churn if customers are taking advantage of introductory offers then jumping ship by only awarding savings to customers who stay subscribed.
- This could help regain people who have unsubscribed. Try remarketing this offer to them or adding it to your cancellation flow.



Fitcover offers a limited number of their top-selling products as subscriptions, and promotes a 'Subscribe & Save' offer — with a twist. They promise a 15% discount on all orders after your first one is fulfilled.

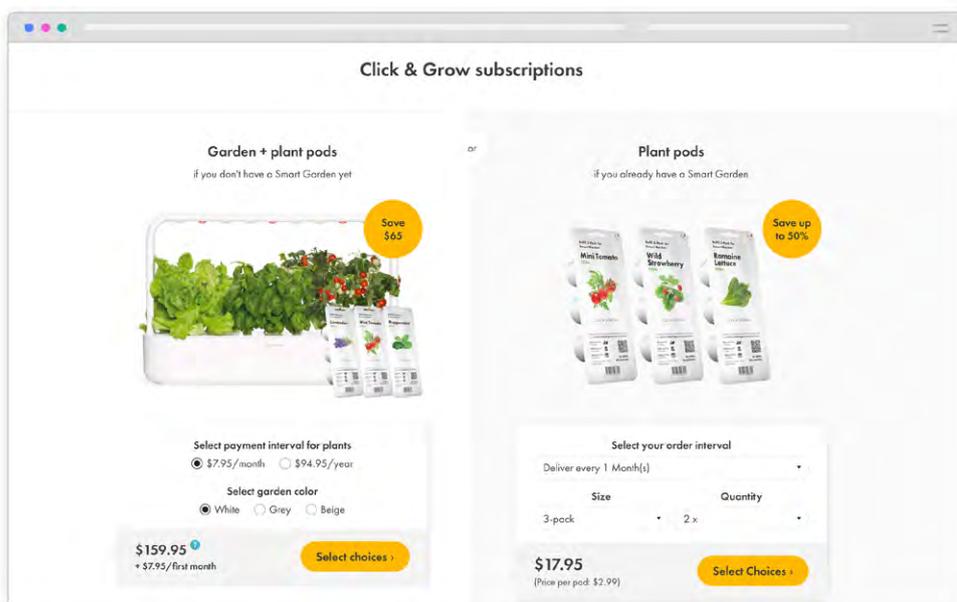


Real life inspiration



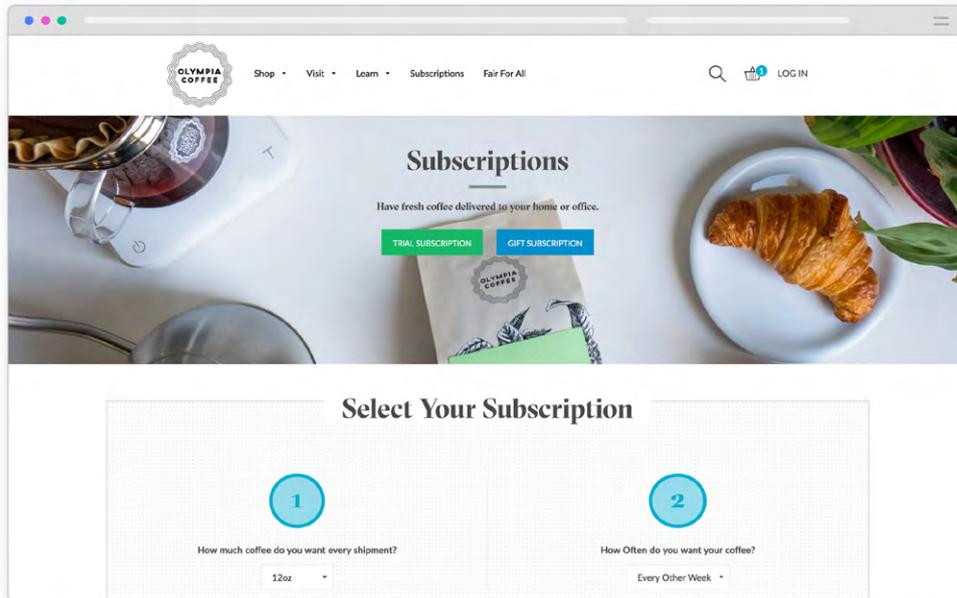
ASUVI

Convertible subscriptions work well for brands with a sustainable, refillable component — just ask [ASUVI](#). They sell deodorant in a reusable tube and biodegradable refills. Purchase their product on a recurring basis and you save on both the initial purchase and future refills, all while being kinder to the earth.



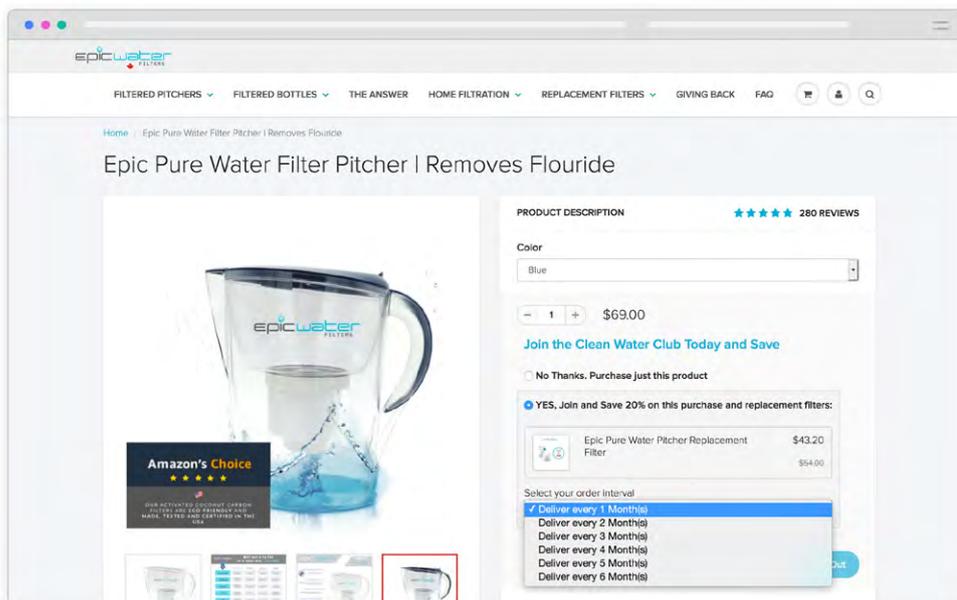
Click and Grow

[Click and Grow](#) offers two different subscription models. New customers can pick up a starter kit, including a year's supply of plants and a personal smart garden, with a value that's significantly higher than what they'd pay a la carte. But if they're already a customer (or if they cancel after the starter kit) Click and Grow offers plant pods on a recurring basis with a discount.



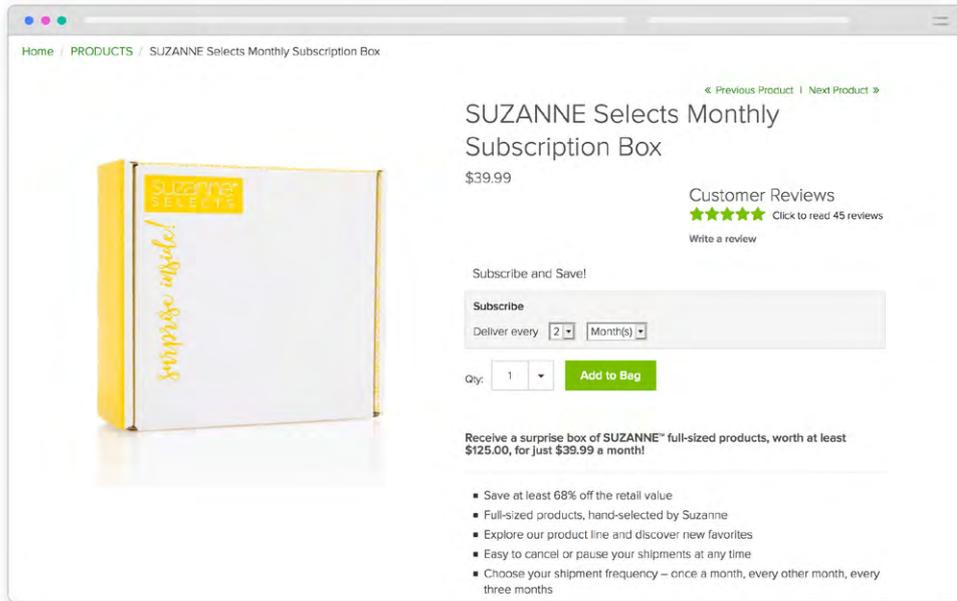
Olympia Coffee

[Olympia Coffee](#) serves up a free brew before automatically putting customers into the recurring subscription program. And if customers decide they're not fans, they can always cancel before it kicks into a full-blown subscription, similar to Netflix or Amazon Prime's introductory trial periods.



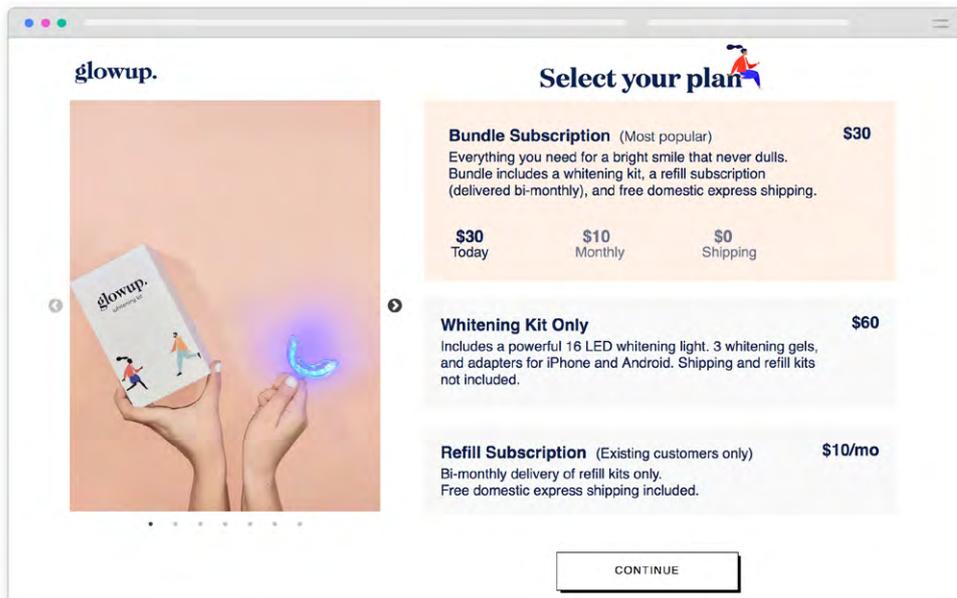
Epic Water Filters

[Epic Water Filters](#) sells their water filtration pitchers, bottles, and home filtration kits a la carte, but offer subscribers the chance to save 20% on both the initial purchase and the replacement products when they sign up for replenishment services at the time of purchase. This strategy can work particularly well for products that are absolutely reliant on replenishment.



Suzanne Somers

Convertible subscriptions aren't just for recurring products — try mixing one into your curated or monthly club model. [Suzanne Somers](#) offers a \$59.99 product with their first box, providing easy entry to subscribing when you consider the box costs \$20 less per month — and has a whopping value of at least \$135 per month.



glowup

Teeth whitening brand [glowup](#) offers a convertible deal on their products bound to make their customers smile. Buy their starter kit on its own and you're paying \$60 for a one-time treatment. Commit to a bi-monthly subscription and you instantly save 50% — the equivalent of three free refills.



Give your customers the flexibility to choose exactly what they want, as often as they want. It's simple: You offer a selection of products customers can pick from, and set how many items they can add to their box, allowing them to curate their own custom subscription.

Build-a-box subscriptions are most commonly associated with the meal kit industry, like HelloFresh or Blue Apron. But there are actually lots of versatile applications, such as:

- Monthly beauty sample box; choose 2 of 5 samples from a selection while the box provider randomly picks the others.
- Aromatherapy brand; select which scents are included in each box.
- Soda brand; craft your own six-pack from a selection of flavors.
- Supplements; pick a mix of supplements based on seasonal needs.
- Diapers; order specific diaper prints or sizes.
- Fashion; choose between a series of limited edition t-shirt prints or accessories.
- Skincare; build your own skincare kit based on skin type and priorities.

In other words, a build-a-box model is great for any business that offers multiple products that work together, whether it's varying flavors, colors, styles, scents, sizes, or health benefits — to name just a few. Give your customers the option to build an order they want and they'll be more likely to stick around in the long-term.



Benefits

- It provides a fun, interactive experience and the customization many shoppers want.
- It gives subscribers full control over perceived quality and quantity.
- It allows you to identify which products are the most popular (based on frequency of selection) and expand on those or promote them more heavily to new customers.
- Ensures your subscription remains fresh and interactive, particularly if you continue to add new products for selection.



Industries

Give your subscribers the keys to your subscription kingdom and you'll have fans for life. Here's a few ideal industries for build-a-box subscriptions:

- Meal kits
- Food and beverage
- Beauty
- Bath and personal care
- Supplements
- Clothing and accessories



Things to look out for

Build-a-box is great for your customers, but when you hand control to them, you make things a little more complicated on your end.

Inventory management will become more complex

When you're putting customers in the driver's seat, it can make inventory forecasting a challenge.

- Ensure you actually have enough inventory of every item you're offering or risk frustrating your customers if something's sold out.
- If you're planning on offering something new or unique to build-a-box customers, be sure to highlight limited quantities if rapidly acquiring more stock will be a challenge.
- Mitigate inventory challenges with a hybrid model where your customers can control part of their box, but also get a "mystery" product.

Buffer days and fixed delivery dates may be required

Not only will inventory be more challenging, fulfillment also becomes more complex for build-a-box models.

- Be sure to build in a hard cutoff date (with buffer days for fulfillment) for order changes.
- Notify your customers when their deadline is coming up.
- Alternatively, promote a two to three day fulfillment time from when your customer sets their next order or delivery date.



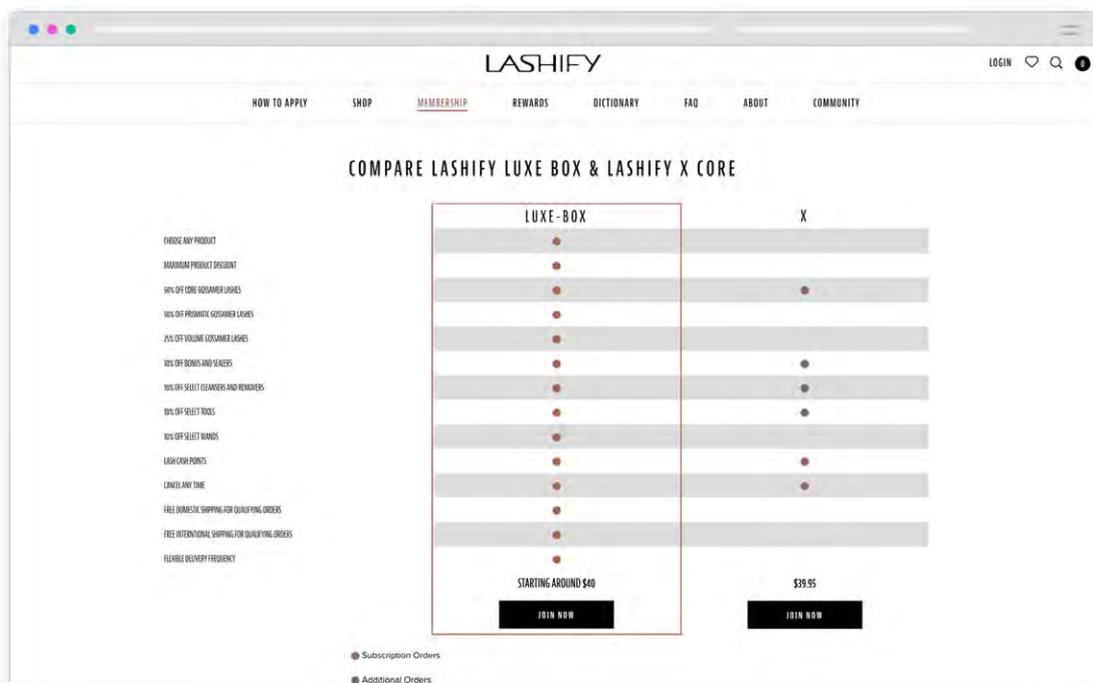
Optimization strategies

A build-a-box subscription can be your entire business model, or just part of it. Here's some crafty ways to curate a customizable experience for your subscribers.

