



# 48 Laws of Subscription App Success

Lessons, patterns, and tips most  
subscription app founders have to  
learn the hard way.

 botsi +



# What is botsi ?

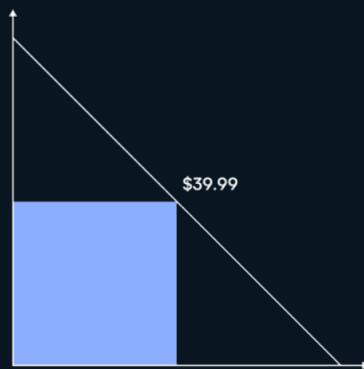
If you're showing the same price to every user, you're leaving money on the table.

Botsi is **AI pricing infrastructure for subscription apps**.

It predicts user value in real time, and then selects the price, offer, or paywall most likely to maximize LTV.

Think of it as a revenue layer that sits on top of your existing stack. A few API calls. Continuous optimization. Currently **averaging 20–30% revenue lifts** for live apps.

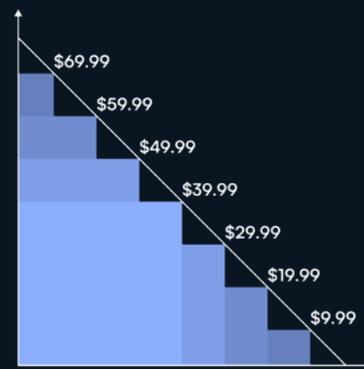
You personalize everything else...why not your pricing?



\$150,000 MRR

## Without Botsi

*One price optimized via A/B testing*



\$213,000 MRR (+41%)

## With Botsi

*Grow your revenue with prices, paywalls, and offers autonomously optimized per-user*

Learn more at [Botsi.com](https://botsi.com)



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# Introduction

**There is a growth playbook for your subscription app.**

**Botsi partnered with Retention.Blog to bring you tried and true lessons, patterns, strategies, and tips.**

We also pulled in expert advice from app growth leaders Thomas Petit, Sylvain Gauchet, Cristian Rotari, Daphne Tideman, Marcus Burke, Vahe Bagdasaryan, Olga Berezovsky, and more.

**This book is grouped into four chapters:**

1. Onboarding & Early Experience
2. Paywalls & Monetization
3. Retention, Engagement & Lifecycle
4. Analytics, Segmentation & Testing

We have 48 different lessons and learnings for you from the past year.

Ultimately, we have to thank the entire subscription app industry because we're always learning from all the other impressive companies and apps in the space.

We hope you enjoy.

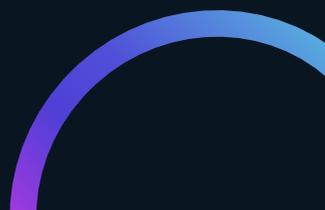
-Jacob Rushfinn, CEO and Co-founder of Botsi



**CHAPTER**

**01**

# **Onboarding & Early Experience**



# 1. Don't just copy competitors

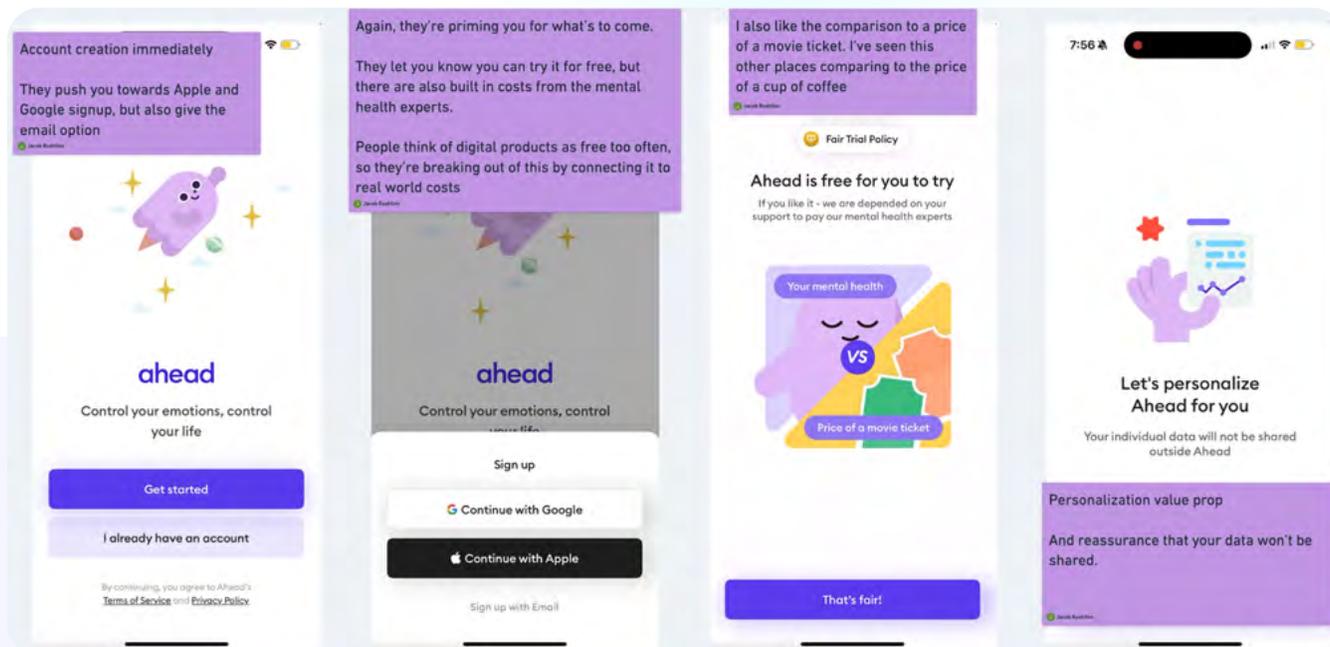
Rather than blindly replicating what others are doing, break down the psychology and intention behind a tactic before adapting it to your own product.

## That means asking questions like:

- Why is this conversion mechanic working for that app?
- What user mindset does it tap into?
- Does it align with my product's core value and audience?
- How can I craft it so it feels native to my experience?

## How to use this:

- When you see a high-performing onboarding, paywall, or engagement flow in another app, don't copy it verbatim. Annotate it first and identify the core mechanics (e.g., commitment, social proof, loss aversion).
- Then run a small test in your own onboarding or paywall with your adapted version, not simply a "copy and paste".



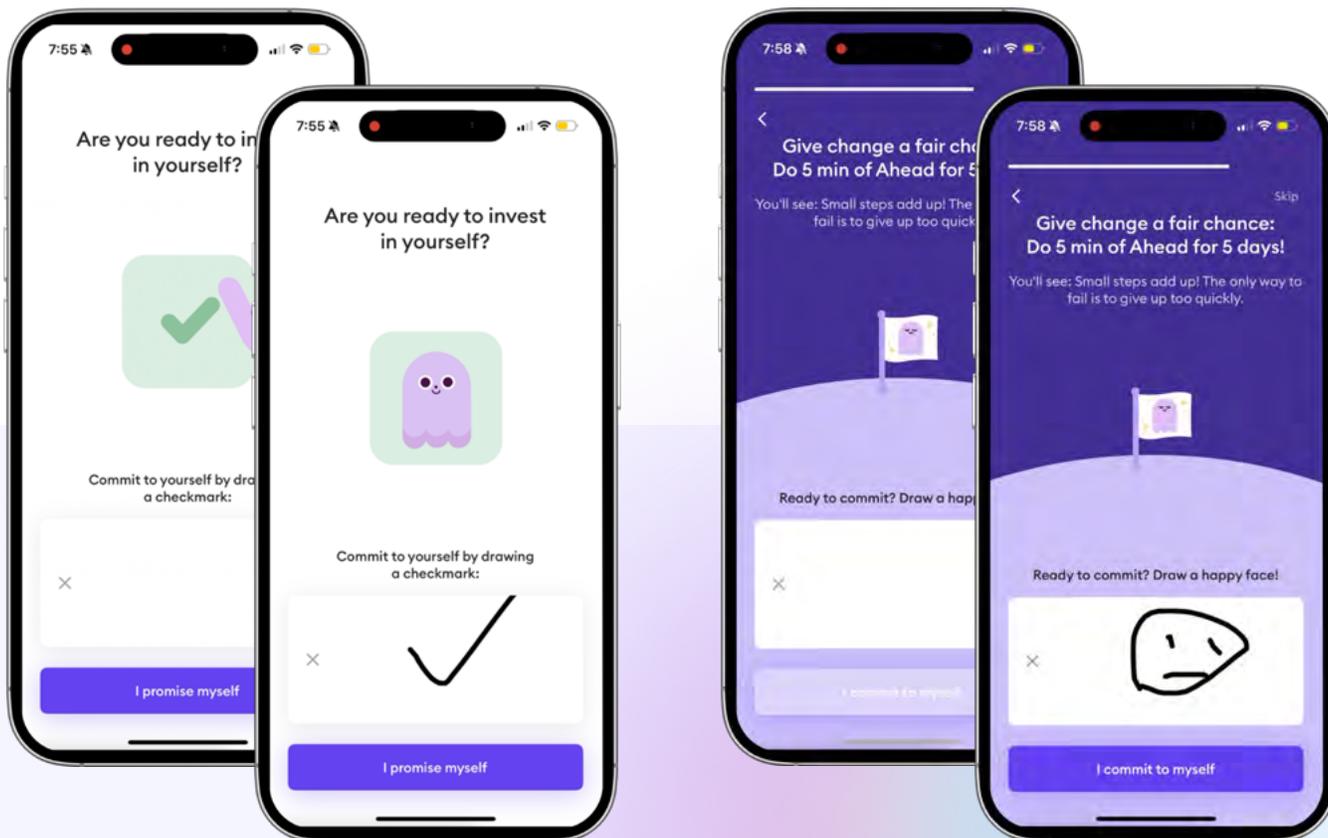
## 2. Introduce micro-commitments early in the user journey

Ahead's flow shows how subtle interactions, like a "draw a checkmark to continue" instead of a simple "Next" tap, can increase engagement before a paywall.

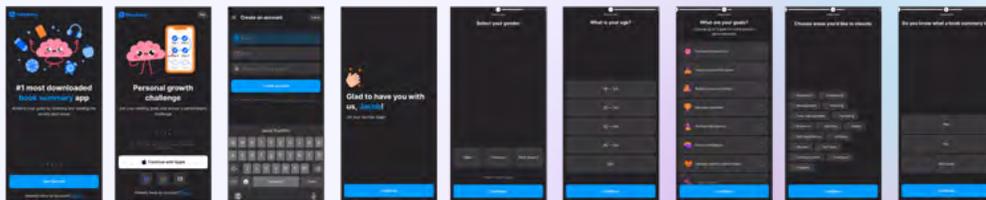
These micro-commitments increase user investment and can make users less likely to leave.

### How to use this:

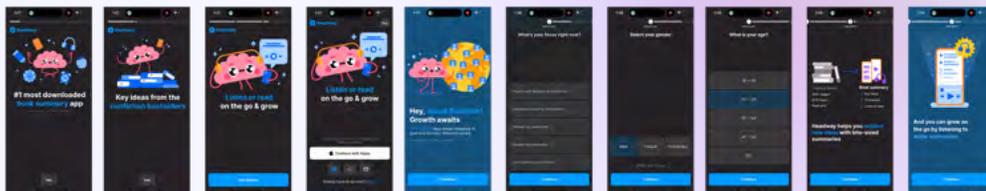
- Add small interactive steps in onboarding that require active participation (e.g., slide to confirm, pick a personal goal, choose preferences).
- Place these before major conversion points like account creation or trial activation — it increases emotional investment and primes users for commitment.



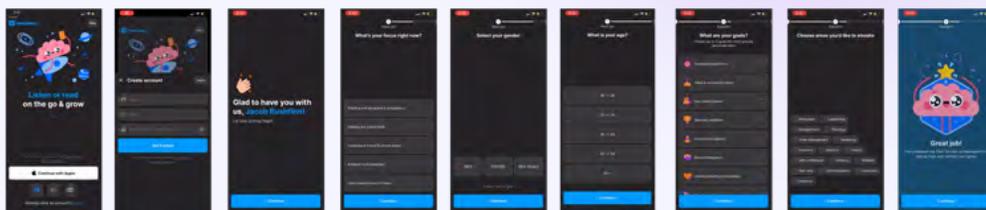
January 2024



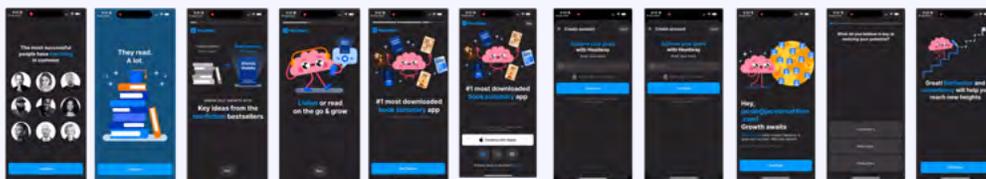
June 2024



January 2025



September 2025



### 3. Evolve onboarding incrementally. Start simple, then iterate toward richer flows

Headway’s onboarding didn’t start as a lengthy, personalized experience. It grew over time through deliberate iterations. Starting lean helps you gather learnings quickly and iterate without overwhelming new users.