Build-a-box: Your way or their way

Some people love the idea of picking exactly what goes in their subscription. Others get analysis paralysis and just want to be surprised. If possible, give your customers a few options:

- A curated box hand-picked by you.
- A build-a-box hand-picked by them.
- A hybrid where subscribers can customize one or two aspects of their subscription on a monthly basis and also get a curated portion.



Lashify offers two subscription 'memberships.' A basic curated subscription is available for a flat rate, but they heavily promote the benefits of their build-a-box by offering extra discounts, flexibility, and benefits. Customers can also add more to their box for a flexible pricing model.



Allow for add-ons

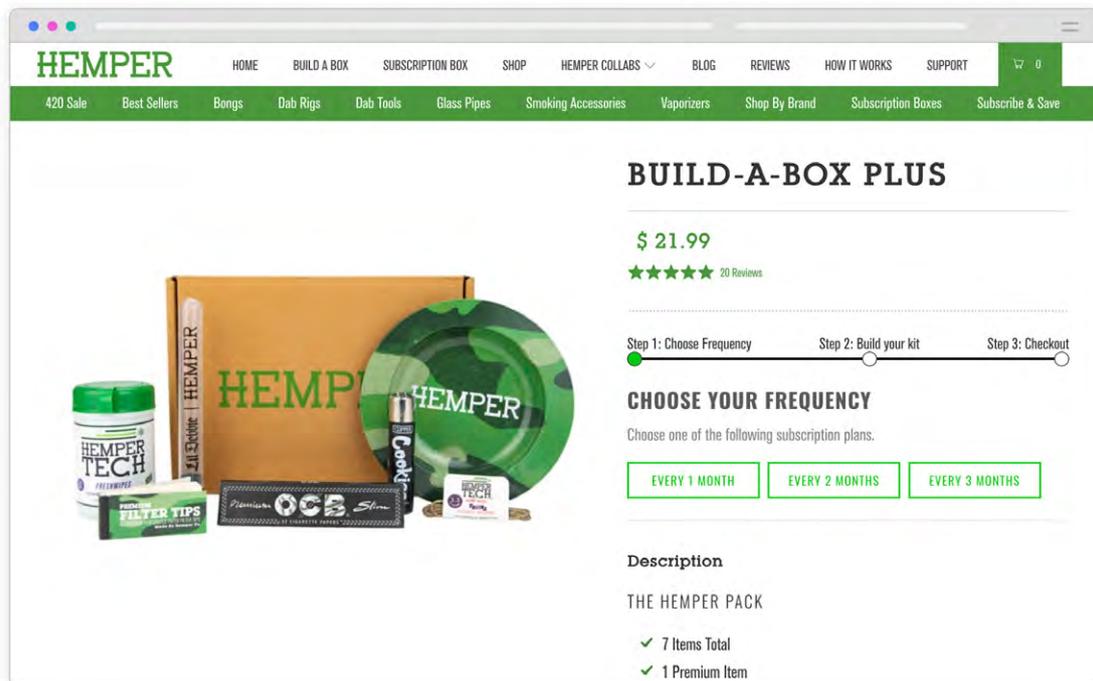
Go beyond a set quantity from a certain collection of products to increase average order value.

- Let customers add on extras at a discounted rate. For example, if a meal kit service normally includes five meals per box, offer extra meals for 20% off.
- If you only offer subscriptions on a core group of products, let customers top up their orders with additional products at a discount, like recurring standalone products.

Serve up a premium offering

Having a premium tier for your subscription can help you earn bonus revenue from your premium products, as well as increase the perceived value of your regular subscription.

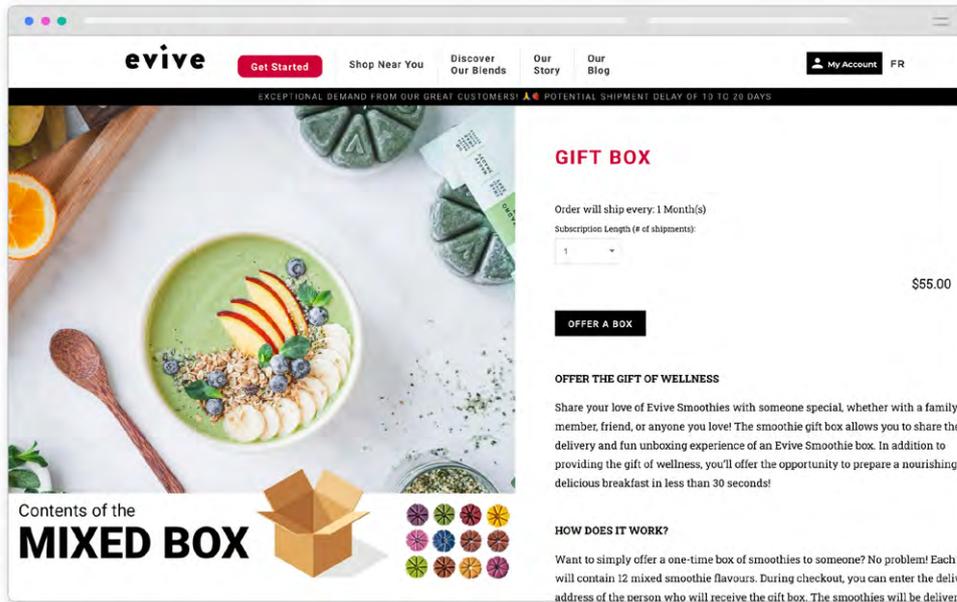
- Price your core box so you'll earn a profit, then introduce a premium product at a higher price point — like full-size products instead of samples, luxury items, or other benefits.



Hemper has multiple subscription options, including a classic curated box and two build-a-box subscriptions. Their 'Build-a-Box Core' serves up six 'essentials,' while their 'Build-a-Box Plus' (at twice the price) offers six 'essentials' from upper tier brands plus a premium item.

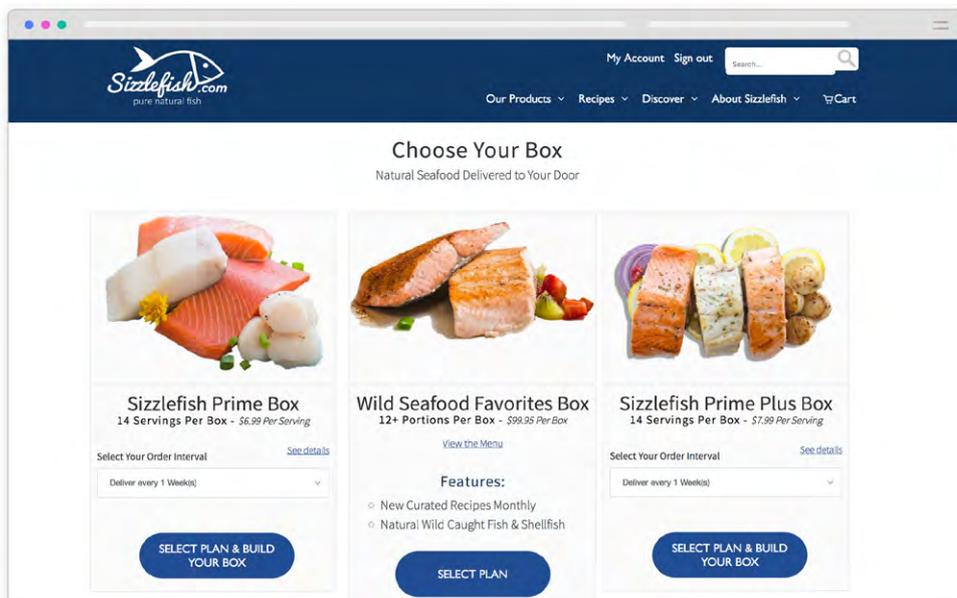


Real life inspiration



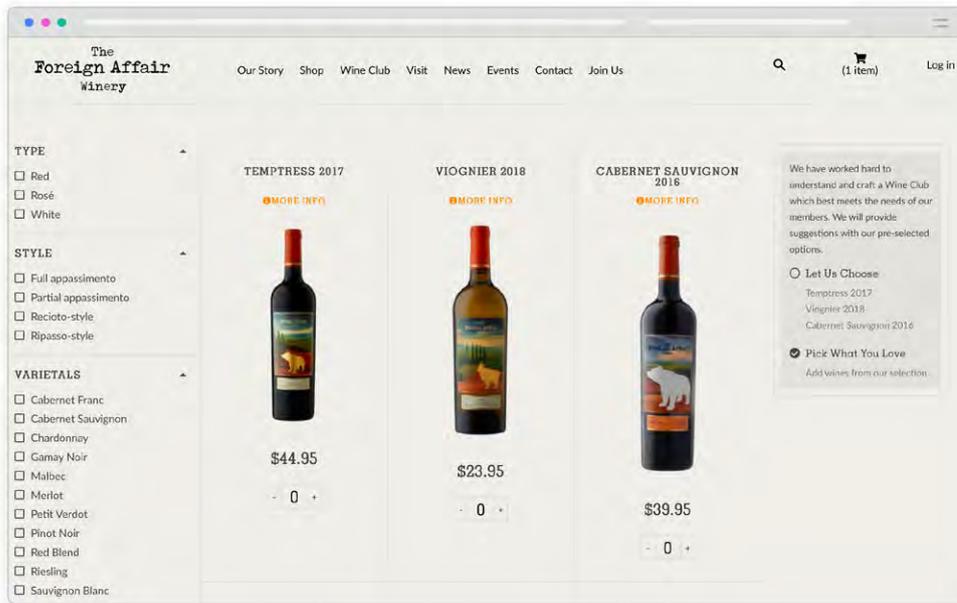
Evive

Smoothie pack brand [Evive](#) offers tasty frozen smoothie cubes. Just pop them in a container, add milk, juice, or a liquid of your choice, and shake for a blenderless beverage. They have a build-a-box page that showcases the ingredients of each smoothie mix, and also lets customers choose sizes and delivery intervals right on the build-a-box page.



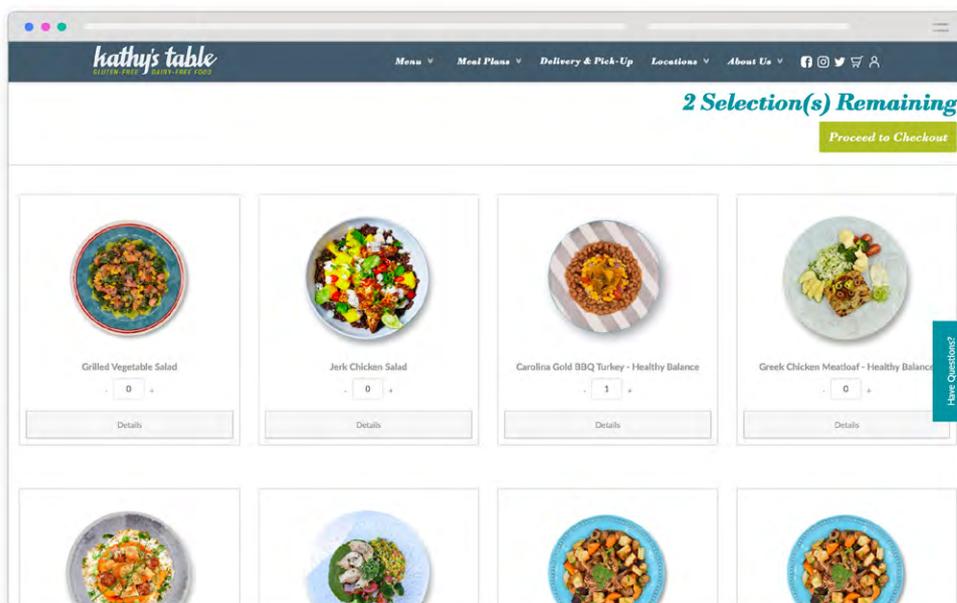
Sizzlefish

[Sizzlefish](#) delivers prime cuts and quality recipes to seafood lovers. They have three different subscription models: curated recipes and two pick-your-own options, one of which serves up premium seafood at a higher price point. They give customers multiple options for delivery intervals and an account page where subscribers can edit future orders.



Foreign Affair Winery

This Canadian company serves up Italian-style wines to one-time customers and subscribers alike. [Foreign Affair Winery](#) lets subscribers choose between a curated box or a build-a-box. The price automatically updates with manual selections but also shows the cost of the pre-curated option with the click of a button.



Kathy's Table

The meal box space is crowded, but brands like [Kathy's Table](#) stand out by offering meals tailored to a variety of health and fitness goals or dietary restrictions. Their onboarding flow gives a detailed breakdown of each plan, making every box feel just right for each customer. They also give subscribers the option to edit upcoming orders.



Curation subscriptions

Curation subscriptions are one of the most common, yet diverse, subscription models out there. It puts control in the hands of the merchant, who provide customers with a curated ‘mystery box’ of items. They bring products together so subscribers can discover something new.

There are two slight variations within this model:

1. **Curated boxes**
2. **Monthly clubs**

Merchants who sell **curated boxes** usually have the subscription at the center of their business, like Birchbox. They’re one of the pioneers of the curated box, offering a monthly collection of beauty samples. Since launching, Birchbox opened an online store where subscribers can purchase full-sized versions of samples they provide. Even then, their curated box is still their core product.

Monthly clubs are a little different in that they’re typically an add-on to a business model that sells products a la carte. For example, a sock retailer may have a ‘sock of the month’ club alongside their actual sock collection.

The primary difference is that monthly clubs usually feature a single brand or products exclusively curated from their inventory, and all of these products can generally be purchased a la carte from their store.

Meanwhile, curated boxes’ differentiating factor is the actual collection of items as an experience. They usually promote their ability to source a range of unique and valuable items from well-known and emerging brands that perfectly fits their customers’ tastes.



Curated boxes

[Monthly clubs](#)

Curated box subscriptions are almost always a business model unto themselves. When you're offering this experience, you have to carefully pick and source items that will appeal to an audience with specific interests, lifestyles, or values. While some of these items may be available elsewhere, it's the act of bringing them together for a unique experience that attracts subscribers.

As we mentioned, these businesses usually offer curated boxes as their core product, but might expand to an online store where subscribers can buy the items featured in the box as one-off purchases.



Benefits

- They can create viral buzz for your brand, especially if you have a good unboxing experience and a product selection that resonates with your audience.
- Gives you the potential to negotiate with suppliers on committed inventory quantities.
- You can potentially make money from suppliers for the promotional value your box provides.
- It streamlines revenue and inventory forecasting by offering a single product while giving you complete control over the contents and costs.



Industries

The good news? You can create a curated box for just about any interest or activity under the sun. These are just a few ideas for curated subscriptions:

- Sports (teams, activities, equipment)
- Values (eco-friendly, religious, fair trade)
- History (cultural, alma maters, regional)
- Hobbies (crafting, music, outdoors, travel)
- Food or beverage (liquor, snacks, recipes)
- Activities (date night, games, mysteries)
- Pop culture (television, movies, comics, video games)
- Fashion and accessories
- Beauty, bath, and hair
- Events (baby, weddings, bridesmaid)



Things to look out for

Curated boxes are one of the simplest subscriptions for consumers to understand, but they definitely offer some complexity for their operators. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

Your customers may still want some customization

Sure, the thrill of a curated box partly comes from the surprise factor, but some customers still want some say in their box. Here are a few ways to give them that touch of personalization.

- Quiz customers and funnel them into different boxes based on personas or preferences.
- Let your customers choose from a number of discovery boxes. For example, a tea box company could let customers choose between only caffeinated, only decaf, or a mix.
- Offer a mix of set recurring products and one or more surprise products for an extra charge.
- Let your customers provide one or two key points of preference, like t-shirt size or favorite color.

Customer acquisition will be key

Subscriptions are more popular than ever, which means there's plenty of competition. Standing out from the crowd can be a challenge.

- Reach your customers on a personal level while offering something a little different — like customization, partnering with an influencer, or providing exclusive content.
- If you support any special cause, use that in your marketing to show customers that when they buy from you they're also doing a little bit of good.
- Interact with online communities that are relevant to your niche and try promoting your subscription there.
- Reach out to brands whose products you're featuring and ask them to share your box on their social channels and website for direct exposure to your target audience.

Leftover inventory can be a challenge

The best curated subscription boxes create a sense of FOMO with limited quantities and exclusive products, but if you over-order you're left with unsold inventory.

- Offer up last season's boxes at a discount to subscribers who want to double up on products.
- Decouple products from boxes and sell them a la carte in a web store.
- Start small but make agreements with vendors to acquire more product in a hurry if you need it.
- Have a general 'welcome box' available if someone subscribes after you've sold out of your limited edition seasonal box.



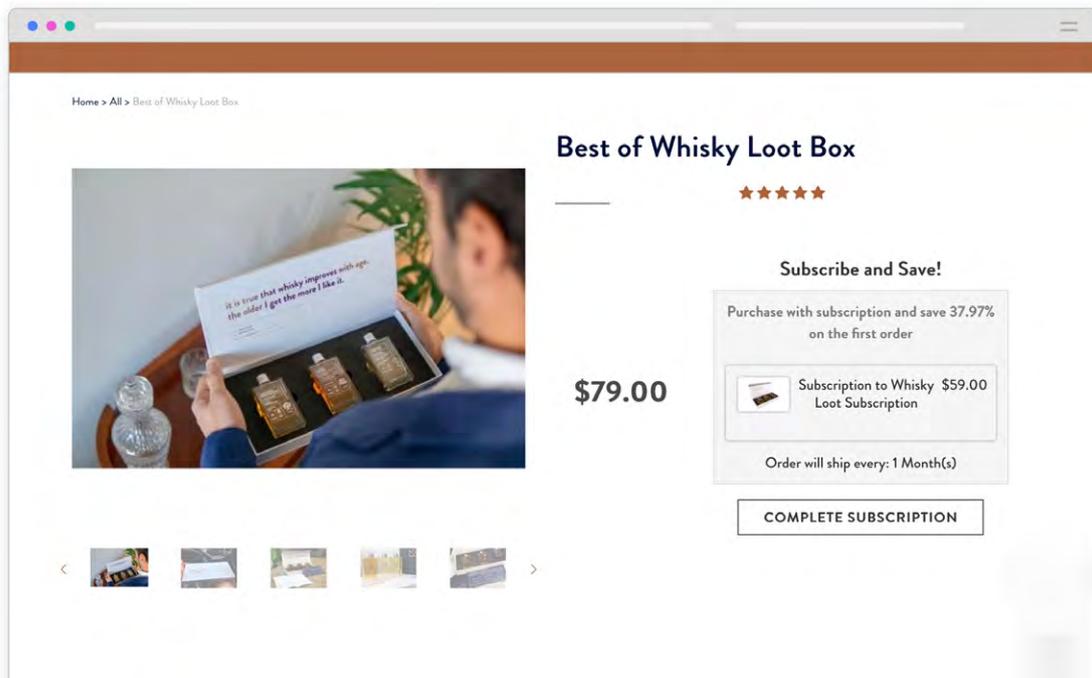
Optimization strategies

Here are a few top tips to set yourself apart and keep your customers eagerly awaiting their next delivery. Oh, and be sure to check out our Monthly Clubs section for more inspiration.

Make unboxing count

Getting people subscribed is one thing, but keeping them on board is another. That's why [unboxing](#) is so critical — it makes your box an experience to look forward to. It can also lead to social sharing, helping you to acquire new subscribers for less.

- When subscribers first open their box, the products should be laid out in a visually appealing way with outer and inner packaging that matches your brand.
- Make sure it's easy to open so customers don't damage the packaging and ruin the presentation.
- Include little bonuses and surprises to wow your customers, like information cards, personalized notes, or other items that are low on cost but big on impact.



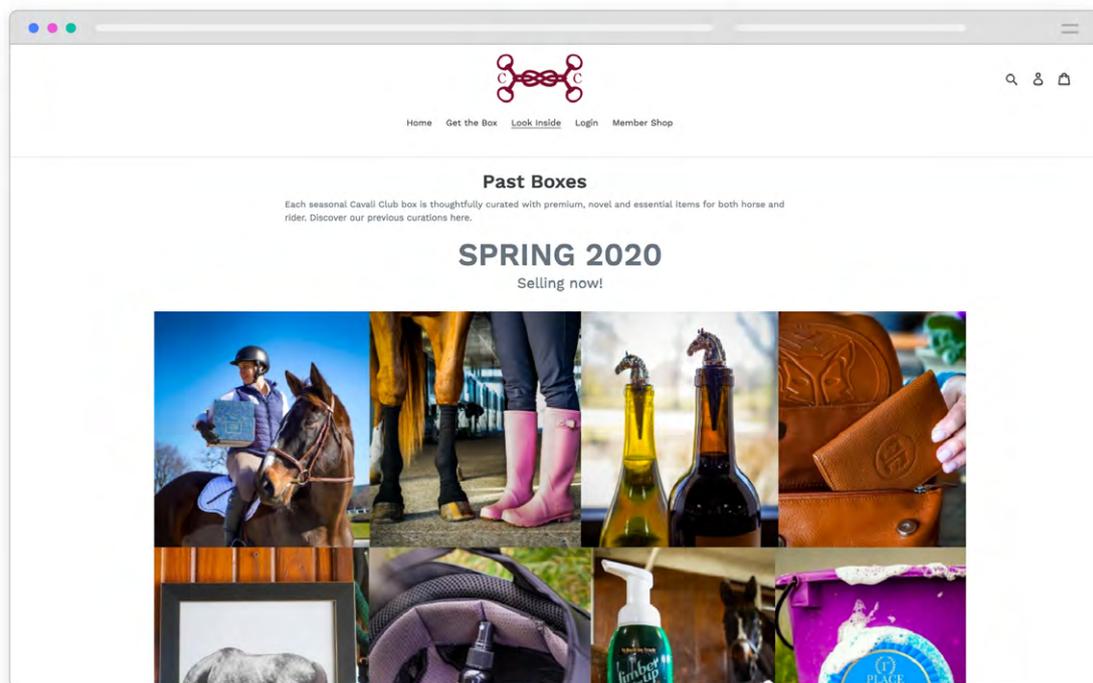
[Whisky Loot](#) provides a stunning unboxing experience with special packaging designed to hold (and protect) their custom glass bottles of whisky. They also include tasting notes to make each sip more meaningful and encourage you to provide feedback through social media.



Be a tease

Surprises are great but... everyone likes a preview of what's to come too. Teases of upcoming products make for great social content, building excitement for your box and potentially attracting new subscribers.

- Use products that are super exclusive, exciting, or aesthetically pleasing and run paid ads that highlight 'spoilers' for what's in your next box.
- Partner with brands to create products and promote them as exclusive to your box.
- Countdown to reveals of special products on social media to build anticipation.



[Cavali Club](#) curates an equestrian-themed box every month for horse lovers and owners. They highlight the contents of past boxes to wow prospective customers while also providing a preview of items in their next box.



Get exclusive

Differentiate from your competitors by offering up something consumers can only get in your curated box. This can be as simple or sophisticated as you want.

- Include a unique color or print of a fashion or beauty item.
- Give subscribers early access to a new flavor, color, or other variation of a popular product before it's available to regular customers.
- Offer custom-branded items to encourage customers to show their pride in being a subscriber.

Leverage someone else's brand power

If your box is just starting out, people may not have heard of you yet — but chances are they've heard of some of the brands you feature. Use them to get your target audience excited.

- For your first few boxes in particular, aim to include at least one product from a recognizable brand and spotlight it in your previews.
- Throw a shout out to your vendors on social media and they may share it, getting your box extra exposure.

Get themed

No matter what type of box you offer, some items will simply work better at certain times of year. Consider applying a theme to your box's items based on the season. Here are some examples:

- A beauty box could include a moisturizer with SPF in the summer.
- A snack box could include limited holiday flavors in November or December boxes.
- If it works with your brand, try focusing on a general theme for every box, like products from women-owned companies or items inspired by a social movement.

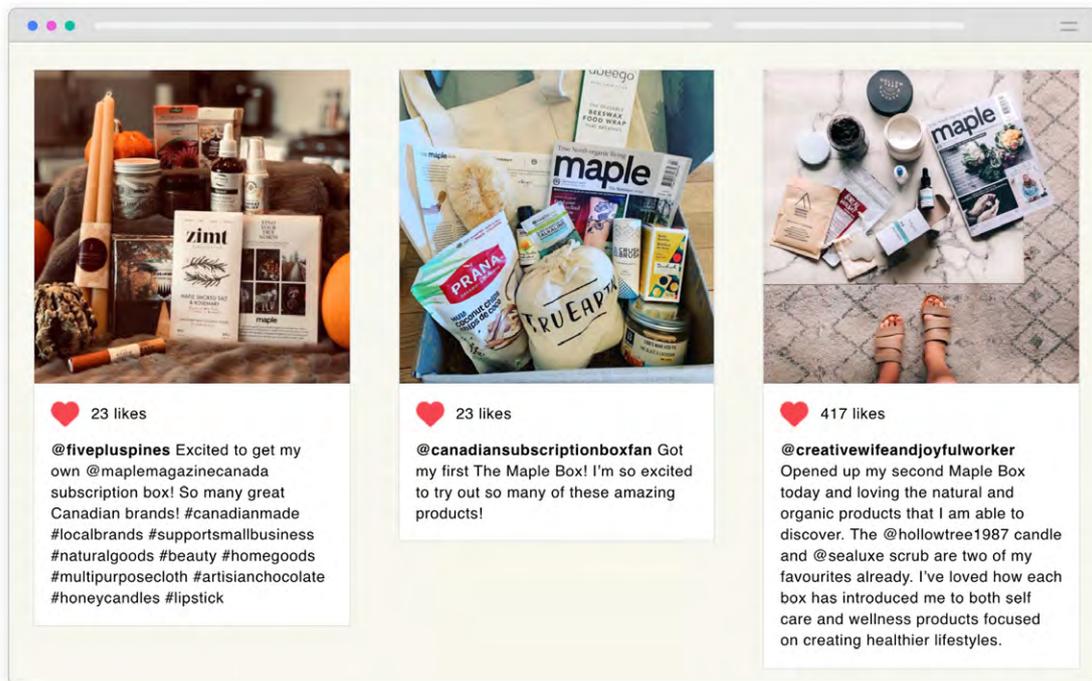




Use social testimonials to highlight satisfaction

The hardest part of selling people on a mystery box is convincing them it's worth it. Social proof like testimonials and reviews are critical.

- Generate social proof by creating a custom hashtag people can use to share their thoughts and photos.
- Run a contest to encourage subscribers to share your box and brand on social media.
- Encourage people to leave reviews on Google or on your site.
- Showcase customer-generated content on your site so visitors know how much subscribers love your product.



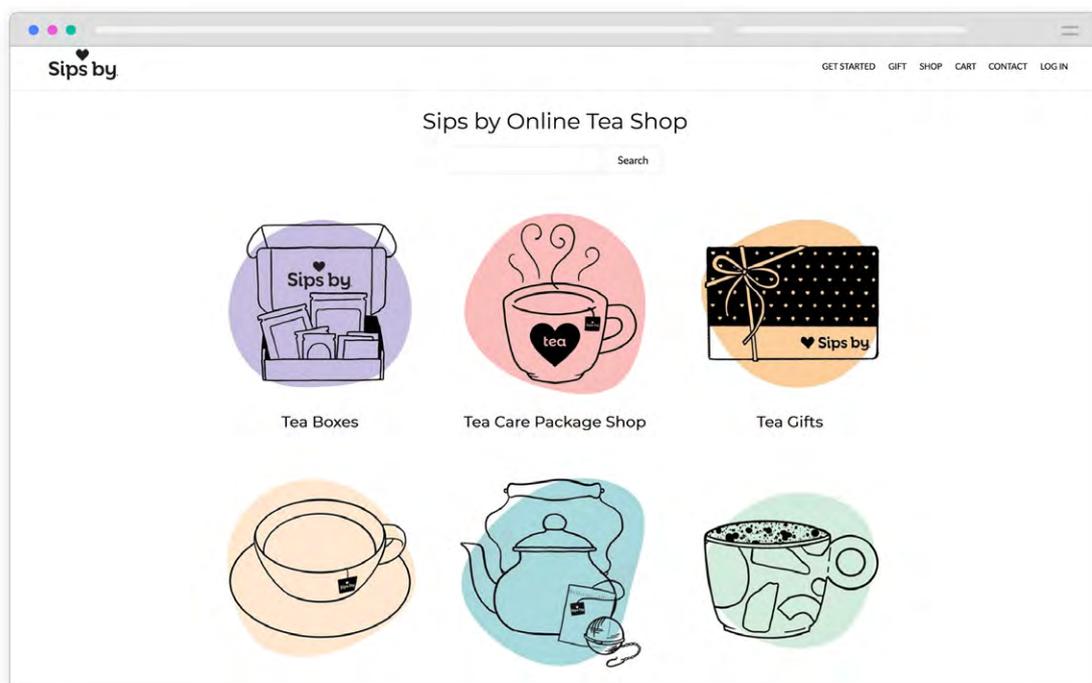
Maple magazine created their own lifestyle subscription: [The Maple Box](#). It's loaded with items from Canadian brands. Their site shares the love by highlighting real-life social testimonials and photos of subscribers enamored with their quarterly shipment.



Offer a la carte shopping

Give subscribers exclusive access to a webstore so they can repurchase their favorite finds.

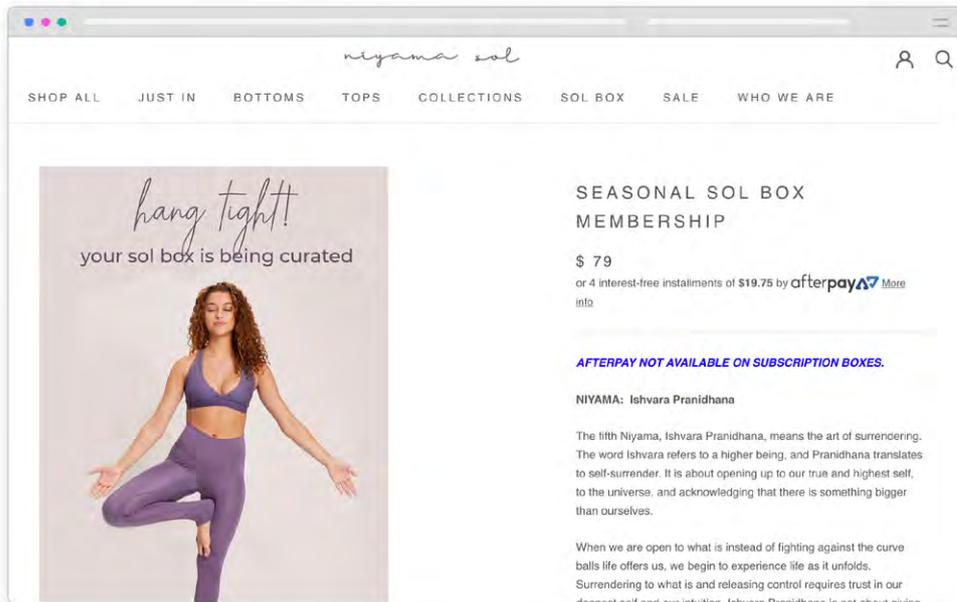
- You can motivate subscribers to shop with you directly by offering a discount or loyalty points (we recommend [Bold Loyalty Points](#)).
- Give subscribers exclusive access to products as an incentive to keep them on board, and as another element to attract new customers.
- Use the webstore to sell off excess inventory.



[Sips by](#) sends subscribers 15 cups worth of tea each month, but subscribers can also stock up on all their faves afterward in the online shop, alongside tea accessories for brew addicts.

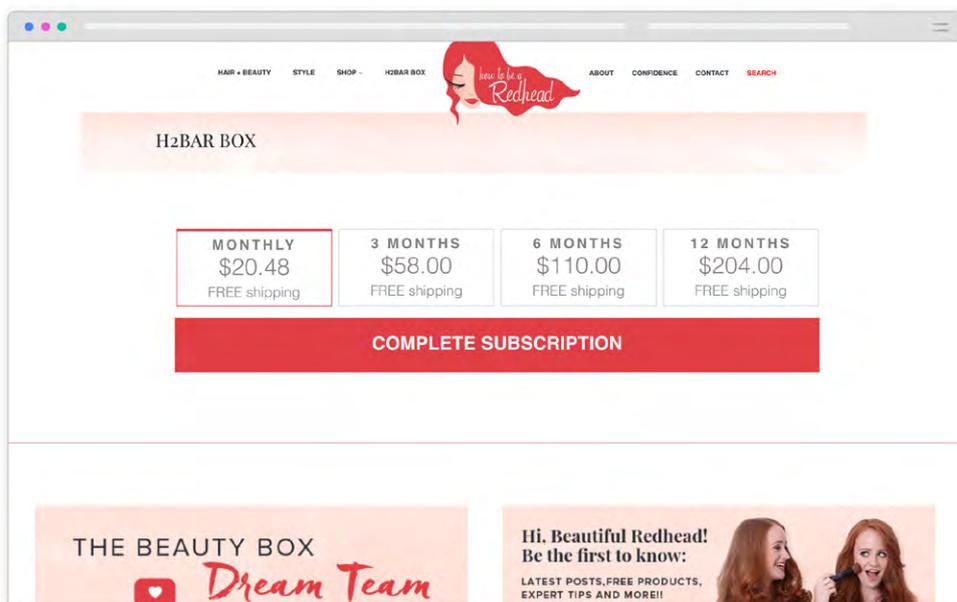


Real life inspiration



Niyama Sol

Sign up for [Niyama Sol](#)'s 'Sol Box' and you'll be shipped the brand's signature leggings, a workout top, and some other goodies to indulge in self-care. This is a great example of one brand creating a multi-brand experience with a curated box.