#### How to apply this in your subscription app:

- Start with a minimal onboarding flow that captures only essential info and helps users reach “first value.”
- Measure drop-off and engagement at each step and plan additions in small increments (e.g., additional preference questions, goal setting, habit customization)

## 4. Extend onboarding into the post-paywall experience

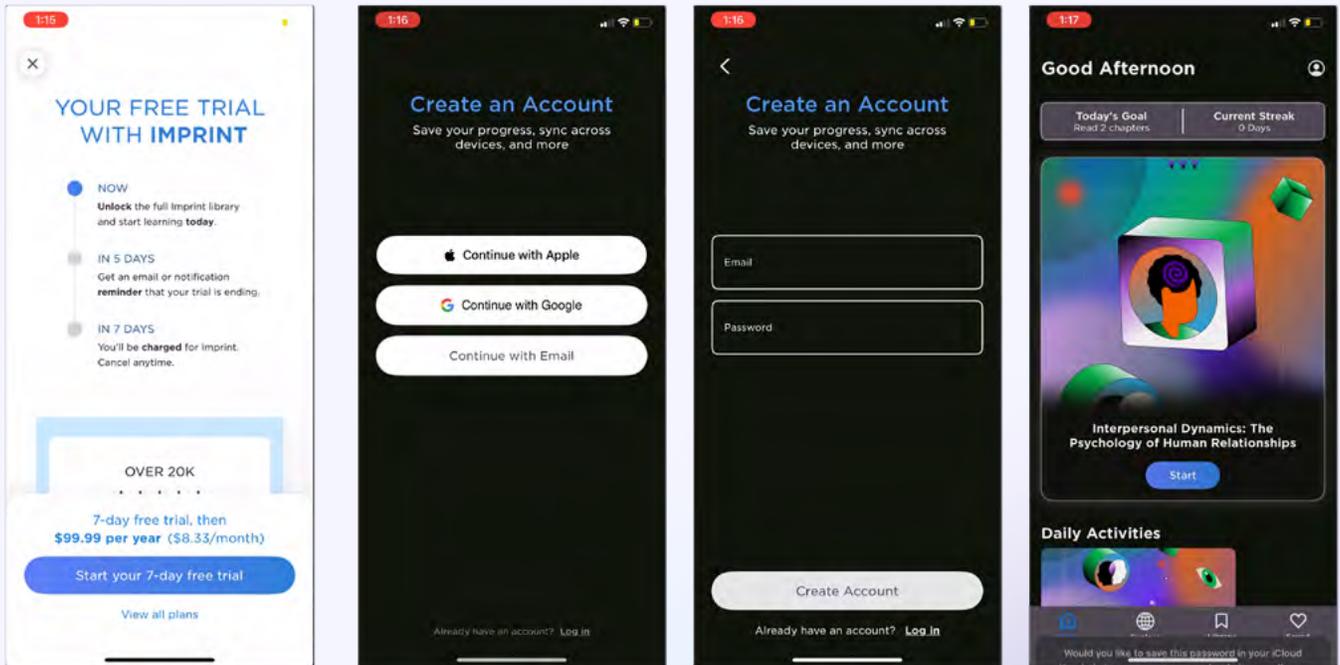
Onboarding shouldn't stop once someone converts or hits the paywall. After the paywall (whether they subscribed or not), many apps just drop users into a generic home screen.

It's often a complex and confusing UI and miss huge opportunities to drive activation, reduce cancellations, and increase early retention.

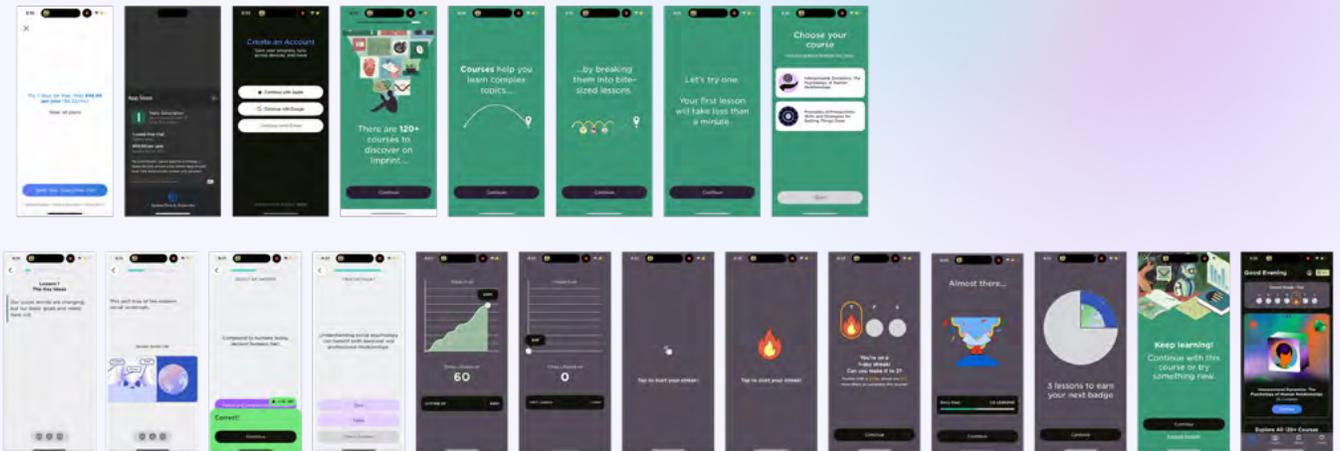
### Actionable ways to apply this:

- Transition users into a guided first task after they pass the paywall. Take them straight into a meaningful activity (like a "first lesson," setup step, or personalization question) instead of dumping them on a blank dashboard.
- Repeat value messaging and reinforce what they just paid for by showing how to use key features step by step (not just generic screens).
- Personalize the next screens based on onboarding choices (e.g., interests or goals) so users feel the app was designed with their needs in mind.

## Imprint Old Post-Paywall Experience



## Imprint New Post-Paywall Experience

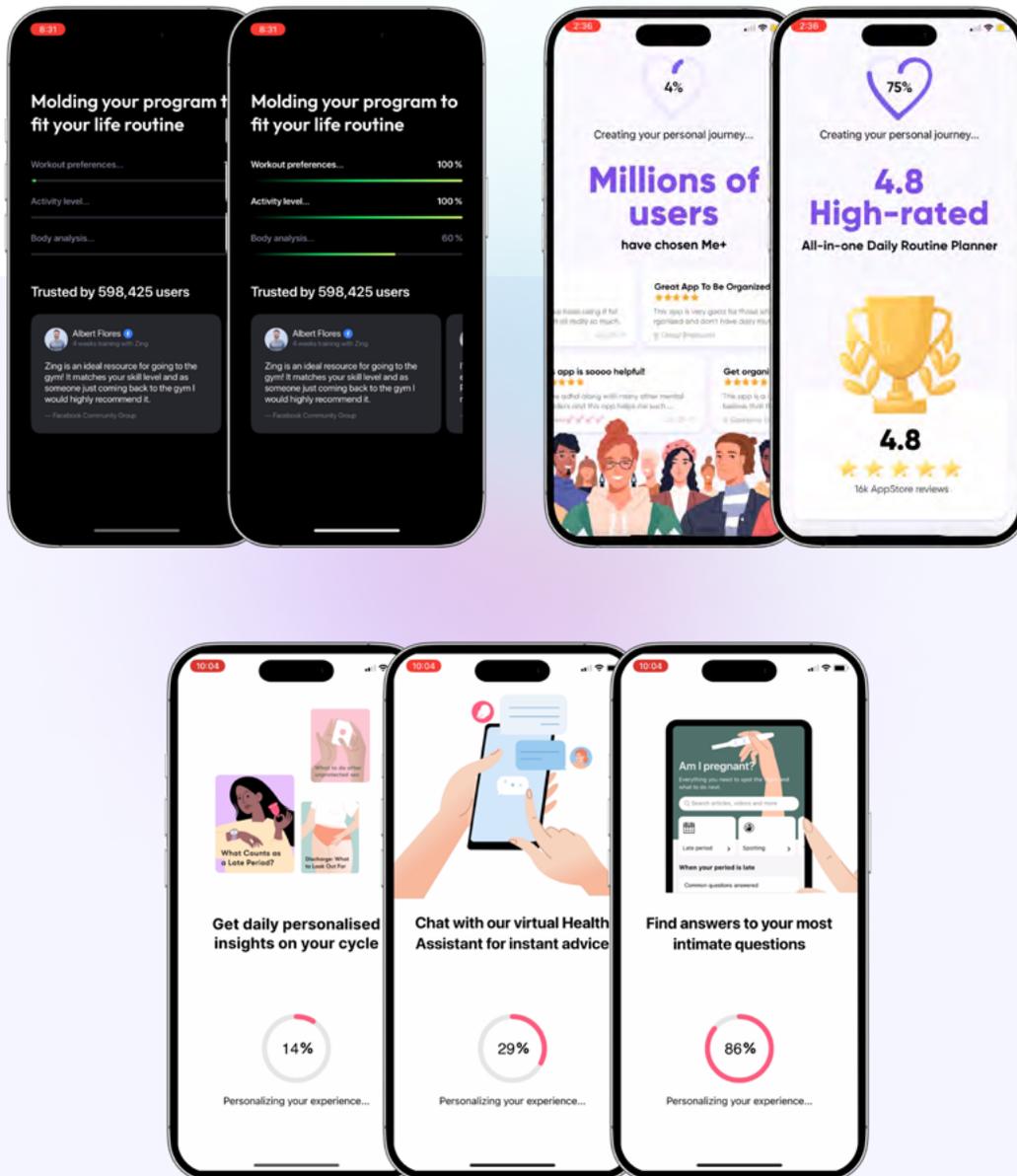


## 5. Show value with loading screens before the paywall

Instead of a generic loader, show screens that communicate your core value, social proof, or personalized messaging while the app initializes.

### Why this matters:

- Pre-paywall loading screens can prime intent and reduce friction before users hit the paywall.
- Getting a user excited about your app before asking them to pay is critical.

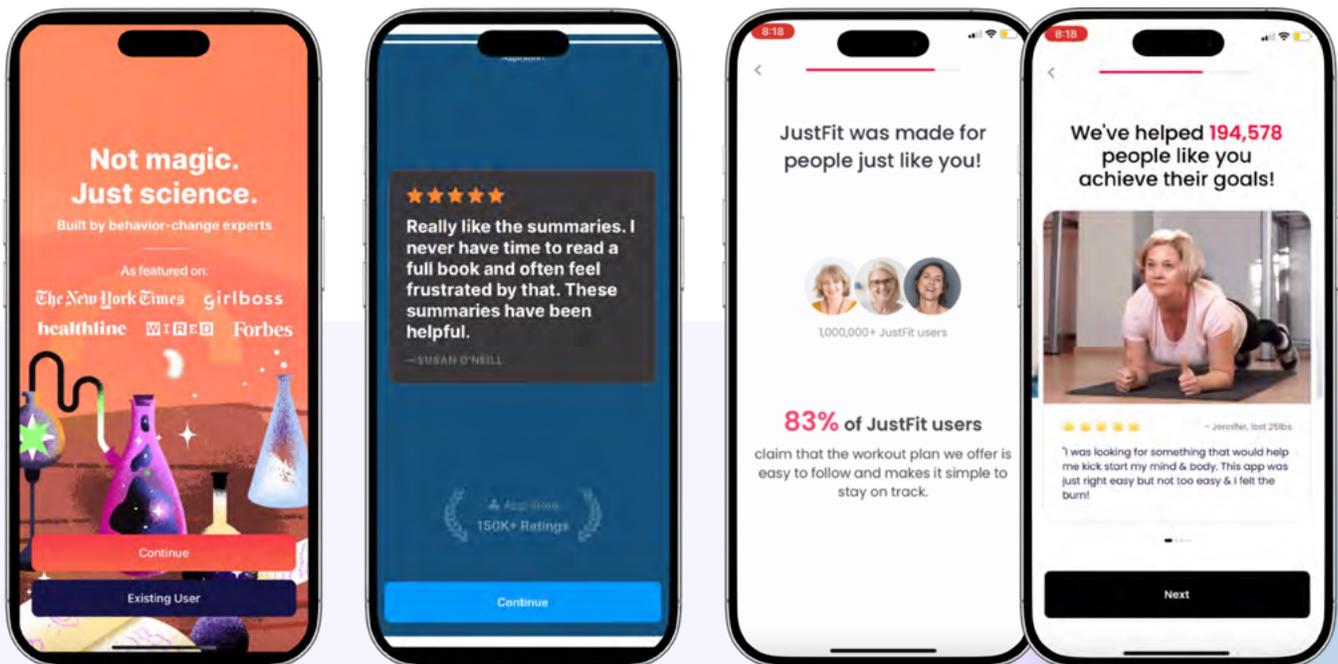


## 6. Add social proof early in onboarding

Social proof is almost never a bad thing. Simple cues like “X people are using this today” or “featured in...” can boost intent.

When a user is going through your onboarding, they’re still evaluating whether it’s right for them. Social proof builds trust that your product can actually solve your goals.

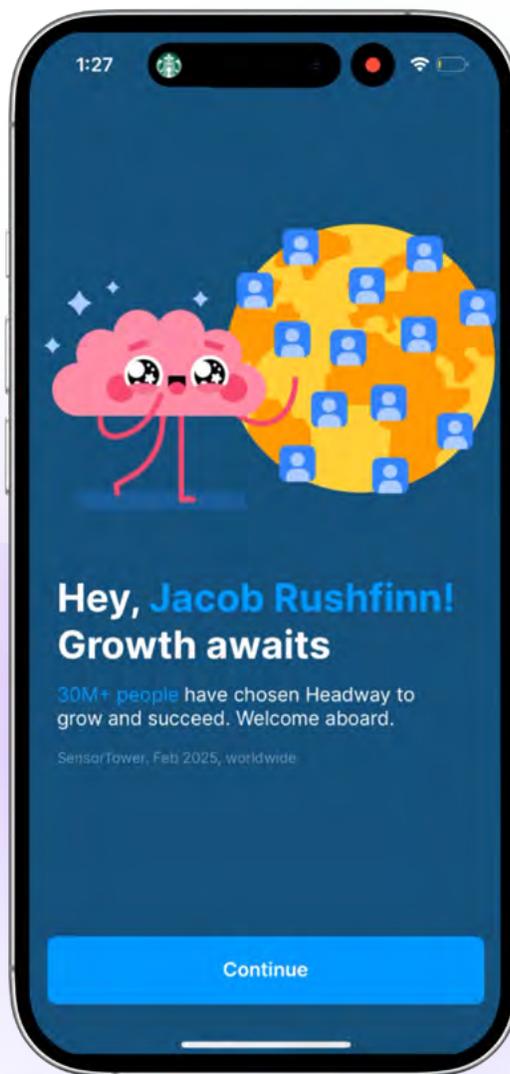
**Tip:** If you can personalize review or testimonials based on a user’s goals, they should be even more effective. For a workout app, show one testimonial related to gaining muscle, and a different testimonial related to losing weight. This reinforces even more that the product is right for them.



## 7. Use simple and early personalization

People react positively when their name is used early (personalization that feels human).

Actionable test: After capturing a first name in onboarding, surface that name in the next few screens (e.g., “Let’s get you started, [Name]”).



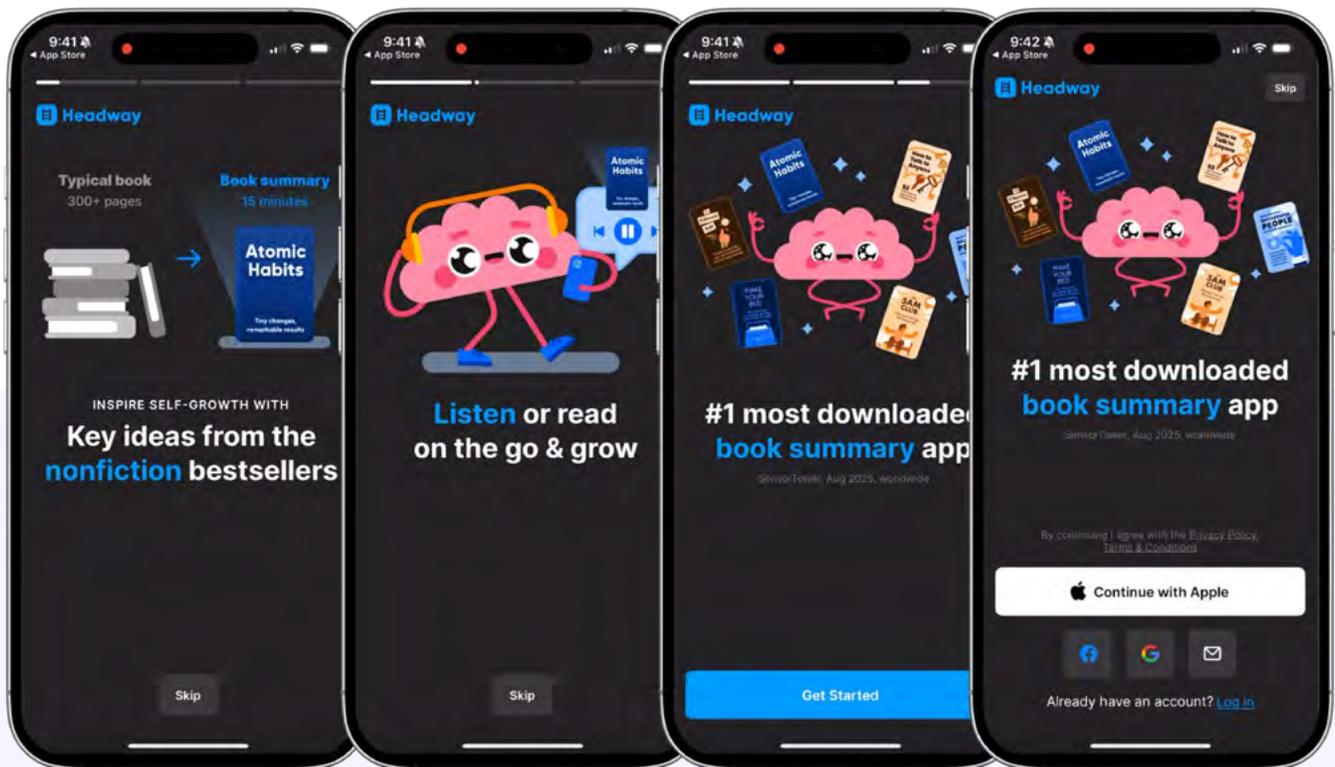
## 8. Try multi-screen onboarding patterns (IG Story Style)

We talked about this for paywalls earlier, but this IG story pattern can be effective for engaging users on first app open as well.

It's much better than a traditional carousel because it automatically advances and

users have the choice to skip. Users are accustomed to tapping on this UX pattern and it can feel more interesting.

Use this in the very first screen of your app to reduce the initial drop off rates.



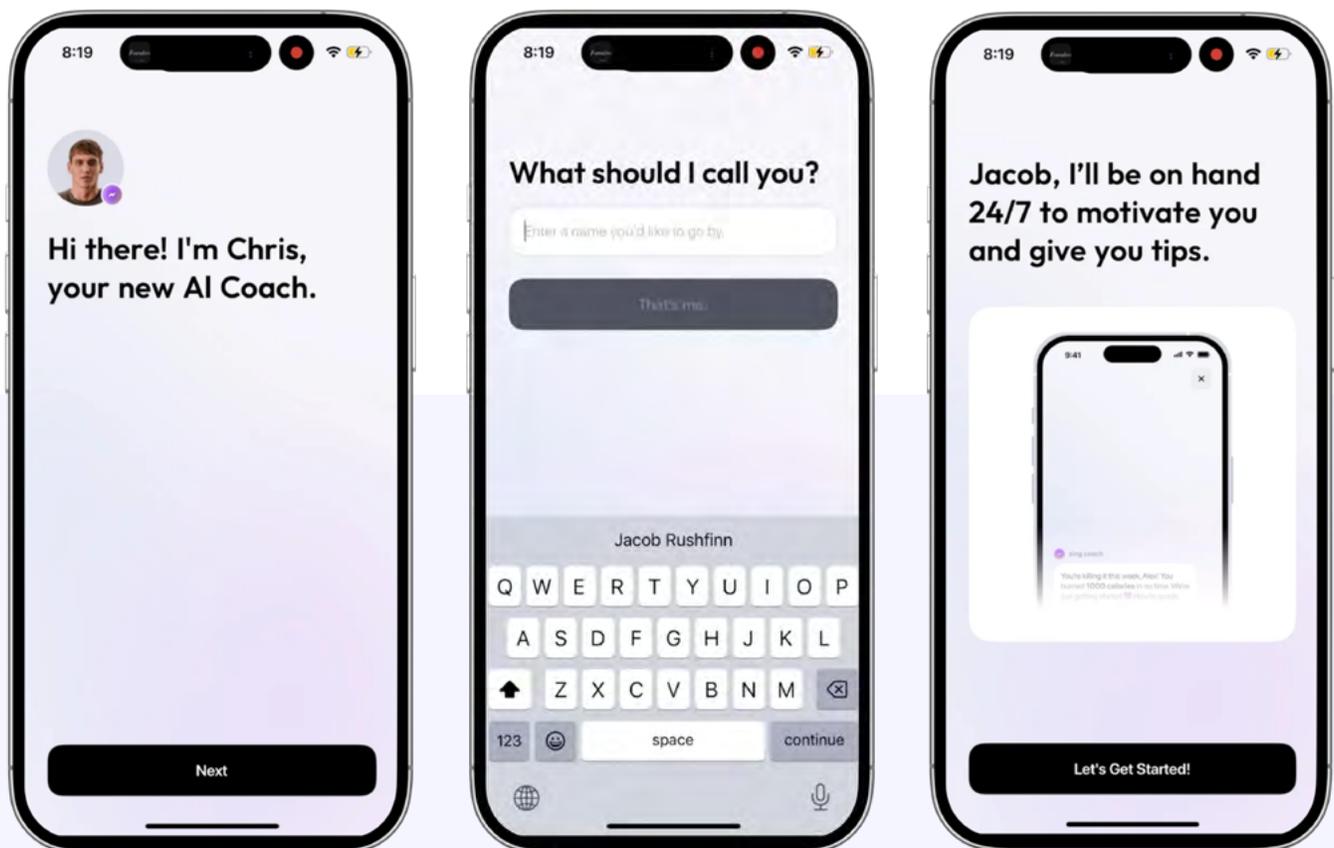
## 9. Add a conversational, persona-driven onboarding guide

Zing AI uses an AI coach persona throughout onboarding to make the experience feel human and supportive, rather than sterile or checklist-driven. This coach shows up early and stays with users through key steps, effectively acting like a friendly guide rather than a generic UI.

- Use this persona to reinforce context (e.g., “Great choice, Alex! Based on your goal of X, here’s the most valuable next step...”).
- Test keeping this persona visible through onboarding into the paywall, so value feels continuous.

### How to apply this:

- Create a persona-driven guide (could be a friendly narrator, brand mascot, or simple conversational UI) that appears throughout onboarding and highlights next steps, benefits, and encouragement.



“

*At Zing Coach we're making the coach the center of the user experience, where our 4 coaches have different personalities and tone of voice, and you can ask them anything, from adapting your workout plan to tips on how to perform an exercise.*

*We want to show the user what to expect in the app by leading with conversational screens in onboarding. The coach doesn't only show up all of a sudden once you finish onboarding, it guides you through, like a real coach.*

”



**Cristian Rotari** is Senior Product Manager focused on Growth and Monetization for Zing Coach. He has deep expertise in mobile app monetization, retention, and web-to-app strategies. Cristian also does consulting for mobile apps, and was previously working on growth at Lingokids.