How to be a Redhead

Talk about niche! [How to be a Redhead](#) is an entire lifestyle brand and community brought to life with their monthly beauty box. Promising a box valued at up to \$200 for just \$20, How to Be a Redhead earns props for also offering a deluxe version of their box that promises \$250 of value.



Monthly clubs

Monthly clubs work very much like curation boxes, although they're usually offered by a specific brand as opposed to curating a multi-brand collection of items. Much like a curation club however, the goal is the same: encouraging discovery. There are two primary reasons why you might want to offer a monthly club (apart from the recurring revenue of course).

- The first is to expand your customers' awareness and use of your products, giving customers and loyal fans the chance to try new products regularly.
- The second is to move your inventory. If you ordered too much of a particular product, you can include it in your subscription box instead of offloading it in a sale (although be wary of putting an item that's on sale in your webstore into your boxes — your customers will catch on quickly).

While monthly clubs are often associated with a single brand, multi-brand retailers can easily jump on the bandwagon. For example, a snack food store specializing in international snacks from around the world could send out a monthly 'discovery' box.



Benefits

- You can test drive new products or lines for market feedback.
- They're very giftable.
- Potential to cost-share with suppliers based on fixed order volumes or promotional opportunities.
- Gives your core business another revenue stream.



Industries

If you offer multiple SKUs and have a product people can use up or stock up on, you're probably a good fit for a monthly club. Here's a few specific ideas:

- Multi-brand retailers (wine, food, beauty)
- Brands with a large number of SKUs with interchangeable variations in terms of flavor, color, or product type (ex: tea, nail polish, shirts, protein powders, candles, foods, socks)
- Brands with sample sizes of their products (ex: beauty, vitamins, bath care)



Things to look out for

We strongly recommend checking out our curated box section to pick up some tips for your monthly club, but here's a few other points to keep in mind.

Watch your frequency

You don't want people to leave because they're getting too much or too little of the product they're subscribed to. Here's how you can avoid that conundrum.

- Make sure you're not sending out new products before they've had a chance to use up their last delivery.
- Let customers choose between multiple intervals of differing lengths, and adjust default cycles based on customer feedback.
- Give subscribers the option to pause or skip the next delivery if they don't need new products yet.

Social sharing can hurt you

Don't get us wrong. Social sharing can be an amazing advertising tool to raise awareness and interest in your subscription, but you should proceed with caution.

- Be consistent about the value of products in your monthly box. If subscribers think the subscription isn't worth the price, they'll probably cancel.
- Make sure your box would look good posted on social media (see our tip about unboxing in our curated box section).



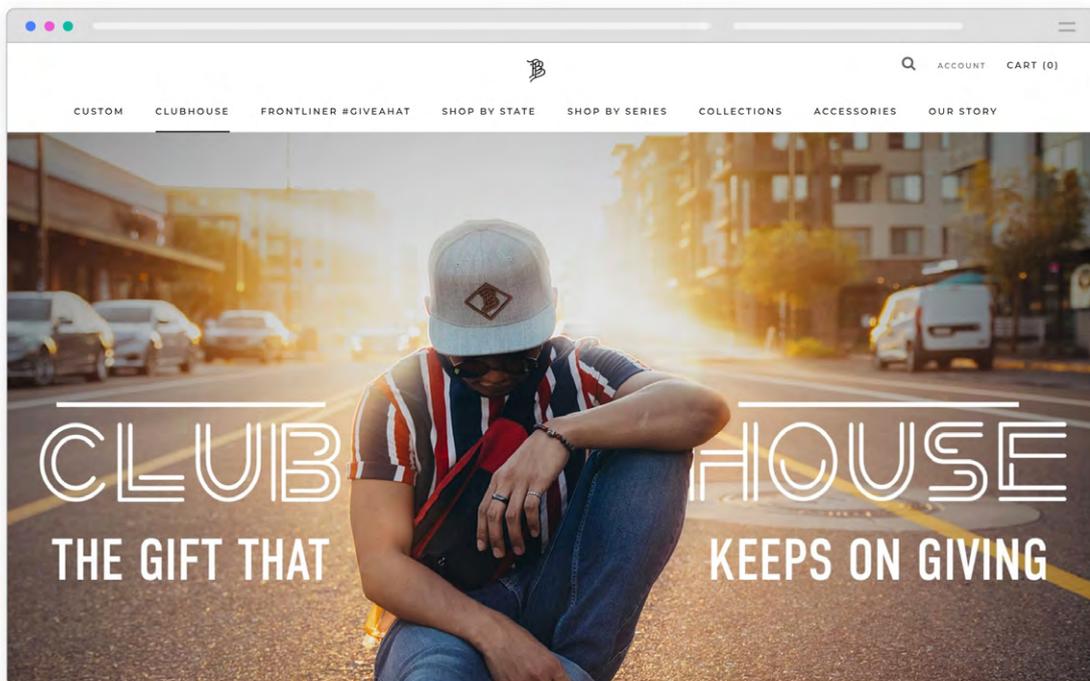
Optimization strategies

Ready to add a monthly club subscription to your business model? Here's some key tips to make it super special. Again, check out our section on curated boxes for even more ideas.

Create a VIP experience

Let's be real: Your subscribers truly are VIPs in terms of your bottom line. These are people that love your brand so much, they're willing to pledge a regular sum of money to you.

- Offer access to new products before anyone else, or better yet, exclusive access.
- Give them special discounts or offers.
- Invite them to special events or online sales.



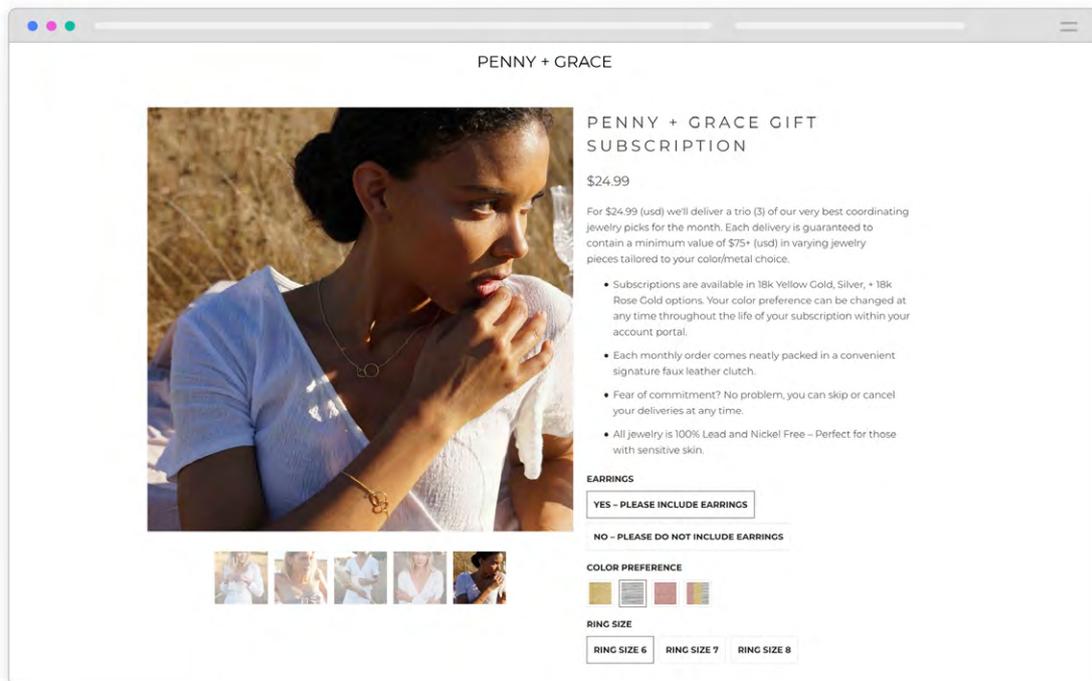
Join [Branded Bills](#)' 'Clubhouse' for \$20 a month and you'll receive a hat featuring an exclusive design. Plus members can purchase past months' designs and choose their preferred style of hat.



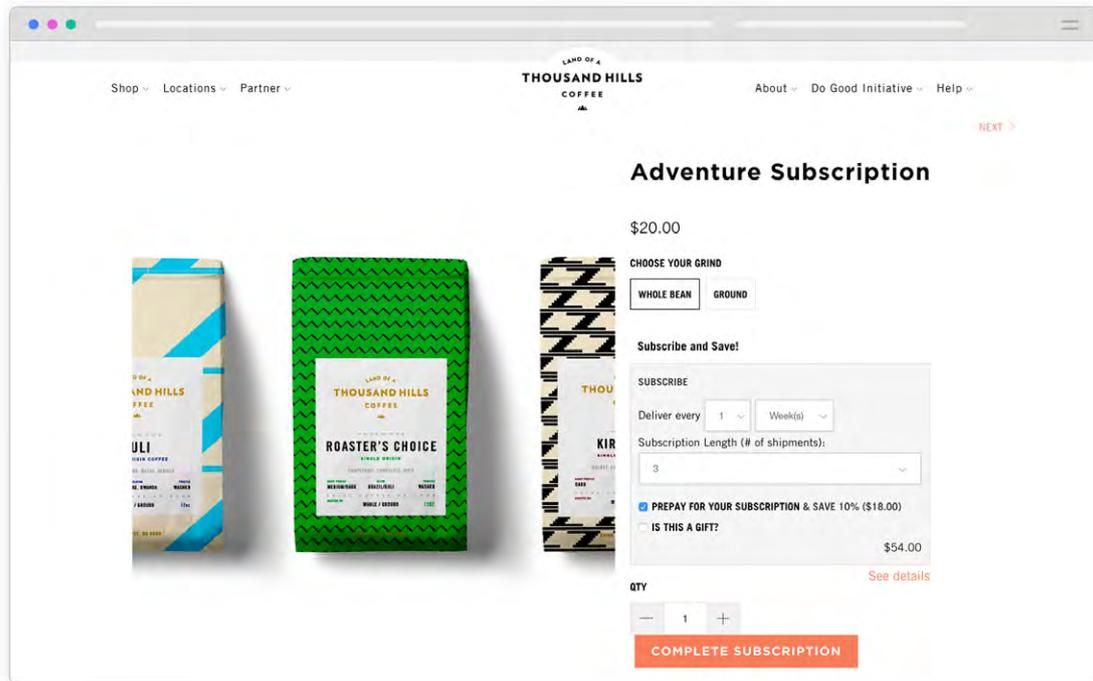
Offer some customization during onboarding

Just like with actual curated boxes, one-size-fits-all rarely works. Don't be afraid to add some personalization with a custom onboarding flow.

- Use your onboarding flow to tailor boxes. For example, a snack food company could give subscribers the choice to opt out of spicy snacks.
- Offer bonus options they can add to their cart at a discounted price, like an extra sample, stickers, or other little goodies.
- Use the answers — even from abandoned transactions — to make adjustments to your offering and better understand what customers want.



[Penny + Grace](#) has some simple questions to tailor your subscription, including whether or not you wear earrings and your preferred metal color.



[Land of a Thousand Hills](#)' onboarding flow offers a monthly club-style subscription, or a regular delivery of their standard blends. Naming their club program 'Adventure Subscription' helps spark curiosity.

Sell your samples

Get creative and repurpose inventory for your customers' other needs, using that as an entry to sell them on a subscription.

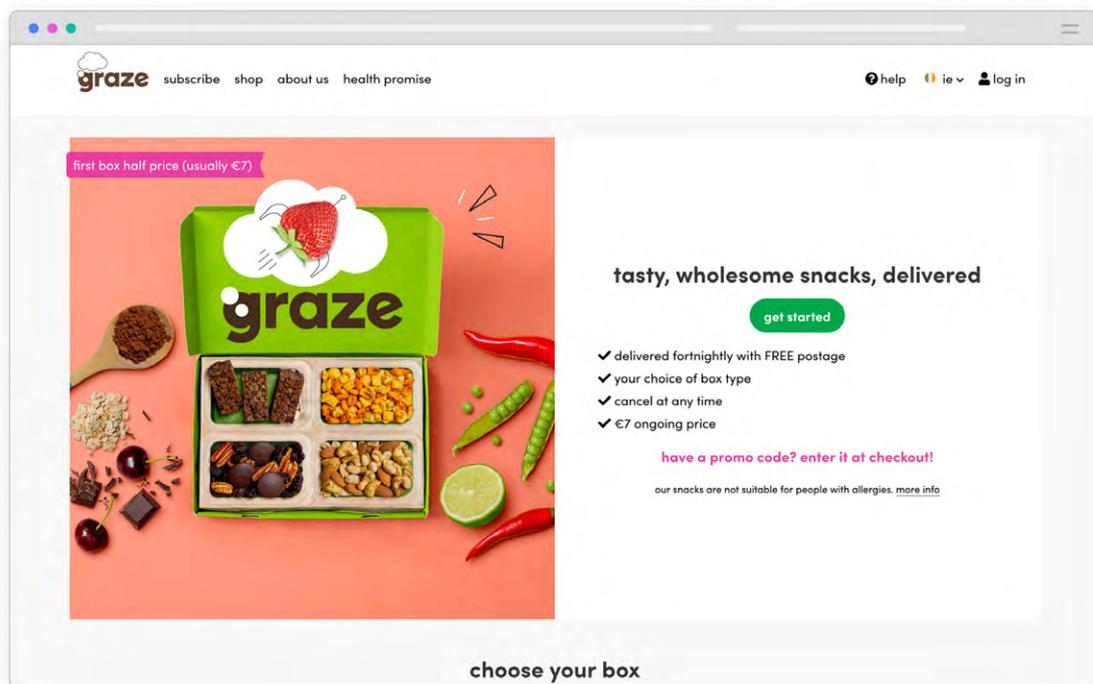
- Sell trial-sized versions of your full-sized products as 'travel-sized.'
- If someone buys a trial-sized product, be sure to send them a coupon to sign up for your monthly club, or a recurring order of the full-sized product.



Offer free shipping

Look, it's totally fine if you need to charge shipping for your day-to-day purchases, but your subscription boxes should absolutely offer free shipping, here's why:

- Shipping costs can scare away shoppers, even if they're low.
- You can try only offering free shipping for a minimum subscription value to help cover delivery costs.



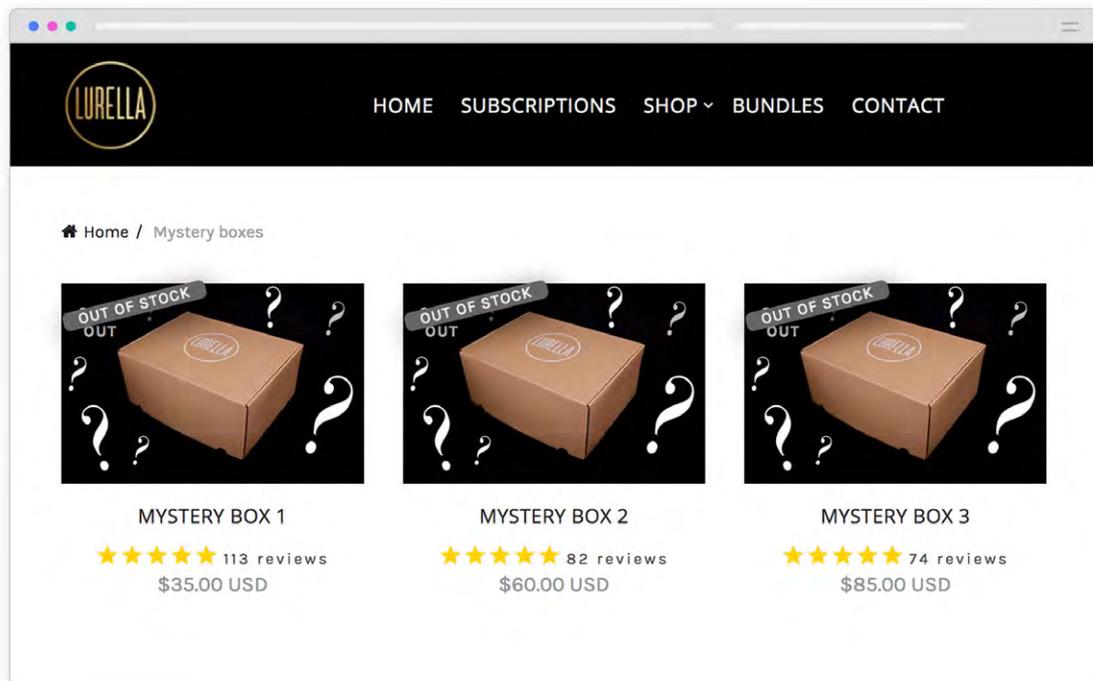
[Graze](#) makes it hard to say 'no' to their introductory offer. They clearly state their delivery frequency, FREE postage, box customization capabilities, the ability to cancel at any time, and a low recurring price.