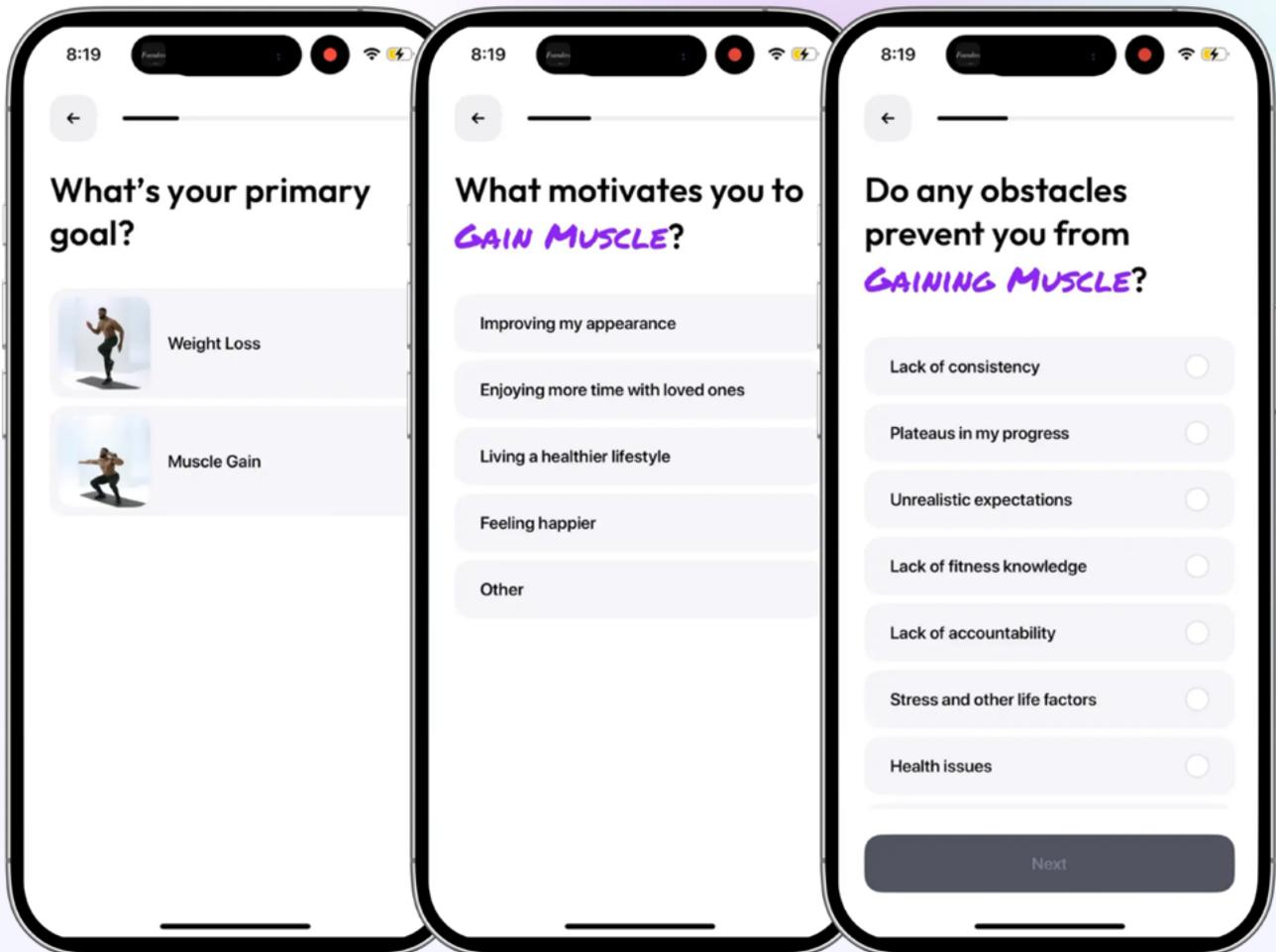
## 10. Personalize goal inputs continuously through onboarding and paywall screens

Zing asks users to choose their personal goal early (e.g., muscle gain) and then re-uses that same phrase everywhere — in onboarding screens and on the paywall — to reinforce relevance. Even simple string personalization boosts engagement without complex modeling.

- Surface that data repeatedly in flows — in guidance, contextual micro-copy, and on the paywall itself (e.g., “Your X plan is tailored for [goal]”).
- Avoid complex ML personalization to start — simple copy insertion works and is easy to test.

### How to apply this:

- Capture one or two zero-party data points early (e.g., specific user goals or preferences).



## 11. Test the placement of key moments in onboarding

Tiimo moved its account creation step earlier — right after the initial welcome screen — instead of just before the paywall. Placing this ask when users still have high initial intent can increase account signup without sacrificing paywall conversion later.

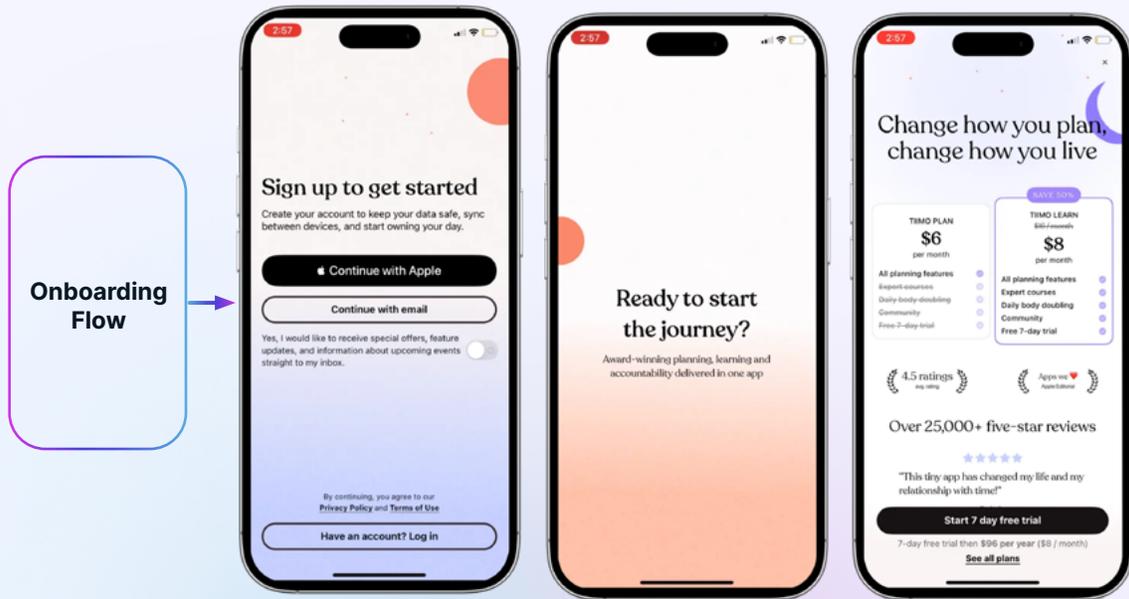
- Place the account creation step very early — when users first open the app — to capture intent while engagement is fresh.

*Other examples of key moments are push opt-in and paywall placement.*

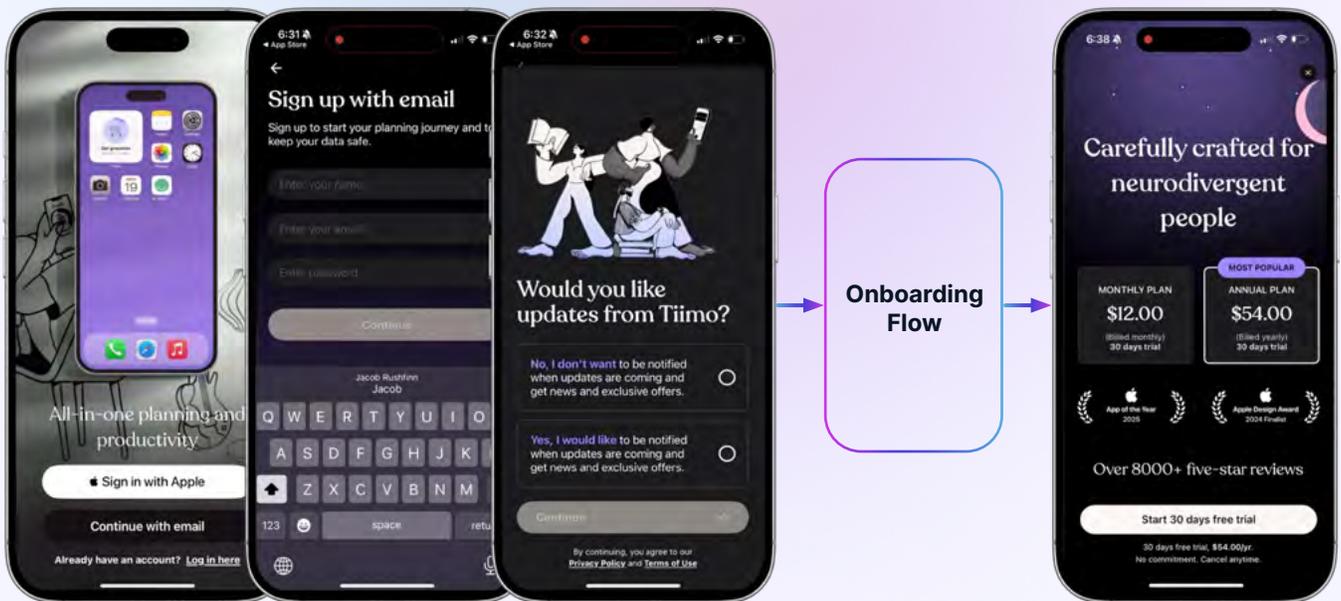
### How to do this

- Try splitting up large asks (account creation vs subscription prompt) so each feels lighter and better timed.

Before



After



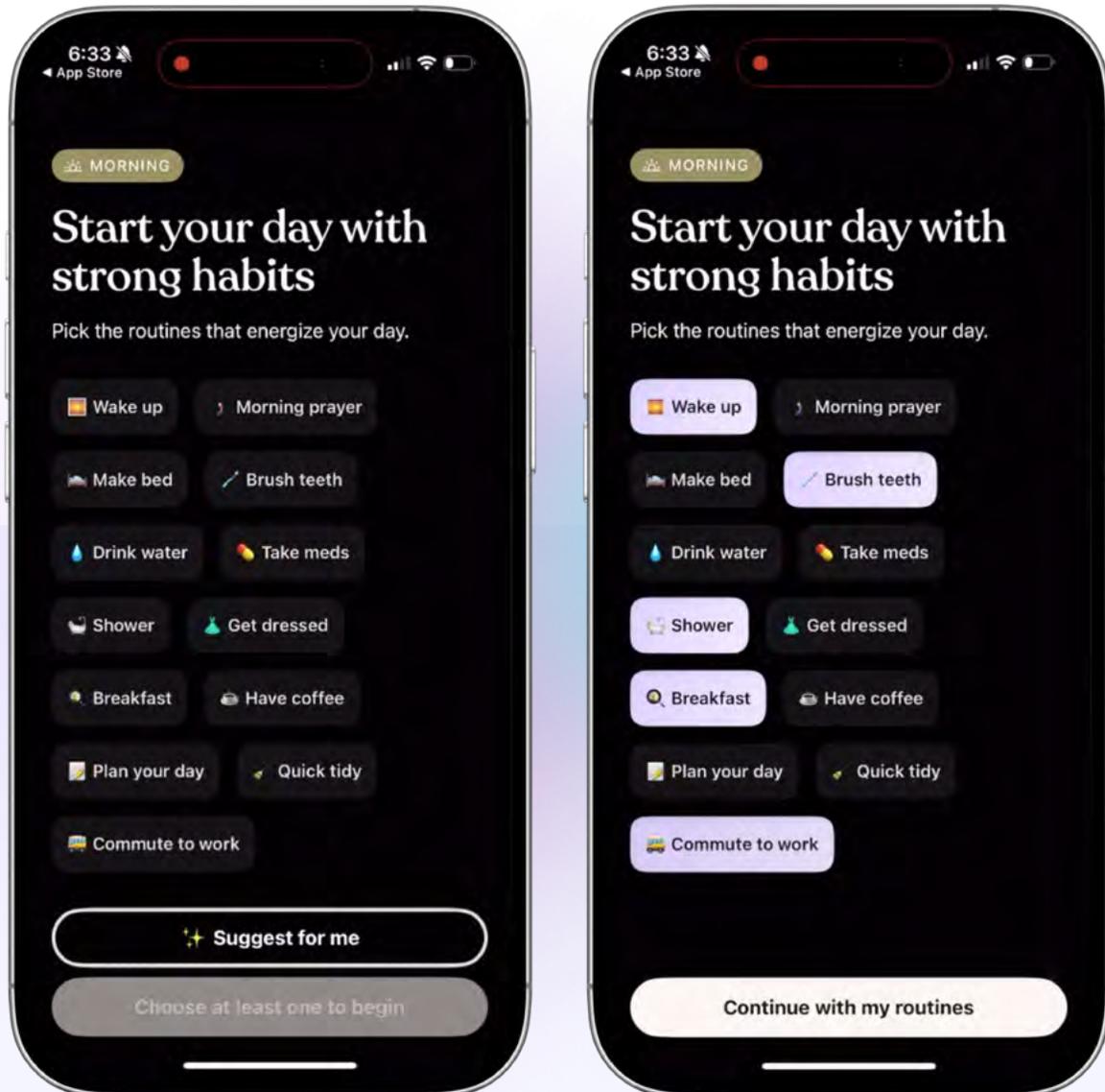
## 12. Anticipate friction and help users get unstuck

Tiimo includes a “Suggest for me” option when a user might not know which routine to pick. This anticipates decision paralysis and gives users a guided choice.

- Introduce an auto-suggest or default choice that lets users proceed easily.

### How to apply

- Identify moments where users commonly hesitate or drop off (e.g., choosing categories, setting goals).



“

*Our target audience is neurodivergent and often experiences decision fatigue. Helping users make decisions supports everyone, but it's really essential for the people we design for.*

”



**Anders** is currently Head of Design at Tiimo, where he works hands-on with product strategy, UX, and design systems in a product-led company building planning tools for people with ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and anyone who struggles with getting things done. In 2025, Tiimo was awarded App of the Year, recognizing our focus on inclusive, user-centered product design and real-world impact.

## 13. Make your permission prompts genuinely helpful

Copilot’s push notification opt-in flow is great: instead of simply asking users to “Allow notifications,” it breaks down real benefits (like “know when you get paid” or “avoid overdraft fees”) with interactive previews that users can swipe through at their own pace. Only then does the system prompt appear.

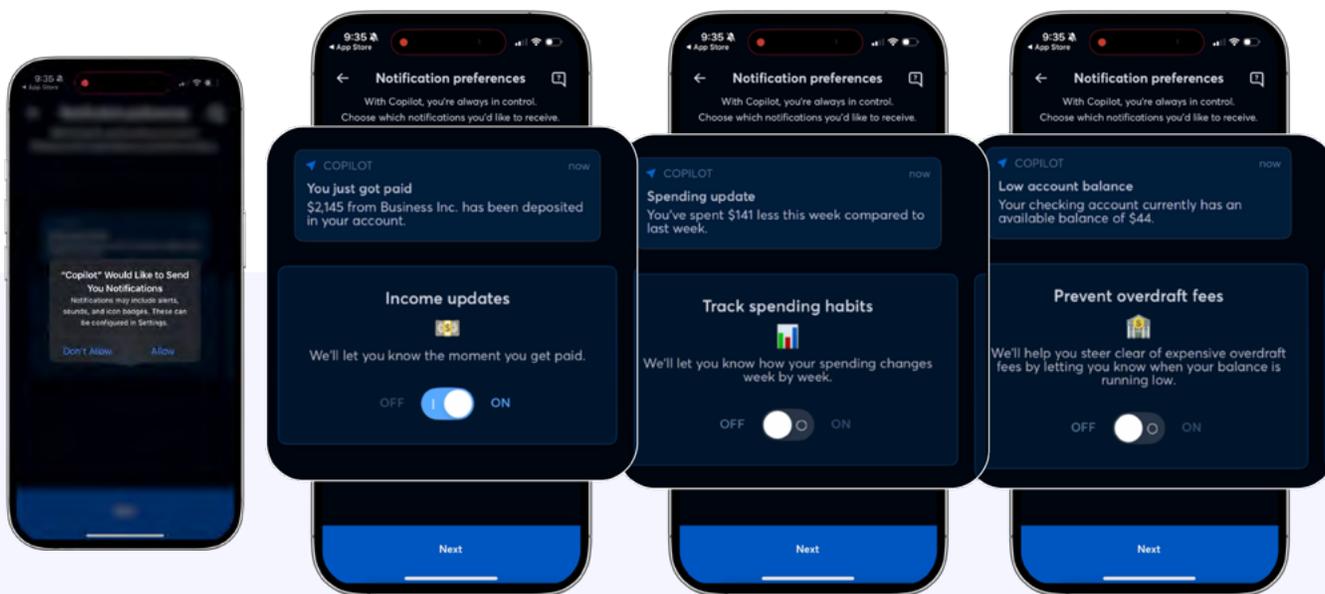
### Why this works:

- Generic permission prompts often get declined, but when users understand the value tied to the permission (e.g., reminders for usage streaks, upcoming renewal nudges, personalized insights), they’re far more likely to opt in.

- Higher permission opt-in rates (push & email) mean better engagement opportunities, which can improve trial activation, retention, and ultimately subscription conversion.

### Actionable ways to apply this:

- Before asking for push/email permissions, show screens explaining specific benefits tied to those permissions (e.g., “Get reminders when your progress is ready for a milestone”).
- Let users interact with mockups or previews of what future notifications or messages look like. This makes the benefit concrete rather than abstract.

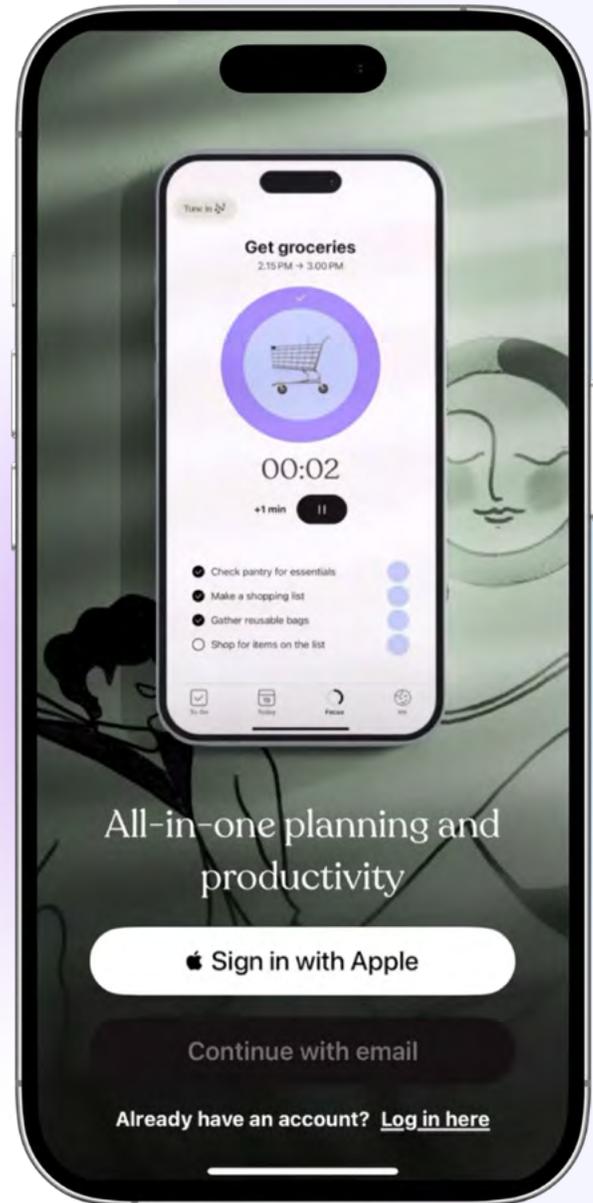


## 14. SSO / Simplified login options

If you have account creation, you need to try SSO options.

We all know this is a best practice, but too many apps still force account creation and only give you email options.

It's not guaranteed to improve conversion, but it usually works.



## 15. Invest in a distinct visual identity

Tiimo uses engaging, memorable imagery and custom illustrations that communicate personality and differentiation in a crowded category, making users feel like the product was built for them.

### How this helps subscription apps:

- A strong visual brand can increase recognition and emotional engagement — which may lift conversion across onboarding and paywalls.

- Custom art/mascot elements can make your UI feel unique (not just another utility app).

### Actionable steps:

- Add distinct illustrations, icons, or visual themes to onboarding and primary screens.
- Consider a simple mascot or consistent visual motif that aligns with your brand values and audience identity.



“

*We want Tiimo to feel like more than a tool. Our visual expression is a key part of creating emotion, safety, and a sense of belonging – beyond pure functionality.*



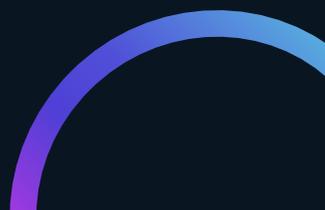
**Anders**

”



CHAPTER  
02

# Paywalls & Monetization



## 16. Try a scrollable, information-rich paywall that educates before converting

OMENA's team redesigned their paywall from a traditional "timeline style" paywall into a long, scrollable screen that lets users explore why they should subscribe. It includes clear info, testimonials, real user faces, a founding story, and an FAQ. It doubled their trial start rate in their test!

### Why does this work?

- Lets users who aren't ready to commit yet explore value at their own pace instead of feeling blocked.
- Combining social proof (faces, testimonials) and feature education reduces uncertainty before the CTA.

### How to apply this in your app:

- ✓ Replace a single paywall with a scrollable vertical layout that includes:
  - Core value and feature highlights
  - Customer testimonials or data points
  - A short FAQ addressing common objections
  - Optional founder/mission story for early-stage brands

After

9:41

Comment fonctionne l'essai gratuit ?

**Aujourd'hui**  
Commencez votre essai gratuit pour accéder à votre programme

**Jour 6**  
Recevez une notification et un mail 1 jour avant la fin de votre essai gratuit

**Jour 7**  
Votre abonnement commence. Si vous n'annulez pas avant, vous serez débitée ce jour-là

7 jours d'essai gratuit, puis  
79,99€ / an (soit 6,67€ / mois)

J'ai un code promo 🎁

**VOIR TOUTES LES OFFRES**

[\\*Comment annuler mon essai gratuit ?](#)

[Restaurer mon abonnement](#)

[Conditions générales](#)

**COMMENCER MON ESSAI GRATUIT DE 7 JOURS ET PUIS 79,99 €/AN**

Découvrez votre programme personnalisé avec une semaine gratuite !

Offre exclusive - uniquement sur cette page

Copucine A: "Ça neoute rien d'essayer car il y a un essai gratuit. C'est facile, ça m'a permis de voir si je l'utilise ou pas."

Emma L: "C'est pas mal de faire un essai gratuit, on se rend compte de ce que ça va être. Le prix divisé par le nombre de jour, ça fait pas grand chose."

Nothilie D: "J'étais motivée pour tester l'essai gratuit car il y a de tout. J'ai des symptômes variés, je me demandais si c'était lié à la ménopause."

Améliorez votre quotidien avec des articles et exercices courts

- 3 min - article: Comprendre la prise de poids à la ménopause
- Challenge 10: Commencez tous vos repas en consommant les fibres
- 18 min - Actu & pratique: séance de pilates pour étirer son corps
- 3 min - Vidéo: Que faire contre la rétention d'eau ?

Trouvez des réponses à vos questions avec nos médecins formés sur la ménopause

Discutez facilement avec des professionnelles de 7 spécialités différentes

Rejoignez la communauté avec nos événements live !

Apprenez-en plus vos symptômes

- Anxiété
- Prise de poids
- Trouble du sommeil

Plus de 30 symptômes à suivre

Rejoignez nos XXX utilisatrices

89% des utilisatrices ressentent une amélioration de leur bien-être en 2 semaines.

Maggali V: "Je suis ravie, grâce à Omnia, j'ai trouvé beaucoup de réponses à mes questions et à mes difficultés."

Audrey B: "Cette application est une mine d'information pour nous, les femmes en période difficile."

Véna B: "Cette application offre des conseils personnalisés qui aident à mieux gérer cette période."

Nothilie T: "J'ai appris beaucoup en 1 mois d'utilisation, je suis ravie. L'application permet de se sentir moins seule et démunie."

Soutenez une entreprise engagée

Les fondatrices

Dr Letombe, gynécologue rétrogène

Valérie J: "C'est super intéressant votre parcours, je voulais faire ma petite part pour votre succès."

Agnès P: "J'ai eu l'occasion de voir des jeunes entrepreneuses qui s'intéressent à la ménopause, j'ai envie de soutenir votre entreprise."

Elodie S: "Je vois qu'il y a un sacré boulot derrière. Tous les médecins, toute l'équipe Omnia, je paie avec plaisir, surtout avec ce prix raisonnable par an."

Méronique M: "Je suis toujours contente d'avoir l'app et je vais des conseils chaque matin. J'ai envie de soutenir l'app et ce développement."