Create a sense of urgency

If your boxes offer crazy good value and some level of exclusivity, it can be super easy to get subscribers on board.

- Highlight that only a limited number of boxes are available at a time.
- Promote the day that the limited products are going on sale.
- Include a countdown of inventory available to highlight limited stock.



[Lurella Cosmetics](#) offers a mystery box lottery. They have three tiers available in limited quantities each month. Most boxes contain 'regular' items and value (like \$35 for \$80 of products), but about a dozen \$35 boxes contain products valued at \$200!

Leverage your suppliers

If you're working with your existing network of suppliers to create a box, try presenting the box as a promotional opportunity. Here are some strategies you can discuss with suppliers:

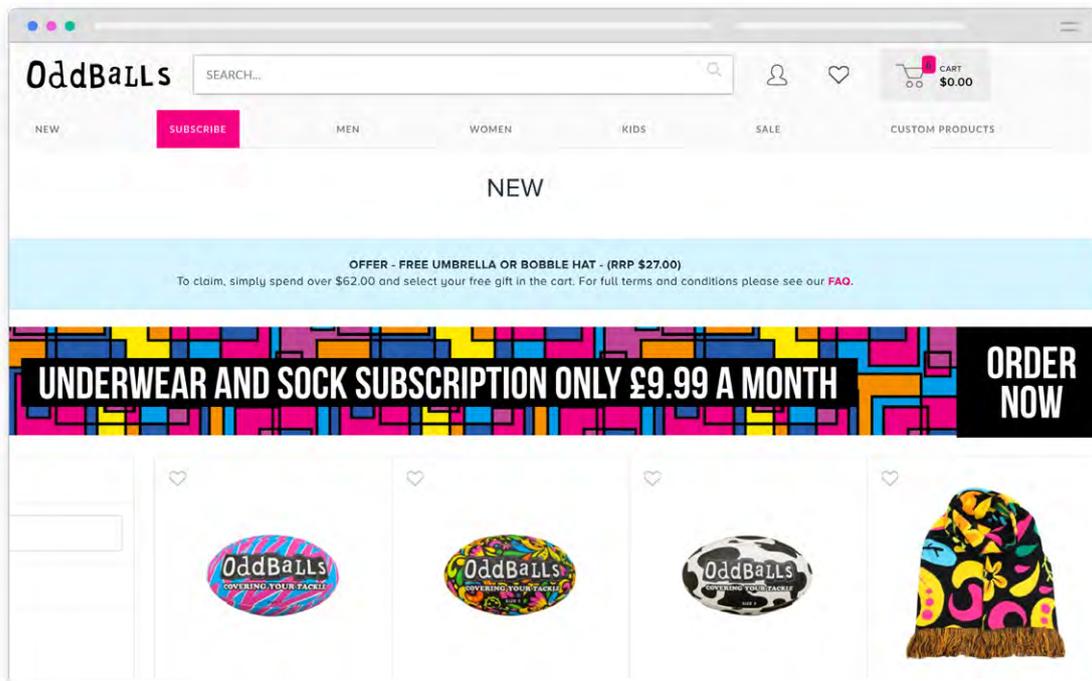
- A supplier could try out a new flavor of hot sauce in an online food market's 'Condiment of the Month' club, and send out a follow-up survey to gain feedback before launch.
- Team up with suppliers to offer coupons or bonus items to subscribers that enhance your box and earn supplier's exposure.
- Ask suppliers to share your box on their own networks to get direct access to people interested in products similar to your own.



Spotlight your subscription

If your monthly box is a side product to your core business, it can get lost in the shuffle of your regular inventory.

- Don't be afraid to call attention to your monthly box by giving it a dedicated place of honor in your top navigation, home page, or main menu.
- Let existing customers know about the monthly club by putting bounceback coupons in their order (maybe including an exclusive discount), or by emailing your list.
- Talk about your subscription on social media, and maybe even with paid ads.



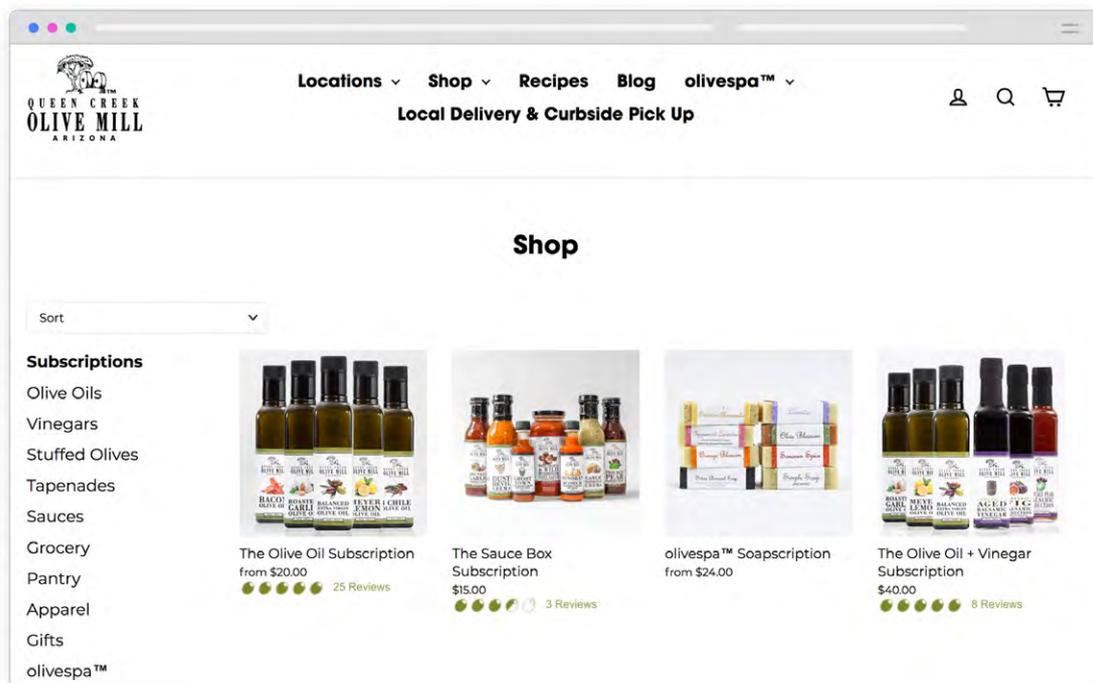
It's hard to miss [Oddballs'](#) subscription offering, given it's highlighted in hot pink. Click on the link and you're instantly prompted to start a subscription, gift one, or redeem a complimentary gift.



Offer more than one type of monthly club

Letting people customize their preferences for your subscription box is great, but it might be better to offer different types of subscriptions altogether. Here are some examples:

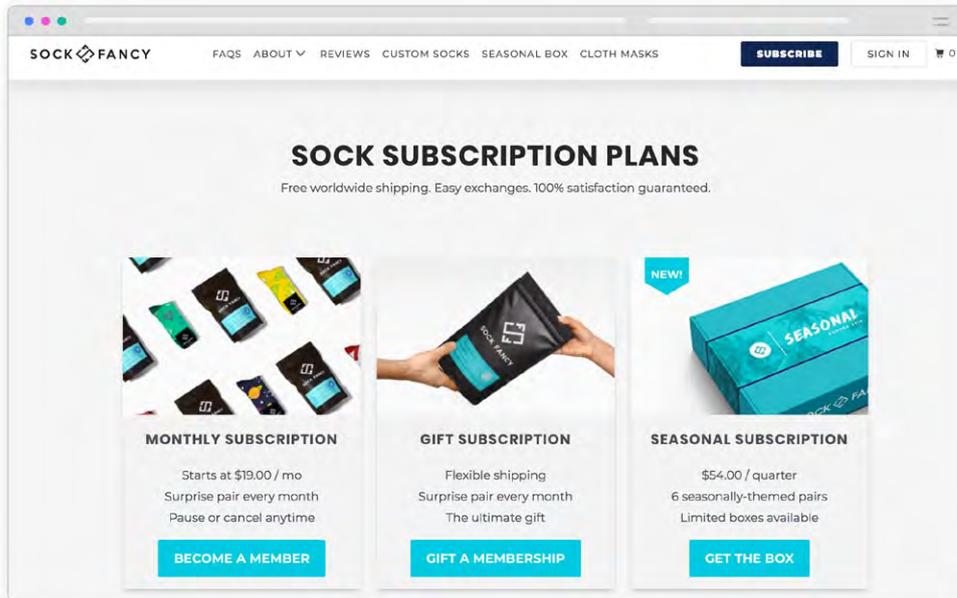
- A beauty brand could create a beauty box specifically for fans of nail polish, and another one for people looking for multiple types of products.
- Create both a regular and premium offering for your subscription.
- Offer some sort of other access with your subscription, like discounts on regular products during a certain period of time, first dibs on new releases, or exclusive content.



[Queen Creek Olive Mill](#) could just send you one of their flavored olive oils per month, but instead, they actually offer four unique subscription offerings. They also offer a bit of customization within some plans, letting you choose between one or two bottles of olive oil per month.

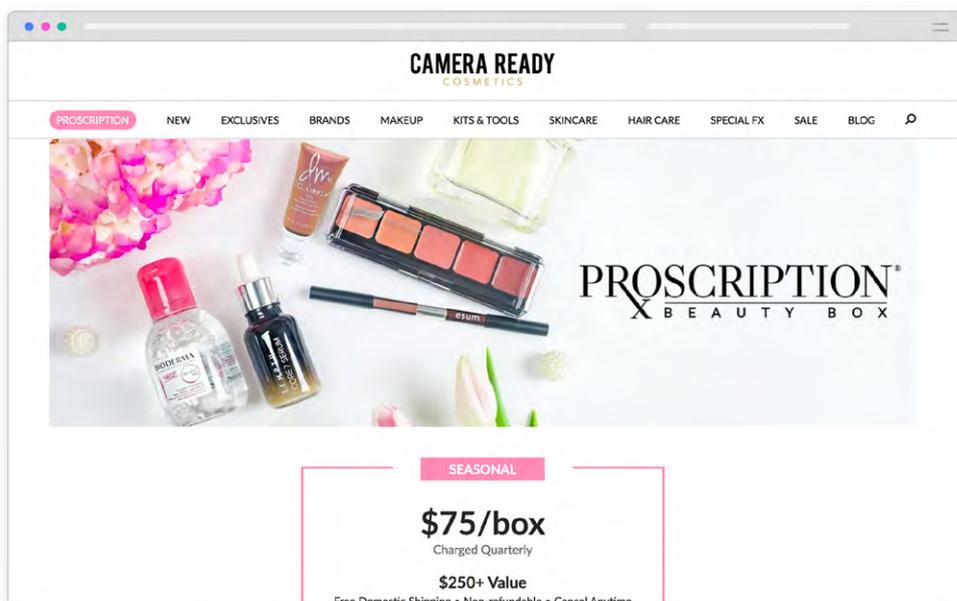


Real life inspiration



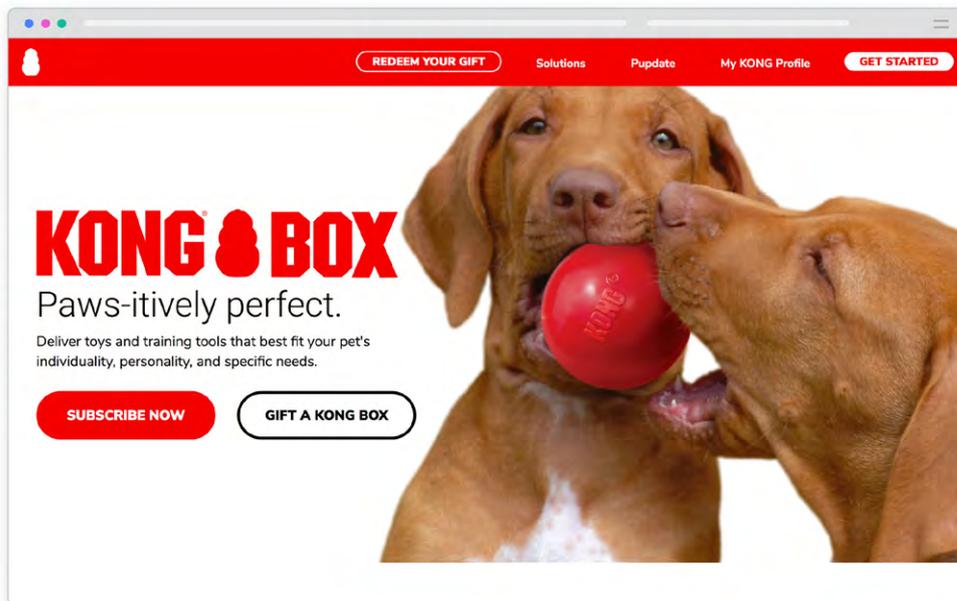
Sock Fancy

Offering multiple frequencies and a gifting option right away makes it easy for subscribers to find the socks they're looking for — from a random item (ideal for inventory control) to a seasonally themed 6-pack (ideal for creating social media buzz). [Sock Fancy](#) offers a fantastic onboarding flow that lets subscribers pick how bold they want their prints to be, and what height they prefer.



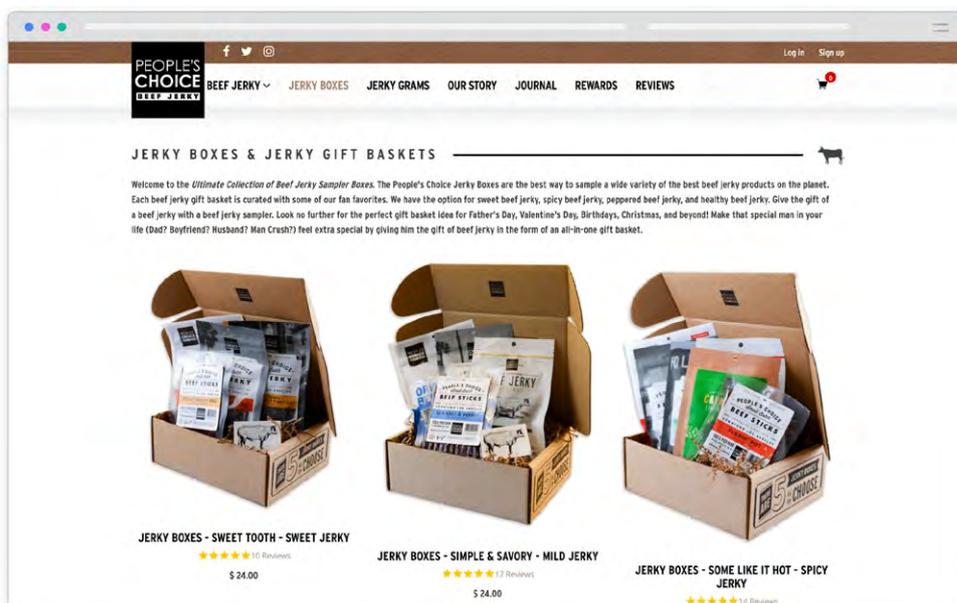
Camera Ready Cosmetics

You don't need to be a single brand retailer to nail the monthly club: [Camera Ready Cosmetics](#) gets a lot right with their Proscription subscription. They highlight it in their top nav, deliver exceptional value in every box, and preview the brands and some of the items in their quarterly box. It's no wonder 97% of customers would recommend it to a friend.