4.3/5 App Store | 4.6/5 Play Store

Nous sommes soutenus par **gemvi**

Société savante des gynécologues et

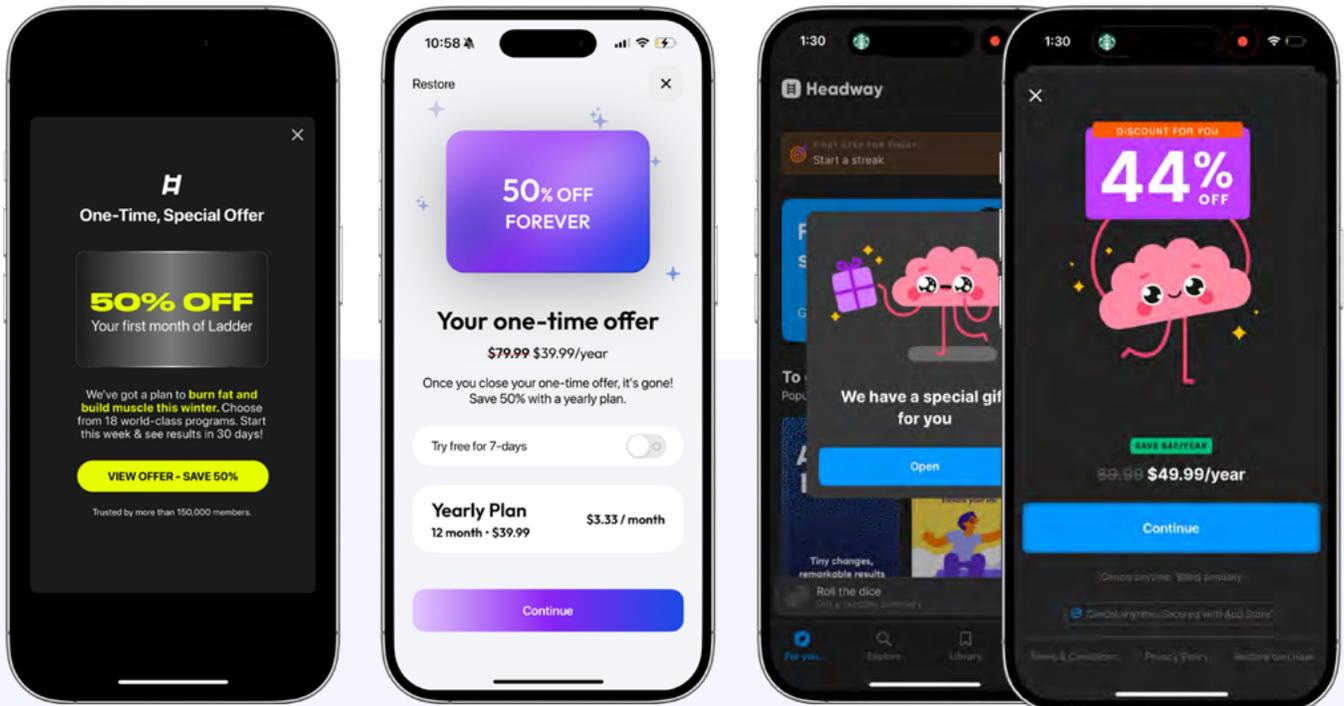
# 17. Build meaningful 2nd offers instead of giving up after the first paywall

Even though the first paywall is critical, most users (90%+) don't convert. There's still value in giving them another shot with different tactics rather than assuming they're lost forever.

### Practical ways to implement this:

- **Offer a limited-time discount or alternative pricing:**  
Think inexpensive lifetime deals or discounted plans for users who didn't subscribe initially (e.g., a low-cost lifetime price can appeal to price-sensitive segments).
- **Tailor the second offer to the user's behavior or mindset:**  
For example, ask a "Why didn't you subscribe?" mini-survey after the initial paywall and use the response to adjust the next offer (e.g., more explanation vs. different pricing).
- **Re-engage with contextual messages on app open:**  
After a period of inactivity, show value reminders or alternative paywalls explaining key benefits more deeply.

*Exit offer*



“

*Think about paywalls, like you think about ad impressions. Users need more than one touch point to open their wallets. Try to build your paywalls in sequences, tailor it to the user and use conditional onboarding to filter your user base and show them the best possible paywall.*

”



**Sven Jürgens** is a mobile app growth consultant who has helped app publishers drive over \$100M in ROI-positive marketing spend over the past 10 years. He specializes in user acquisition, onboarding optimization, paywall strategy, and ASO. Sven runs his own consulting practice and writes about mobile app growth on his blog.

## 18. Make your paywall interactive

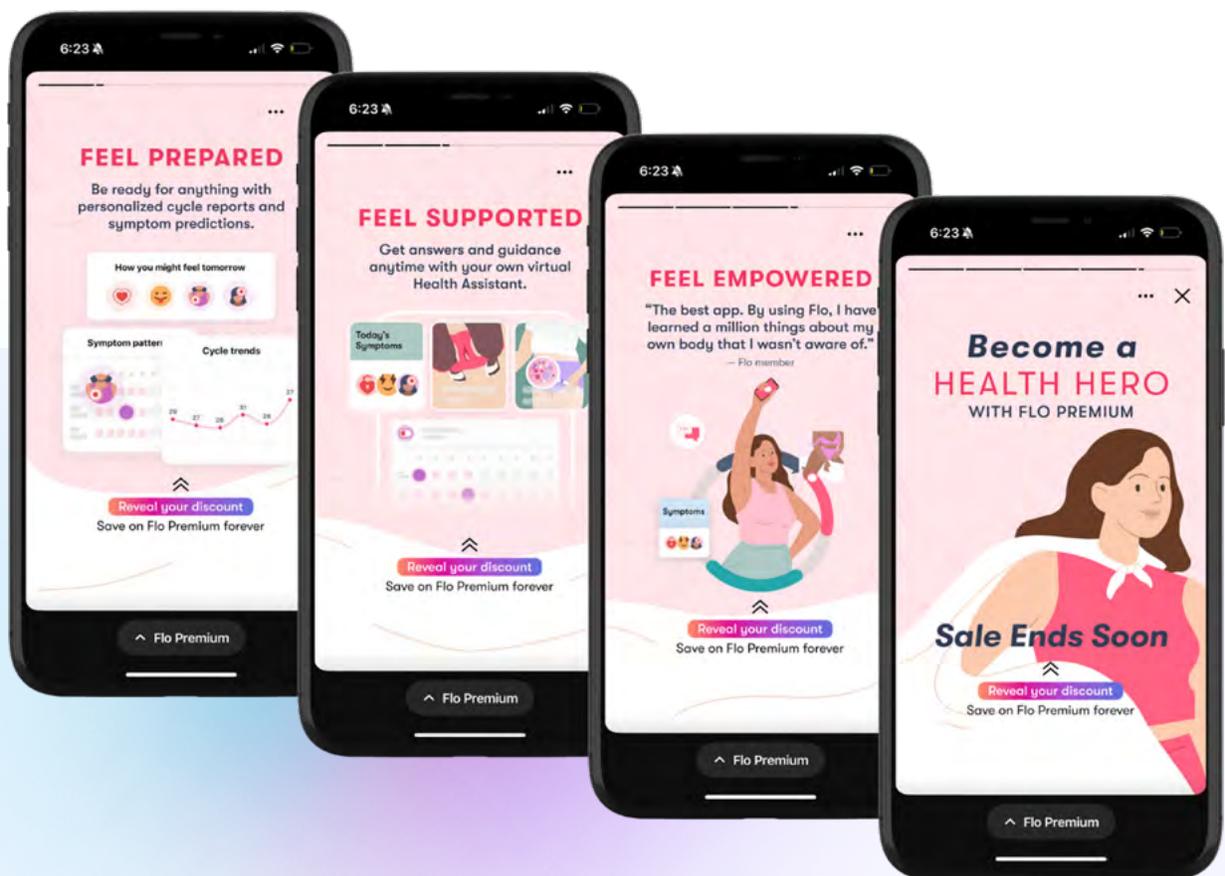
Instead of a single static paywall screen, consider using multi-screen, story-like experiences (similar to Instagram Stories) for your offers. In the example from Flo, they:

- Trigger the interactive offer from multiple entry points (e.g., in-app banner, push notifications)
- Use curiosity-inducing copy like “Reveal your discount”
- Allow users who already know what they want (e.g., a discount) to skip ahead.

### Why this matters:

Interactive formats let users choose how much they want to explore. More curious users can engage before deciding. That improves motivation and helps users internalize value before purchasing instead of treating the paywall as just a blocker.

This can be especially effective for sale campaigns where you don’t want users to think it’s the same offer you always have.



“

*We often think of paywalls as a single static screen, but what matters more is what happens before your paywall.*

*An interactive paywall makes it more fun; it allows you to tell a story and guide the user rather than go for the hard sell.*

*I see it working well when combined with an angle/campaign that evokes an emotional reaction and connection.*

”



**Daphne Tideman** is a freelance growth advisor and consultant, partnering with founders and Heads of Growth at D2C and app startups. At Heights, as Head of Growth, Daphne helped the startup scale from £28K to £343K MRR in just 18 months. Previously, she was Head of Growth at RockBoost helping more than 100 companies scale

## 19. Test multi-page paywalls

Multi-page or tiered paywalls that guide users through value messaging and then pricing tend to perform better than basic static screens.

This has been a very popular trend over the last years with many apps adopting. And they adopt them because they often work.

### How to apply this:

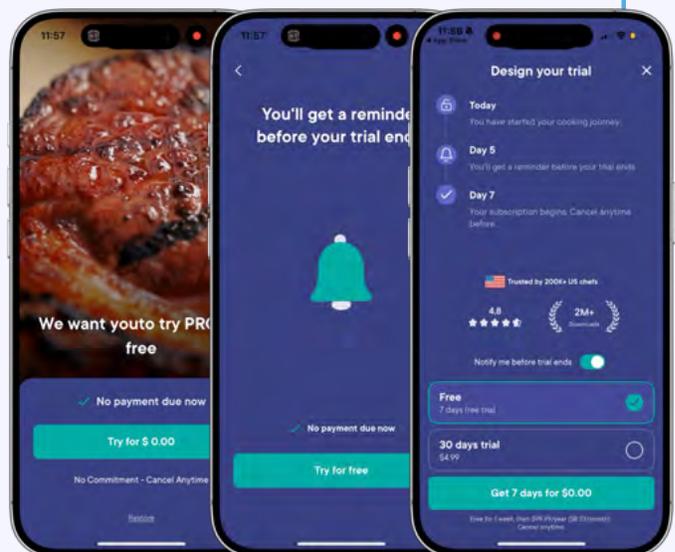
- Take your current paywall and try splitting it up into multiple screens
- Figure out if you're trying to force too much information on to one page, and break up and simplify
- This was first commonly done with the "Blinkest trial timeline" style where apps would emphasize benefits, the trial reminder, and then the actual price points on separate screen to reduce cognitive load



*Trial anxiety is real, and the Blinkest-style paywall doesn't solve it anymore. Users need to feel confident in the value they'll get and reassured that the trial is worth their time and risk-free.*



**Vahe Baghdasaryan**



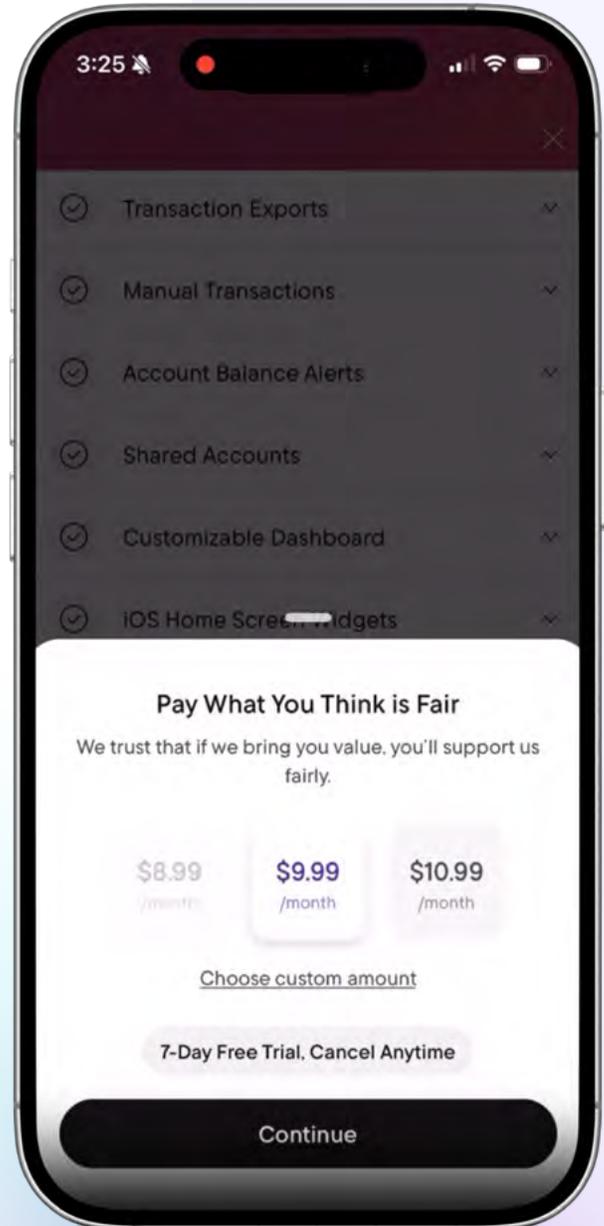
## 20. Experiment with “Choose Your Price”

A “choose your price” paywall lets users pick a price within a range. This plays into user psychology (many users don’t want to feel cheap and will pay more), and can make your brand feel more ethical and value-aligned.

Also, consumers increasingly like the idea of having choice.

### How to apply this in your app:

- Instead of showing a single fixed price, offer a slider or selection of price options (e.g., lower, standard, premium) so users feel they have agency in the purchase.
- Don’t offer unlimited price points as that becomes difficult to manage
- Position it clearly with value framing “Support our mission and choose what feels fair to you.”



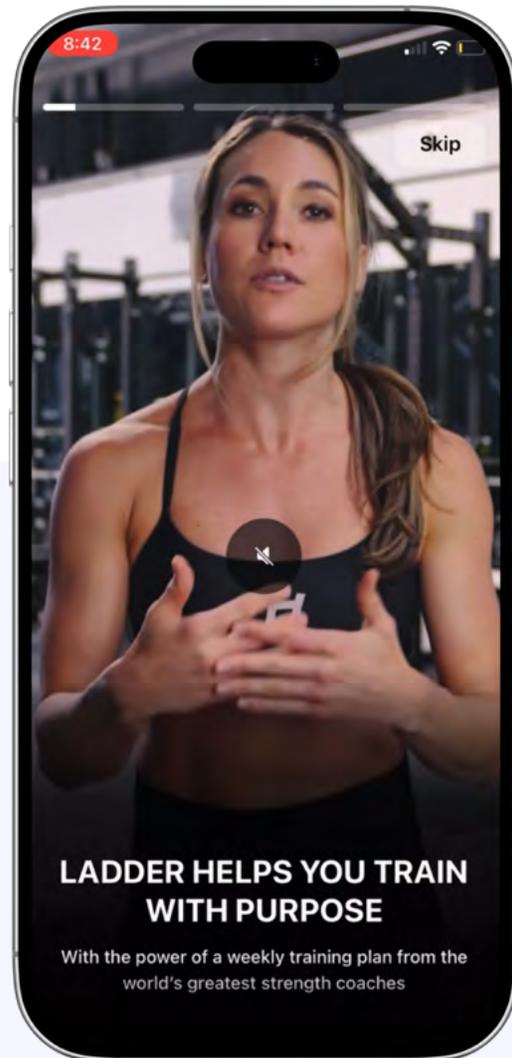
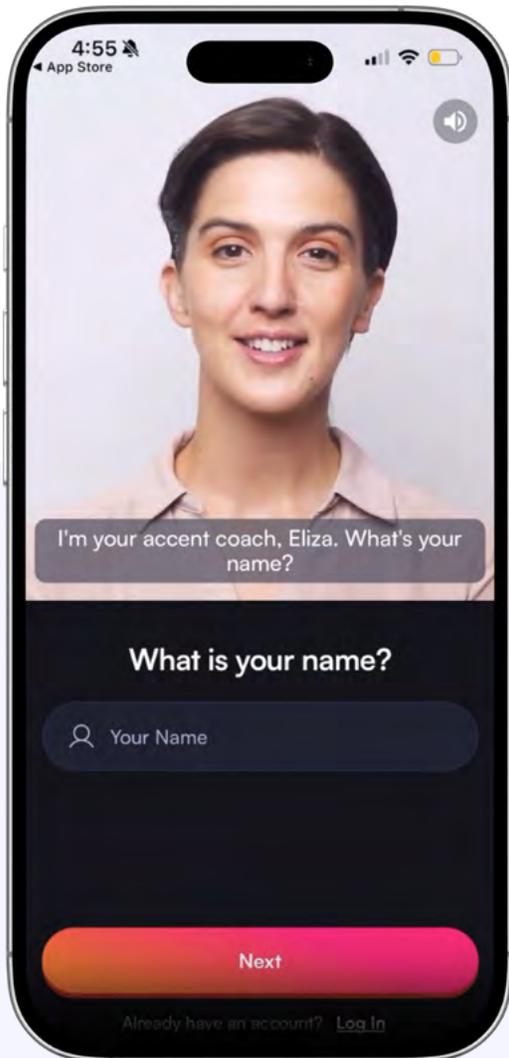
## 21. Use video content

Video-rich paywalls (or pre-paywall video explanations) build confidence and perceived product quality. Higher perceived quality will improve conversion rates.

Of course, don't just blast users with sound, you can default to having it muted with an icon to unmute. Focus on adding value with the video, not just being flashy.

Embed short video content directly in the paywall or immediately before it. Testimonials, product walkthroughs, or a quick demo that reinforces your core value can make a difference.

Videos, if done decently well, are also more engaging and interesting than simple static graphics. If your app already features video content, then it's a no-brainer to test out.



## 22. Use strategic plan structuring to nudge subscription choices

Nebula’s subscription tiers illustrate a deliberate pricing structure:

- Weekly plan with a 3-day free trial (likely converts users who are unsure).
- A 3-month plan without a trial priced slightly below the year (acting as a price decoy).
- Yearly plan with a good value proposition.

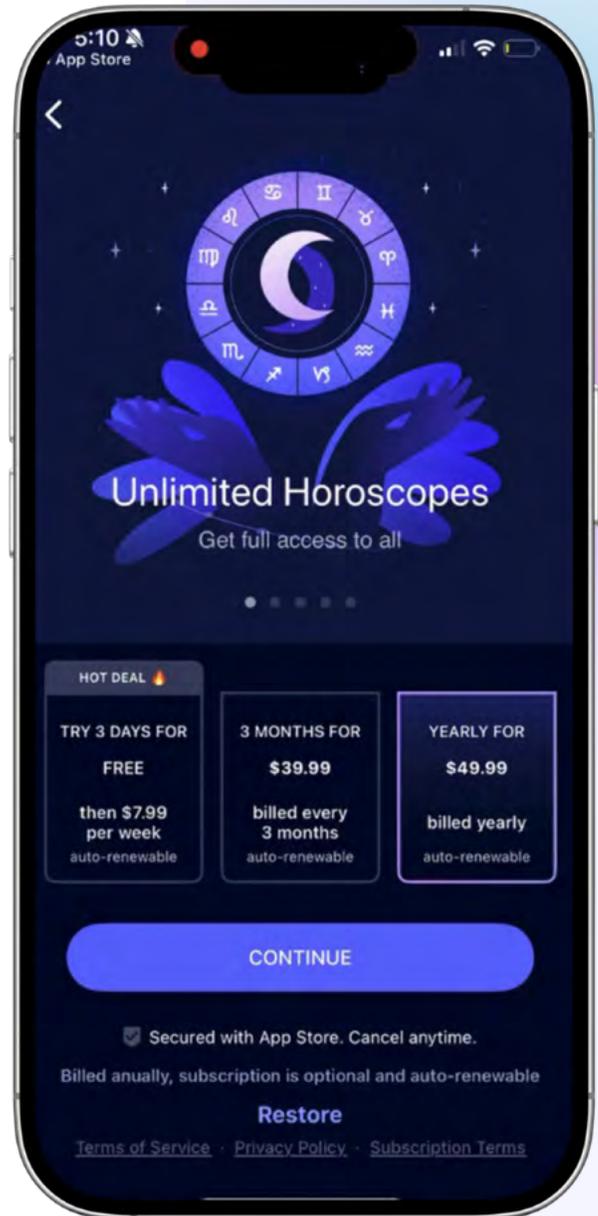
Because the 3-month plan isn’t a strong value play versus yearly, it likely makes the yearly plan look more attractive, likely boosting higher-value conversions.

### Why this matters:

- Decoy pricing or price anchoring can shift users to your preferred plan.
- Offering a trial on the plan you want them to choose (e.g., annual) can increase the likelihood they stay paid longer.

### Actionable ways to use this:

- ✓ Structure subscription offers so that one plan stands out (e.g., annual with trial).
- ✓ Avoid pricing tiers that are actual traps that can cannibalize your higher-LTV options.



## 23. Segment users by early behavior to tailor pricing offers

Instead of one paywall for everyone, look at how users behave in the first session or onboarding.

### Actions you can try:

- Low-engagement segment: Users who skip onboarding questions or don't take core actions → show a discounted offer or extended trial.

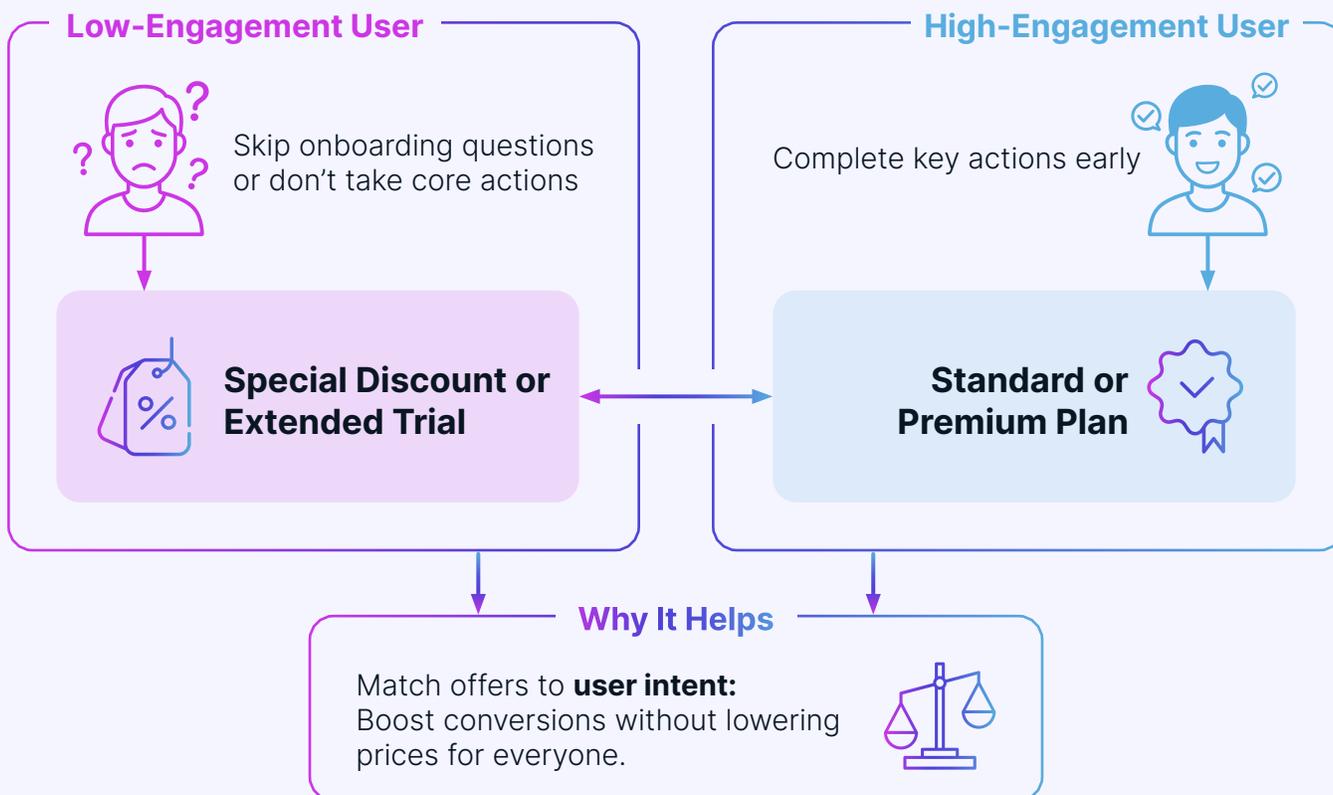
- High-engagement segment: Users who complete key actions early → show your standard or premium plan without discount.

### Why it helps:

- Users with different intent levels convert differently. Aligning offer type with early behavior can lift conversion without lowering prices for everyone.