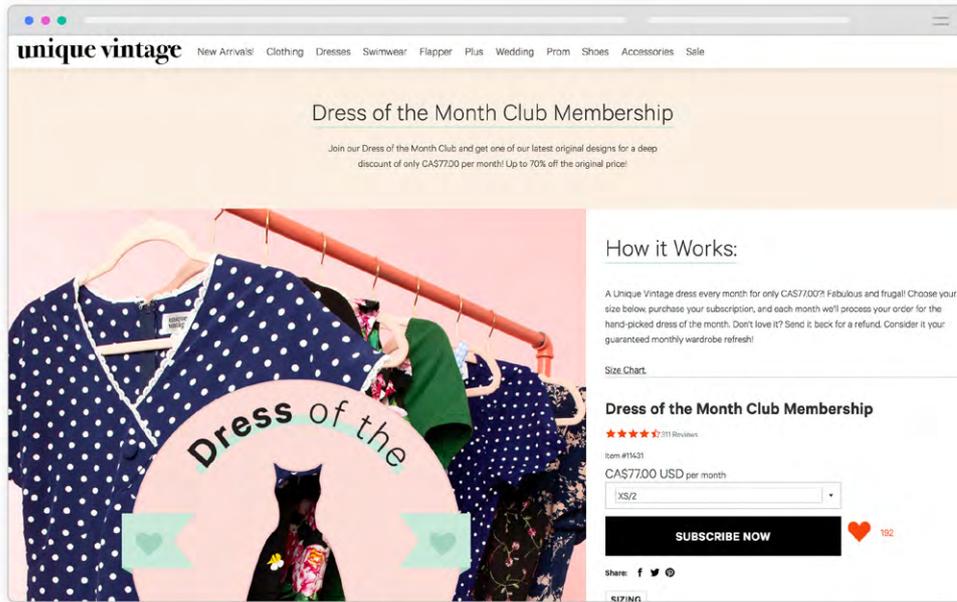
KONG Box

Now dog lovers can skip trips to the pet store and get a Kong toy, treats, recipes, and other non-branded toys to unpack with their pooch every month. Plus they get to create a profile based on their dog's breed, age, and size for a tailored experience. [KONG Box](#) even offers the first box free with a prepaid six-month or twelve-month subscription.



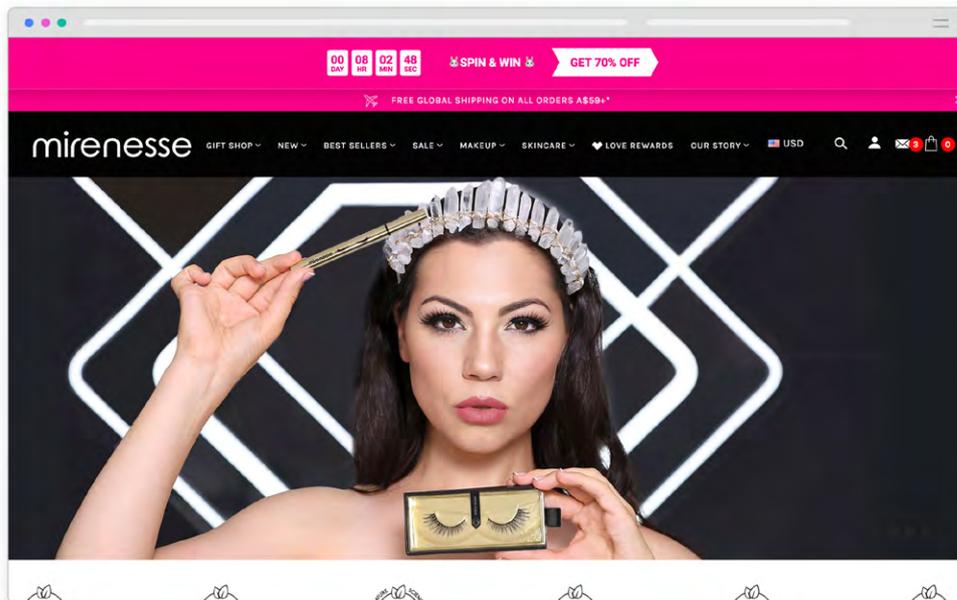
People's Choice Beef Jerky

Jerky lovers know that not all jerkies are created equal. That's why [People's Choice Beef Jerky](#) offers not one, but five different subscription boxes to choose from. Whether you're into sweet, savory, spicy, or healthy jerky, they've got you covered — including a sampler box for those who are a little less decisive.



Unique Vintage

[Unique Vintage](#) encourages customers to commit to a 'monthly wardrobe refresh' by shipping them a dress each month. Unlike many other subscriptions, they offer a refund if subscribers don't love what they're sent. It's a win/win — Unique Vintage offloads slower-moving stock, while customers try styles they might not have ordered themselves, risk-free and at a steep discount.



Mirenesse

Who doesn't want to save up to 70%? [Mirenesse](#) uses their subscription kits to test out new products (or to potentially sell off items they have excess inventory of), all at an extreme discount. As a beauty brand, they're uniquely positioned to serve up sample sizes to maximize their ROI while producing large quantities of samples for a range of purposes.



Access

The last category has two models that require a bit more coordination — but can be a great way for merchants with unique business models to get in on the subscriptions game. **Exclusive** or **brick and mortar** subscription models go beyond simple product fulfillment.

With an **exclusive** subscription model, subscribers are paying to belong to your brand and the community you create. This might mean access to exclusive discounts, product collections, events, virtual resources, or other perks you can only get if you're a subscriber. Kate Hudson's fitness leggings brand [Fabletics](#) is a great example. Anyone can shop [Fabletics](#), but signing up for a membership unlocks steep savings. As a member you have the option to 'skip' payments each month, otherwise a flat rate is credited to your account to spend on whatever discounted items you want. VIP Members also get early access to new collections, plus cash rewards and other bonuses.

A **brick and mortar** subscription is very similar to an access subscription model, with one small difference: There is an offline component to your business. For example, a family center that teaches parenting classes could charge an annual subscription fee. Subscribers could then receive discounts on any classes they book, access online resources for parents, receive a complimentary family photoshoot once per year, and earn a 10% discount on purchases made at the company's online and brick and mortar stores.

As you'll see in this section, there are even more unique ways to set up an exclusive or brick and mortar model to suit your specific business needs.



Exclusive

Brick & Mortar

The most famous version of an exclusive subscription model is Costco: For an annual fee, customers can shop at Costco to earn discounted prices on bulk items. Amazon Prime is another example; what started out as a free shipping program has since expanded to free online storage, music and television streaming services, and special Prime-only discounts and events.

In both cases, the products themselves aren't the sales pitch — access to them is. Whatever your exclusive subscription unlocks can't be purchased outside of signing up.

Here's a few other exclusive model ideas:

- **Rentals or leasing:** Let customers rent products from your brand by paying a monthly or annual fee.
- **Payment plans:** Provide customers access to a big ticket item by letting them pay for your offering on a recurring basis instead of all at once.
- **Virtual products:** Give your subscribers access to your software or an online resource library for as long as they're signed up.
- **Donations:** Let subscribers set and forget their support for your organization. Reward them for locking into a longer upfront period by sending a complimentary gift.
- **Bonus perks:** An exclusive model can be coupled with virtually any of the other subscription models in this book. For example, subscribers to your monthly box could receive an annual credit of \$50 to spend in your online store.



Benefits

- It allows you to layer additional benefits into an existing subscription model.
- It creates added (and somewhat incalculable) perceived value by not just focusing on commodity acquisition of a product.
- Can help build a community of advocates, not just customers.



Industries

An exclusive model can be applied to pretty much any type of subscription business, but it works particularly well with lifestyle-focused brands where people take pride in being a customer, such as:

- Apparel
- Food & beverage
- Sports equipment and fitness
- Furniture
- Digital products



Things to look out for

In general, exclusive models take a bit more work to set up and coordinate, but it's probably one of the best opportunities to wow your customers. Here's a few other things to look out for.

Membership sharing

Think of this as the 'Netflix account sharing' problem. Netflix isn't specifically tied to an IP address, meaning one account could be shared by multiple people in multiple homes.

- De-risk the chance of one person signing up for your membership, whether by capping or limiting use.
- Provide an extra, unshareable feature so sweet, someone will absolutely want their own account anyway.

Drop in perceived value

One of the greatest strengths of an exclusive model can also be the biggest challenge: assigning value to your non-commodity offerings. For example, if you're giving access to an online collection of workout videos, how often are you adding to it and how robust is it to begin with?

- Show value by regularly updating your resources with new content.
- Assign non-commodity offerings a higher price to non-subscribers to help show subscribers the value.

Take & go

Let's say you offer a series of online courses, similar to MasterClass. What's to stop someone from downloading everything in a single month and cancelling their subscription? You've got a few options here.

- You could require a minimum one-year subscription.
- You could offer a flat lifetime membership.
- If you're a content machine, perhaps you promise to add new content (and perks) on a consistent basis that keeps subscribers coming back month after month.



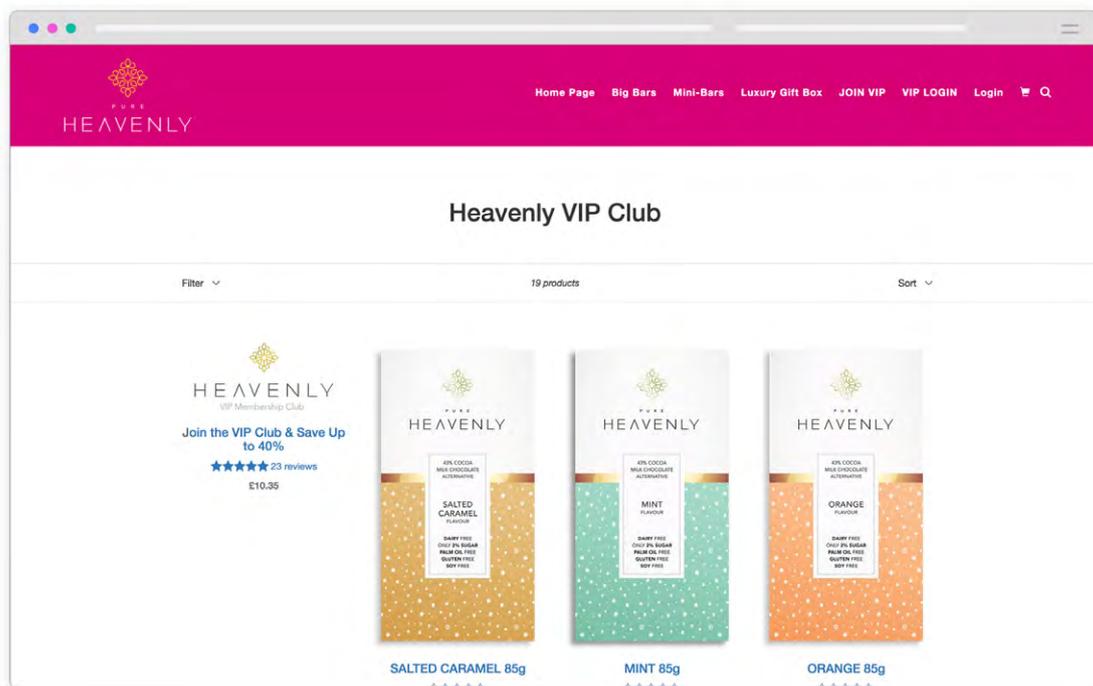
Optimization strategies

A fantastic exclusive model can help make customers loyal to your brand well beyond a standard subscription model. Here's a few ways to make your offering stand apart even more.

Set calendar-based expectations

Give current and potential subscribers a heads up on exactly what you're offering and when. Create a calendar and stick to it, and provide a service or product your customers can look forward to, such as:

- New products and services.
- Subscriber-only events or promotions.
- Access to exclusive content, discount days, prize draws, or other perks.



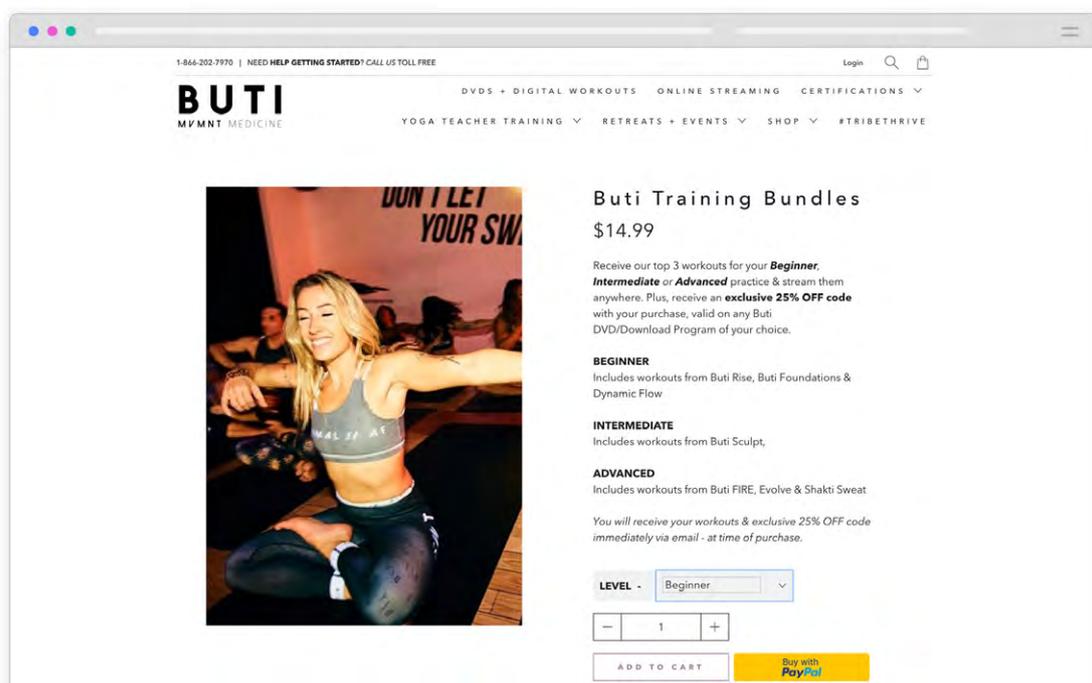
Pure Heavenly positions their subscription as an exclusive model with discounts of up to 40%, free shipping, and a daily prize draw. They ensure shoppers know about the perks right away.



Offer up customization and personalization

Exclusive models are a great fit for businesses where customization is key. This will look a little different for every business, but here are a few ideas.

- Give subscribers the ability to swap out products.
- Serve up tailored plans based on subscribers' goals. Ideal for coaching (meal plans, fitness regimens) or other instructional services.
- Offer regular consultations or coaching.



Buti offers training and certification services like their LEVEL UP training program which unlocks a long list of benefits, including a private social community, weekly workout schedules and meal prep templates, online coaching, and members-only discounts.

Partner with suppliers to offer up VIP value

Whenever you have a chance to serve up more value to your subscribers, seize it! Here are a few examples of how to team up with suppliers to do just that.

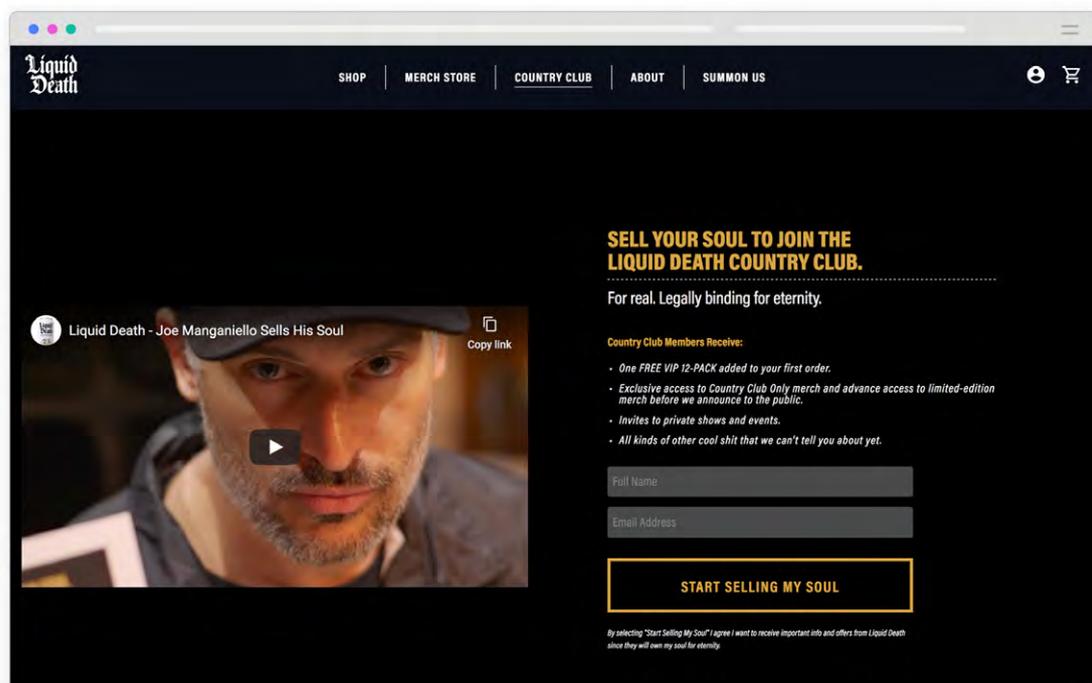
- If you're exhibiting at a trade show or music festival, see if you can score a discount for your subscribers to join you there.
- Piggyback on another event by offering subscribers a special gift or private party.
- Team up with suppliers to create a product or event exclusive to members.



Build a community among members

The best access models don't just form a relationship with their customers, they also create a relationship among their members. Take the time to understand your subscribers and give them opportunities to link up. Here are some ideas:

- Host in-person events or organize group meet-ups.
- Offer exclusive online experiences.
- Creating private groups on social media or forums.



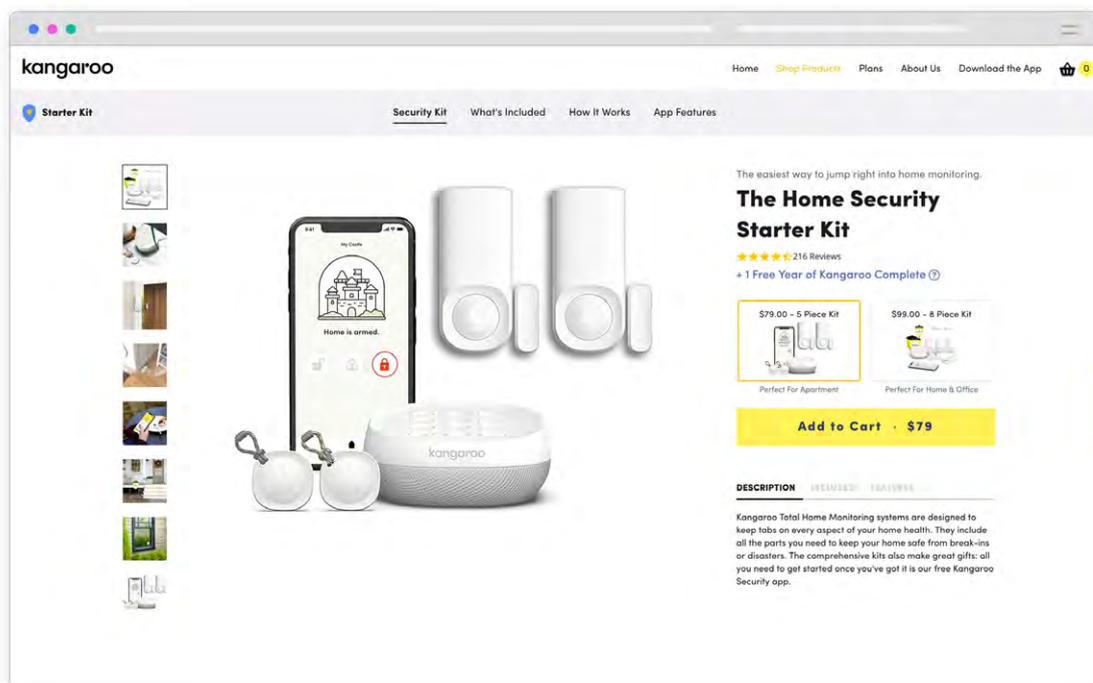
Canned water brand [Liquid Death](#) has branded their email list as a straight up private club. Join and you'll receive a bonus 12-pack with your first order, plus access to exclusive events and promos. Plus, if you subscribe to their recurring products, you also score a free t-shirt.



Offer a free trial for your exclusive model

Many exclusive models let you ‘try before you buy’ — for example, a one-month trial of Amazon Prime or Netflix. For more product-driven businesses this type of incentive works best for ancillary offerings. Here are some examples:

- Purchasing a product could unlock access to your resource library.
- Give free use to an exclusive app for a fixed period of time.
- Grant them trial access to select parts of the subscription.



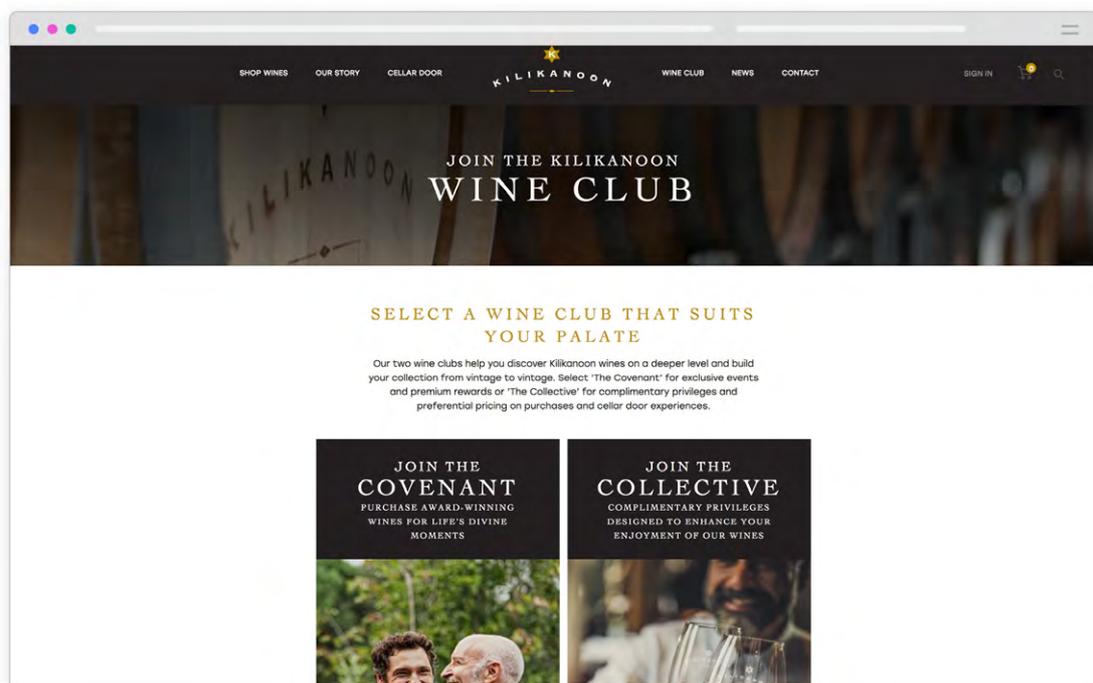
When people buy a starter kit from DIY home security brand [Kangaroo](#), they're not just buying the equipment. They also receive a full free year of Kangaroo Complete, the company's premium professional monitoring offering which includes Alexa and Google integrations.



Think online and offline

An exclusive membership can involve so much more than online shopping and real-life fulfillment. If you have a brick and mortar store or space, think about what benefits a 'member' may have both in your store and virtually.

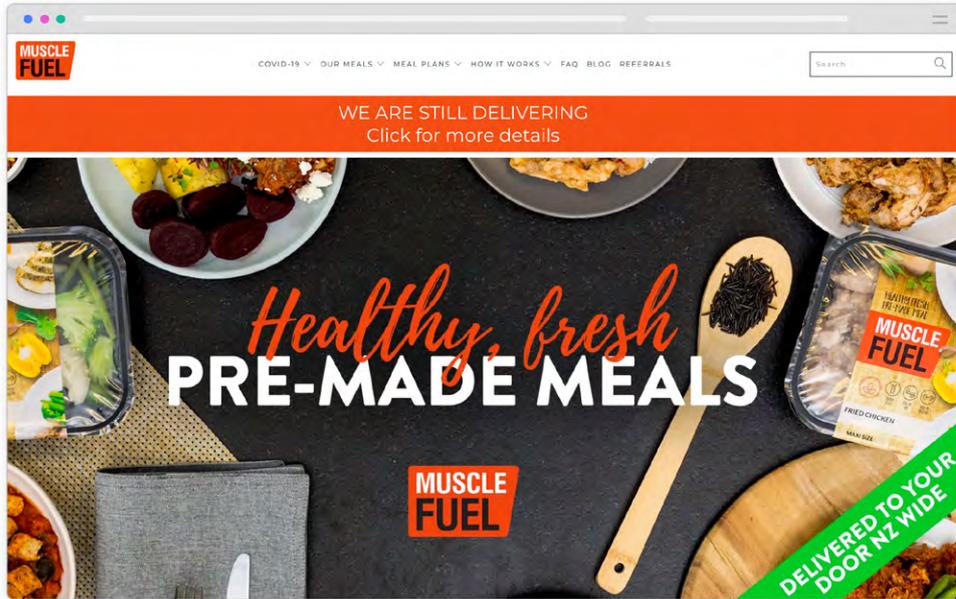
- Discounts on merchandise purchased online and offline.
- Unlimited instructional classes for a year.
- Exclusive in-store tastings and events.



Wine lovers will line up for [Kilikanoon's](#) VIP subscription model. Apart from getting to build a custom case of wine (shipped at least twice a year), subscribers can enjoy premium tastings at their winery, reserve bottles, attend private events, and nab ongoing loyalty perks.

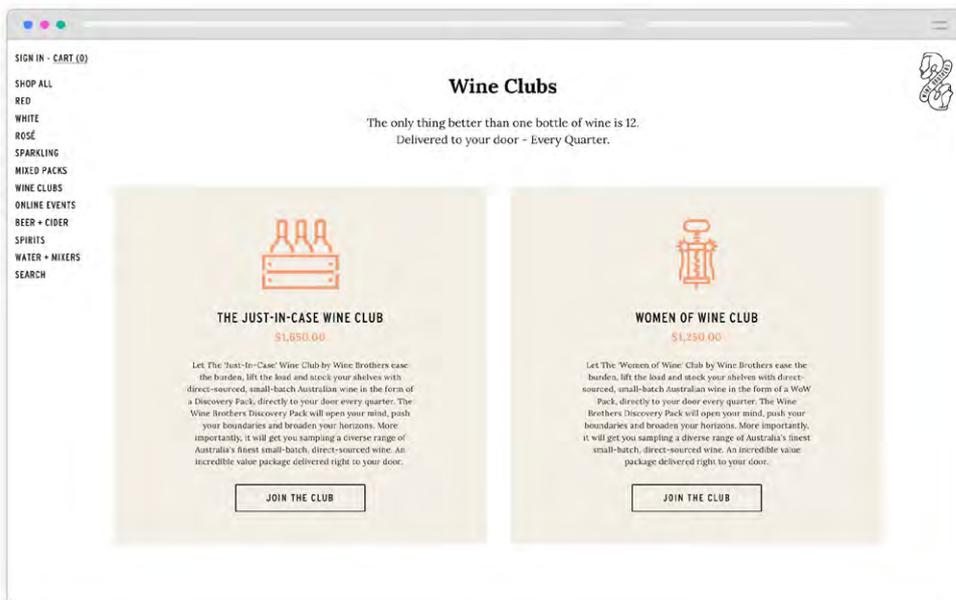


Real life inspiration



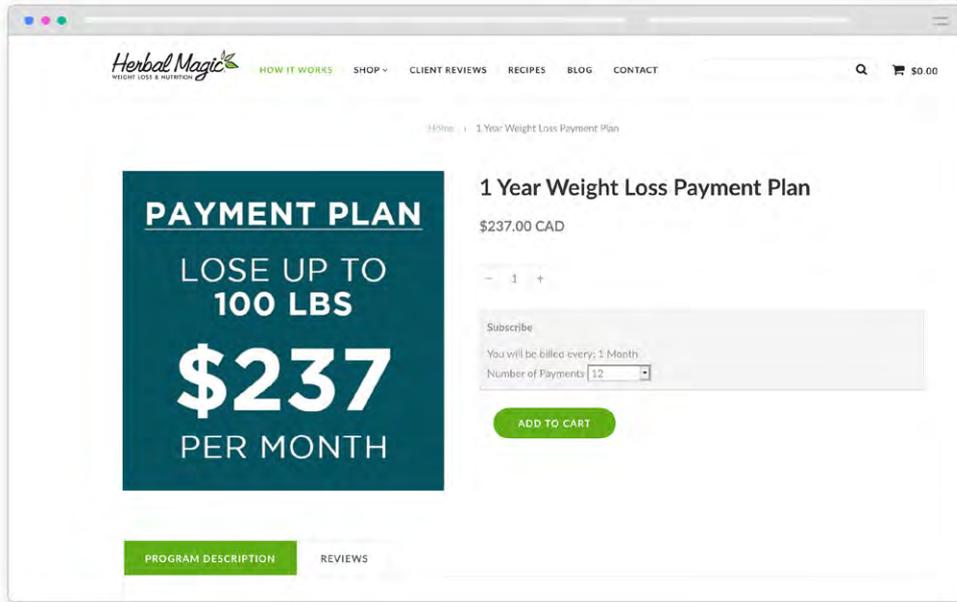
Muscle Fuel

[Muscle Fuel](#) offers a one-of-a-kind exclusive model that's one part fitness challenge, one part competition, and one part food delivery service (their core business). Participants get premade healthy meals, a steep discount on their first week, tips and advice, and the potential to win prizes as part of a 10-week Lose It & Win It promotion.



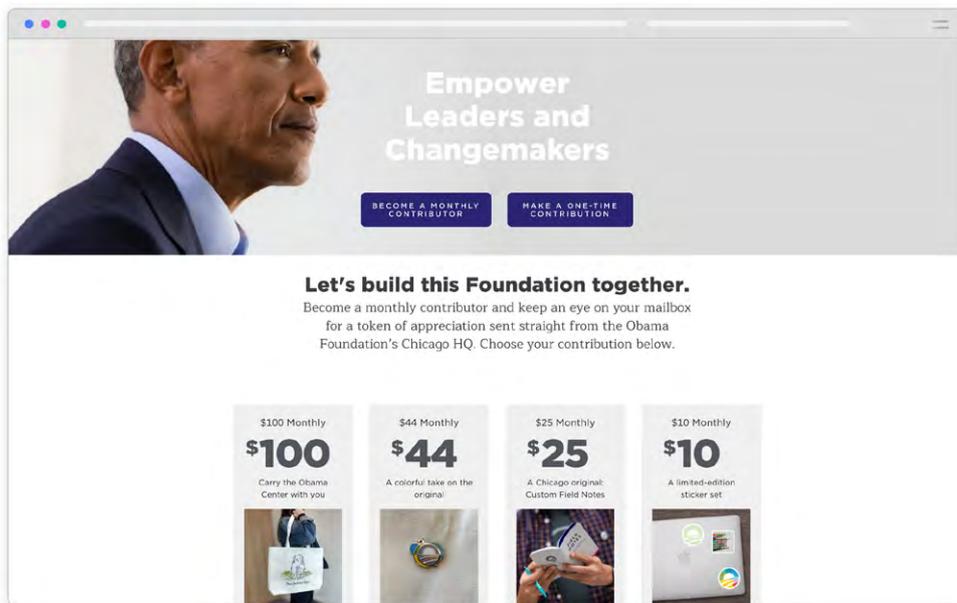
Wine Brothers

[Wine Brothers](#) offers two different quarterly subscriptions; whether you want twelve or six wines. Apart from the steep discounts their subscription model offers, wine club members save 10% on any product within their catalog, plus exclusive invites to their quarterly Wine Club dinners to quite literally wine and dine with other oenophiles.



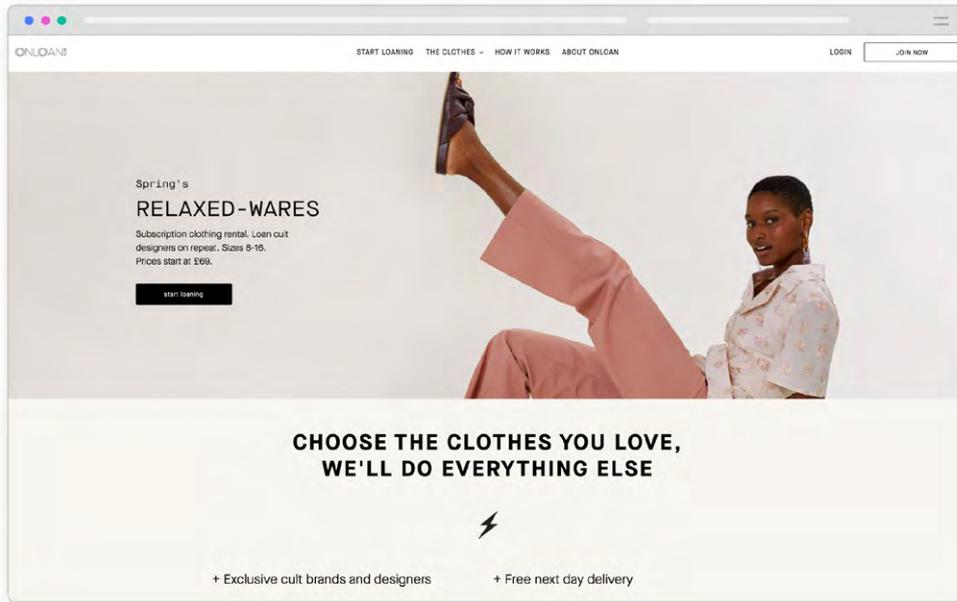
Herbal Magic

Weight loss program [Herbal Magic](#) promises big results — but the upfront fees can be a barrier to entry for some customers. That’s why they offer their weight loss programs, coaching, meal plans, and supplements on a recurring billing model, blending virtual and real-life support to help customers reach their wellness goals.



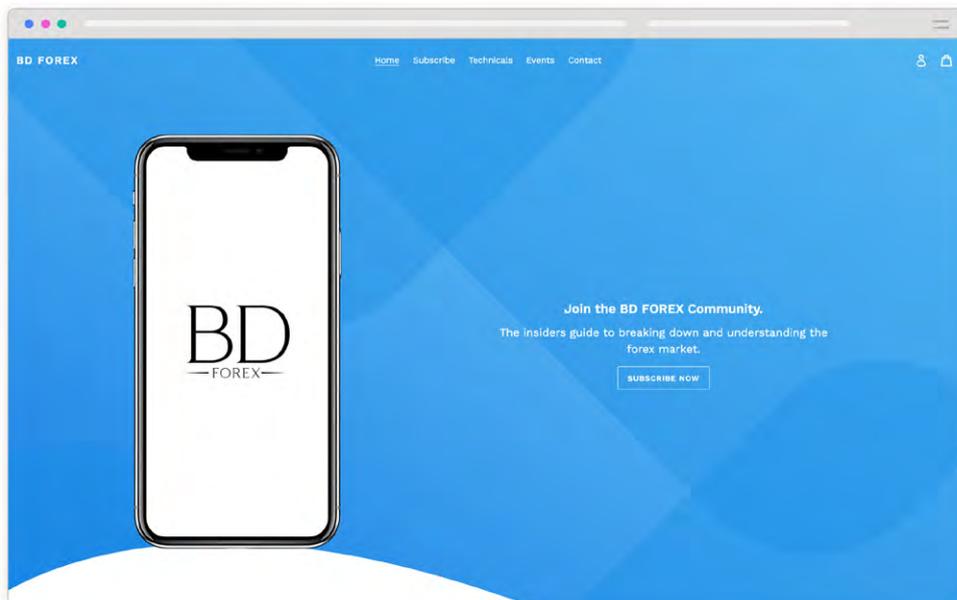
Obama Foundation

The exclusive model works well if you’re looking to collect donations, like the [Obama Foundation](#). A contribution of as little as \$10 a month unlocks a special gift sent straight to your mailbox. Plus subscribers are kept in the loop on how Obama’s Presidential Center is working to revitalize the South Side of Chicago.



Onloan

Rentals are more popular than ever, particularly in categories like fashion. [Onloan](#) curates a cutting-edge lineup of high end fashion each month, including personal edits for customers who fill out their Style Survey. For a flat rate (which includes shipping, cleaning, and minor repairs) customers can select two or four items per month at a fraction of the cost they'd pay to purchase it for themselves.



BD FOREX

Digital access to [BD FOREX's](#) insights requires subscription access, but delivers incredibly exclusive and up-to-the-minute info critical to those in the business of trading, including a morning wake-up call and evening recap.



Brick & Mortar

Ecommerce isn't just for selling and shipping online, it can also help forecast inventory for stores whose core business comes from walk-in customers. This particularly true for industries in perishable goods, like food shares and bakeries.

It can also be a spinoff of an exclusive subscription where you offer a membership program to access online products, in-store experiences, and physical products. Some businesses even use subscriptions for their wholesale or bulk purchase program, centralizing all customer activity in one place.

Compared to other subscription models, a brick and mortar subscription can be whatever you make it. The only criteria is that there's a stable real-life aspect to your business, such as a retail location, restaurant, studio, or other space.



Benefits

- Ensures inventory is prepaid.
- It can provide a complete 'membership-style' program.
- Drives brand loyalty and reduces churn by providing a range of online and offline benefits.



Industries

Brick and mortar subscriptions are unique in that they can work for just about any type of membership-based subscription. However, they're particularly valuable where you're trying to forecast inventory, revenue, or some mixture of the two.

- Bakeries
- Fitness or dance studios
- Delivery services
- Learning facilities
- Salons
- Entertainment venues
- Rentals



Things to look out for

Be sure to check out the chapter on **exclusive subscription models** for key tips to protect and enhance your brick and mortar subscription. But here's one that's unique to brick and mortar subscriptions.

Try to remove friction between online and offline experience

If you're offering a subscription program that's paid online, make sure you have a way to track members within your bricks and mortar experience.

- Use a customer relationship management (CRM) tool.
- Sync your subscribers into some other database.
- Use a membership card (but remember that many people don't like carrying extra cards in their wallet).
- Have a backup method of validation such as phone or email to ensure your members can easily access their benefits in store.



Optimization strategies

Want to turn customers into advocates? Here's a few strategies to drive membership numbers up.

Take advantage of your brick and mortar space

Brands that exist exclusively online can spend thousands of dollars per day to attract new customers, but your physical space is a static billboard. Use signage to promote your subscription — and go beyond the obvious to get attention. Here's a few places you could highlight your subscription:

- **Till:** Have your staff mention the subscription program to customers, and include signage other customers can look at while they're waiting in line.
- **Fitting room:** Throw a sticker on the mirror highlighting how much better someone's outfit would look with 10% off via your subscription program, or put a poster on the wall where your clothing hooks are.
- **Pamphlets:** Have some space to sit down? Let customers peruse your subscription offering while they wait, and even take a copy home.
- **Shelf talkers:** Catch your customers' eyes while they shop with pop-out banners and signs alerting them to your amazing subscription offering.

Gamify your subscription

Brick and mortar subscriptions provide you a unique opportunity to forge genuine relationships with your customer base. Make the most of your face time by validating customer behavior and providing rewards for their patronage when they unlock 'badges'.

For example:

- A fitness studio could set up fifty unique badges for a range of activities, like booking their first early morning class before 8, attending five classes, or leaving a review.
- As customers complete these activities, they get points they can put toward a special purchase, like exclusive merch or a discount.

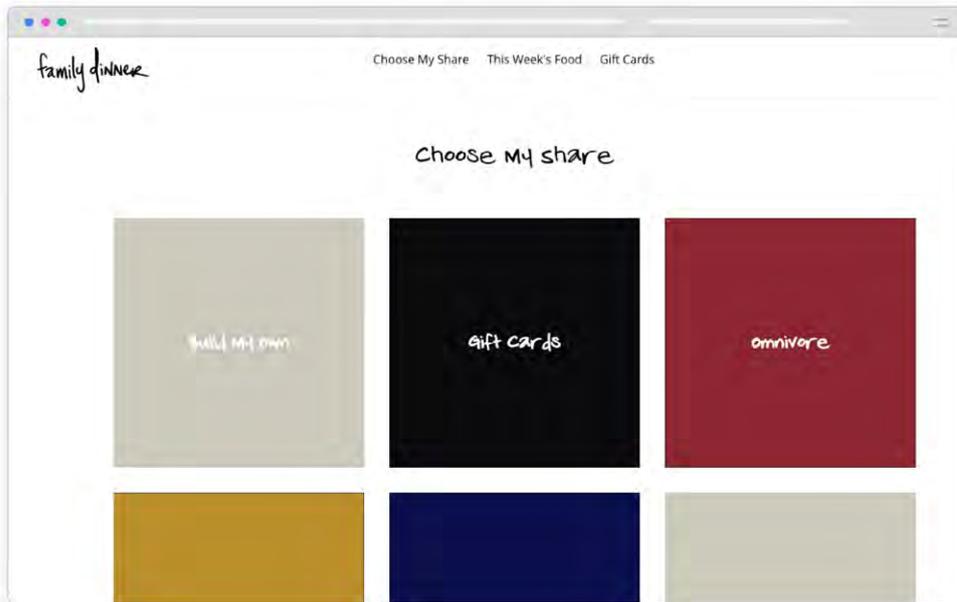
Sync up online and offline

We mentioned it earlier, but smoothing the transition between an online subscription and an in-store experience is critical for your brick and mortar subscription to work. Use apps designed to straddle the world between online and offline.

- Schedules appointments or classes with customers using Acerill Appointment Booking.
- Offer buy online pick up in store with Zapier.
- Use Bold Memberships to sell other services you provide offline.

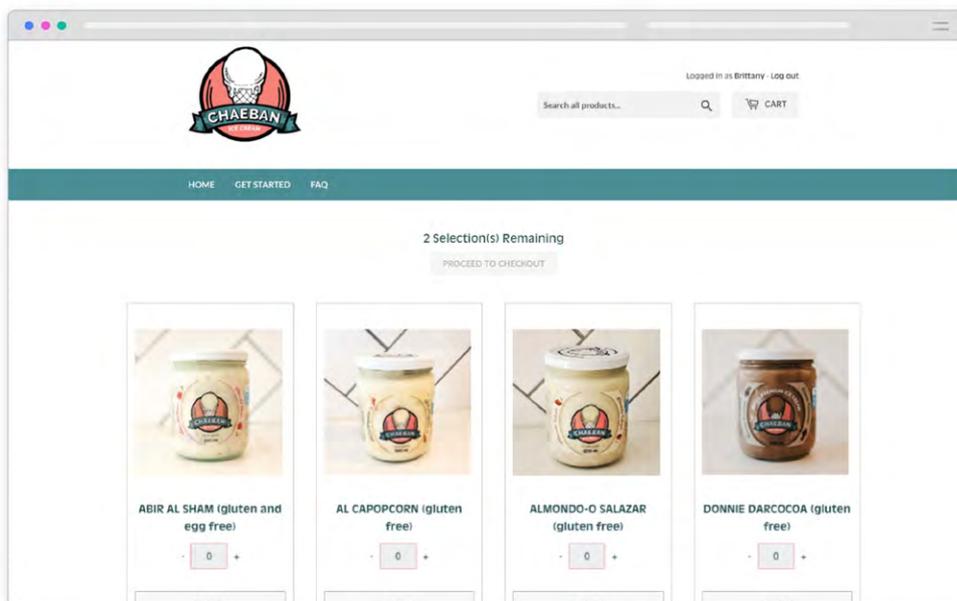


Real life inspiration



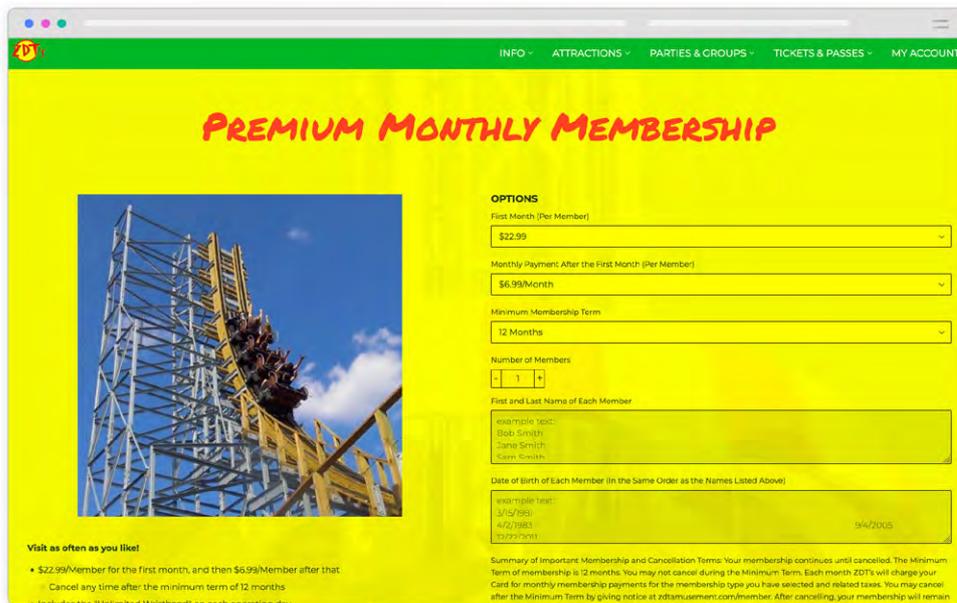
Family Dinner

Boston-area [Family Dinner](#) has optimized their community supported agriculture (CSA) program by letting customers choose their ideal food share type online, including the size and dietary preferences. Members can also order special add-ons, like a Thanksgiving turkey to round out their holiday meals, or segmented subscriptions for specific items like eggs, milk, or coffee.



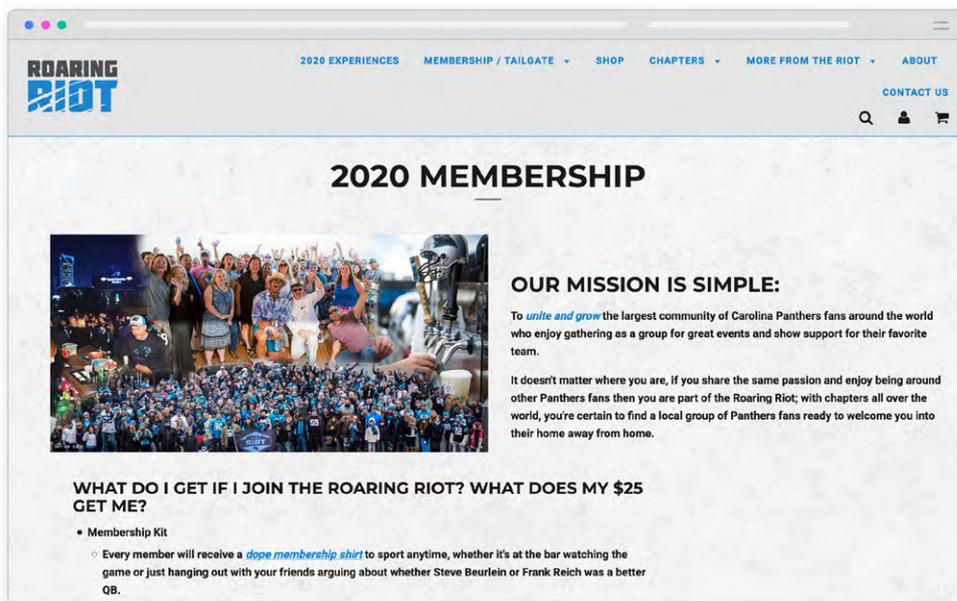
Chaeban Ice Cream

Want freshly made pints of gourmet ice cream delivered to your doorstep? That's exactly what [Chaeban Ice Cream](#) is banking on with their ice cream club. They've further sweetened the deal by offering subscribers a free taster-size of their newest flavors before they're available to the public.



ZDT's Amusement Park

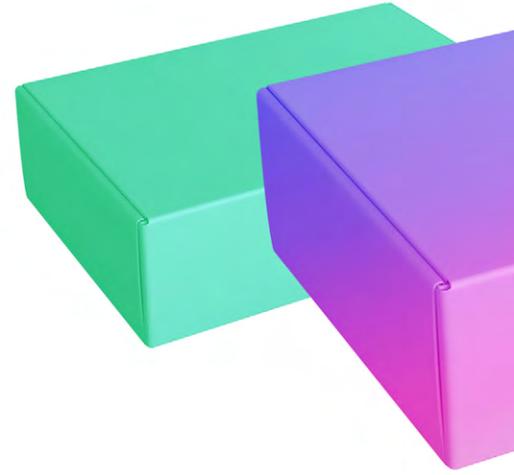
[ZDT's Amusement Park](#) sells VIP memberships to their park using [Bold Subscriptions](#). They actually charge a one-time signup fee using a convertible subscription model and then a recurring amount after, providing access to unlimited rides, video games, and attractions, alongside discounts and free parking.



Roaring Riot

Carolina Panthers fans unite with this unique membership program from [Roaring Riot](#), which combines elements of an Access and Brick and Mortar subscription. For a nominal annual fee, members get a starter kit, including merchandise and discount offers, plus they receive discounts all year long for away game experiences where they can connect with other super fans. Going from online to offline, there's a virtual ticket exchange and payment plan options for games and experiences, plus members can link up in person at a dedicated tailgate space.

7 Subscription Models To Master



Conclusion

We said it before and we'll say it again: Some of the most successful subscription businesses out there are ones that combine multiple subscriptions models to give their customers more choice, control, and value.

The strategies and examples we cited aren't exclusive to each model, many can be applied to any subscription to give members a better experience.

If you're just starting out, why not test the waters with a few models to see what sticks? And if you've got an established subscription business humming along, hopefully we inspired you to shake up your existing offering with some new and exciting options.

But no matter where you're at with your business, we want to help you grow with [Bold Subscriptions](#). Thousands of businesses use it to make recurring revenue — and now's your chance to join them.

We'd love to help you get started! [Contact us](#) today to book a demo, ask questions, or get help setting up your Bold Subscriptions app.