## Targeted Offers for User Segments

Tailor your offers based on user behavior to boost conversions



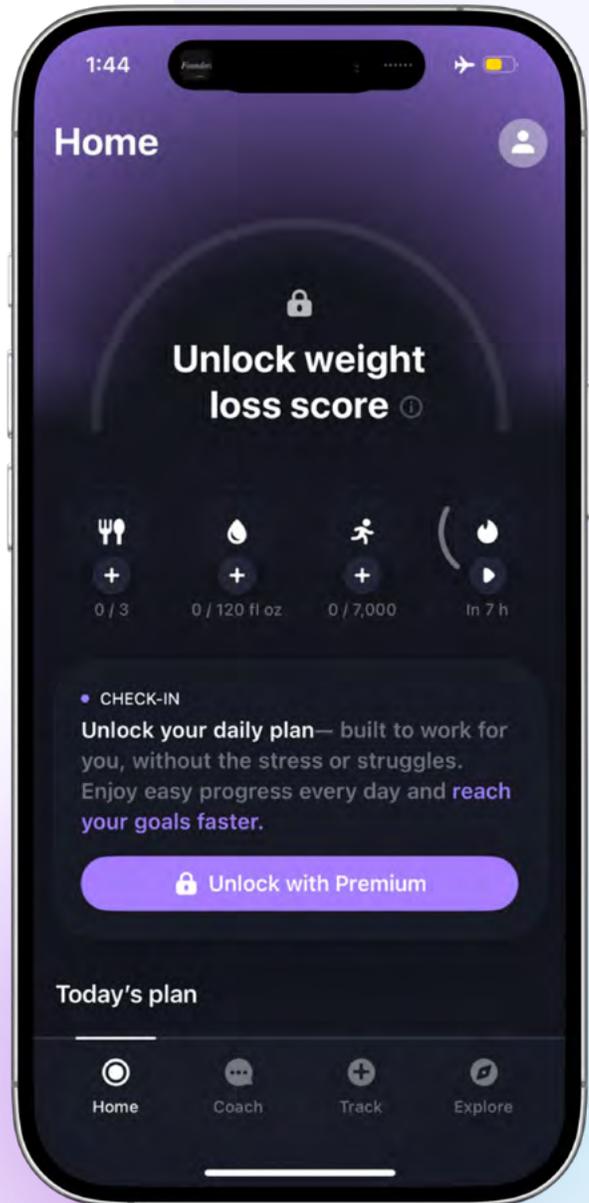
## 24. Add lock icons to premium features

### What to do:

- Place a lock symbol on content/features that require a subscription.
- Do this throughout the app, not just on the paywall — e.g., in menus, lists, cards.

### Why this matters:

- This makes value scarcity visible, reminding free users what they're missing — which tends to bump trial starts and conversions.
- In experiments from the field (e.g., Mojo team), simply showing locks increased free-to-paid conversion because users felt the cost of not subscribing.



## 25. Add more “Unlock” or “Upgrade” CTAs

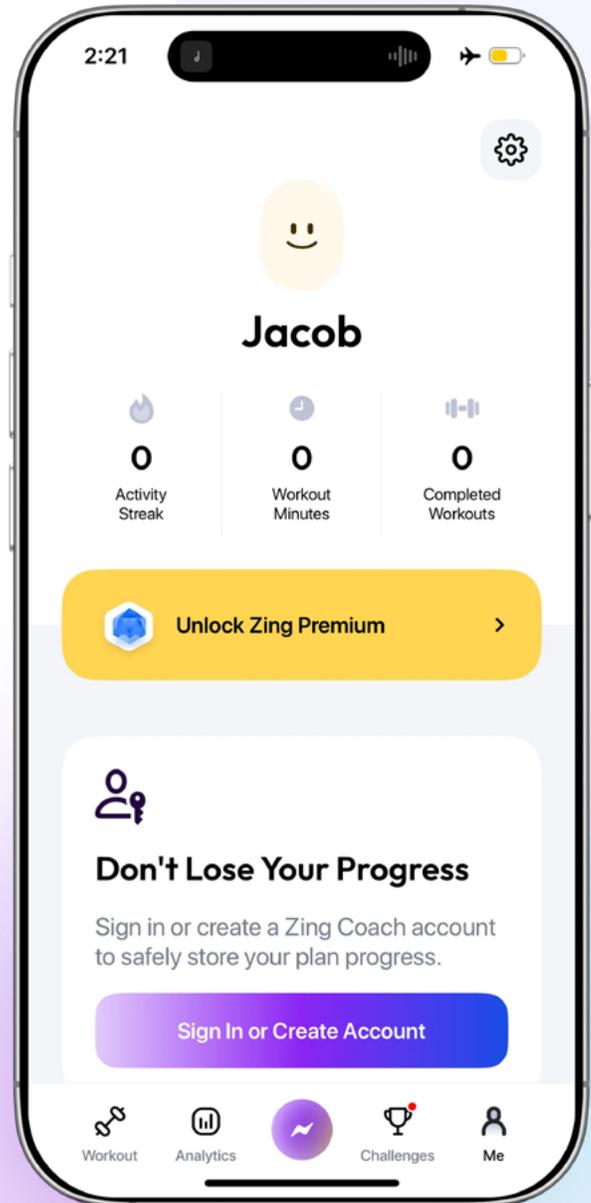
### What to do:

Don't limit “Subscribe” or “Get Premium” buttons to the paywall — also include them in:

- Settings screens
- Feature screens (e.g., text editors, dashboards)
- Profile tabs
- Sidebar or footer on major pages

### Why this matters:

Additional CTAs in context catch free users when they're already motivated and have a higher intent.



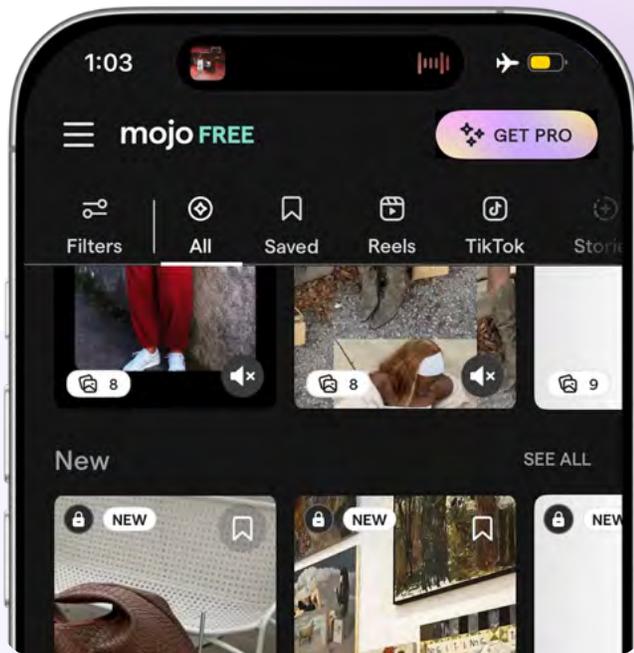
## 26. Label your app or screens as “Free Edition” in multiple spots

### What to do

- Add “Free Edition” messaging in app headers, home screens, or near feature names where free users see it often.

### Why this works

- Subconsciously reinforces the idea that the experience is limited — and that there’s more to get.
- Think of it as light scarcity framing without being pushy.



## 27. Offer a second free trial to returning users

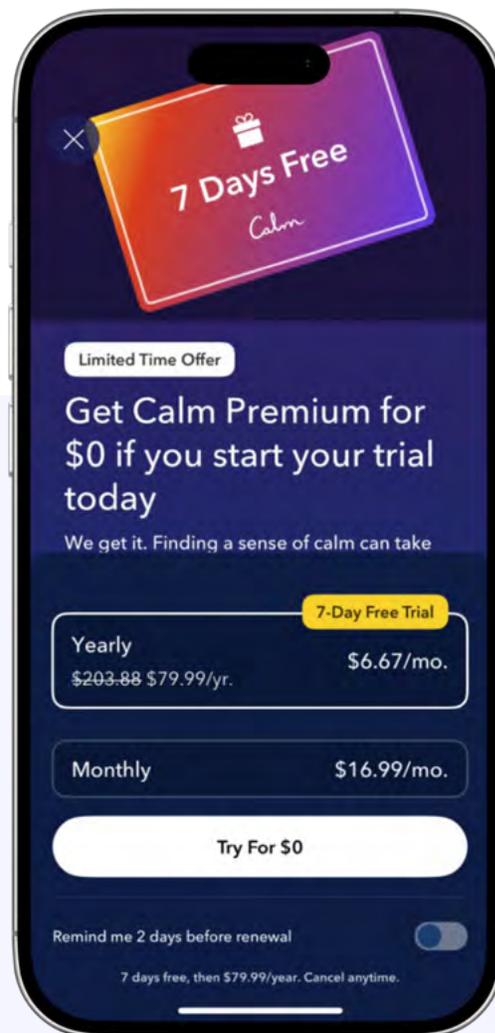
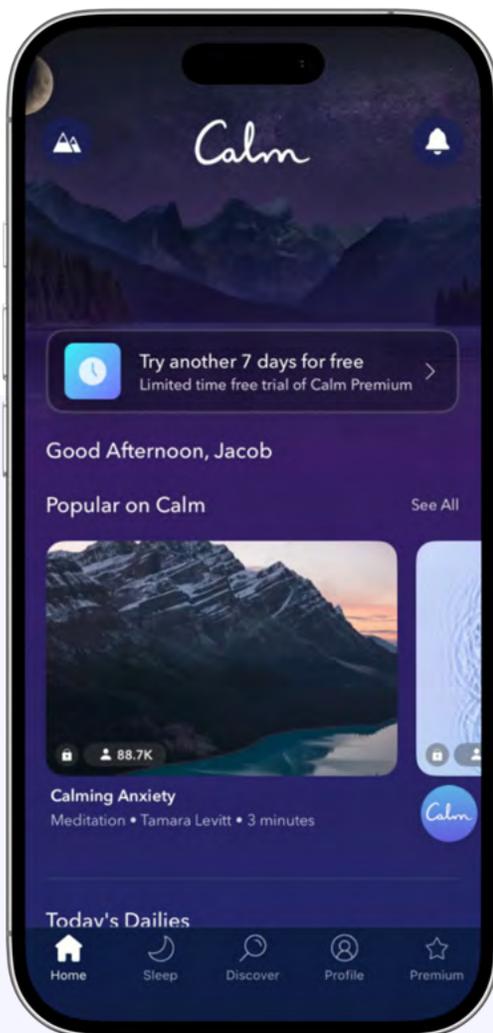
### What to do:

- When users who previously completed a trial return to the app (especially after a period of inactivity), give them another opportunity to try the product again.

### Why this is powerful:

- People who didn't convert initially may have missed the aha moment. A second trial — especially when they come back on their own — can restart intent and boost net conversion without reducing price.

Take a look at the percentage of users active in your app who have completed a trial. This really only works for apps with a freemium model.



## 28. Present a lifetime subscription option as a second offer

### What to do:

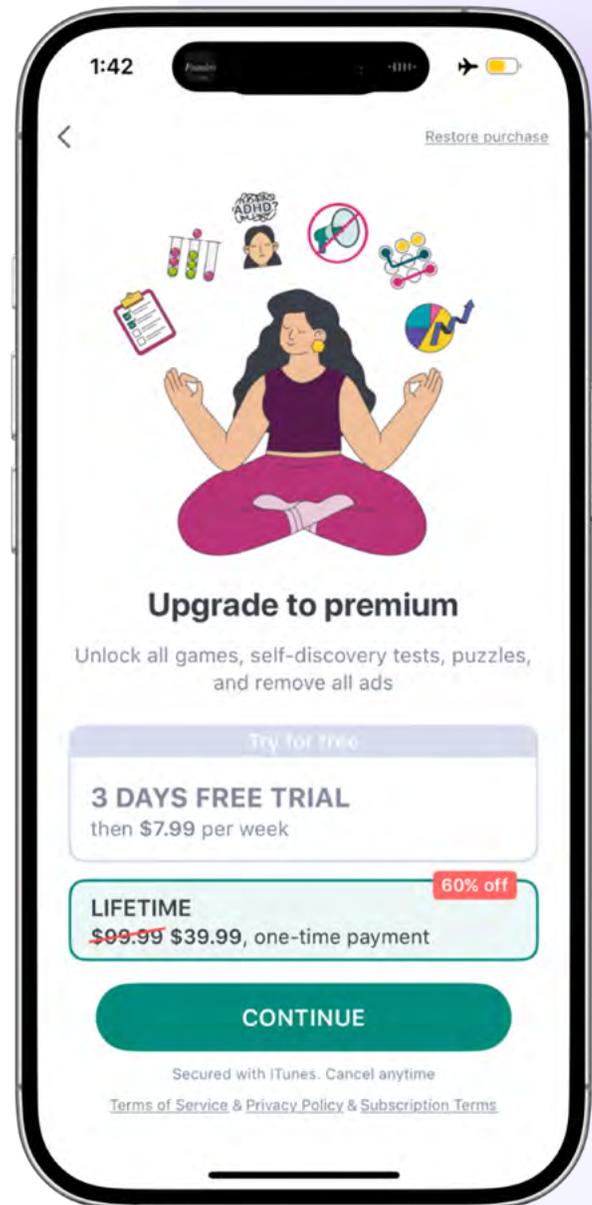
- For users who didn't convert on the initial paywall, offer a lifetime plan (priced attractively relative to annual/subscriptions) as a second chance offer later in the funnel.

### Why this works:

- Some users hesitate at recurring commitments but are comfortable with one-time purchases. Offering a lifetime option resets their frame of reference and can capture value you'd otherwise lose.

Be careful how/when you offer this as there is a subscription cannibalization risk. Likely, you want to promote this as an option to free users, or users on shorter subscriptions (e.g. monthly and weekly subscribers).

Sending this as a 2nd offer after a free user started using your app can be successful.



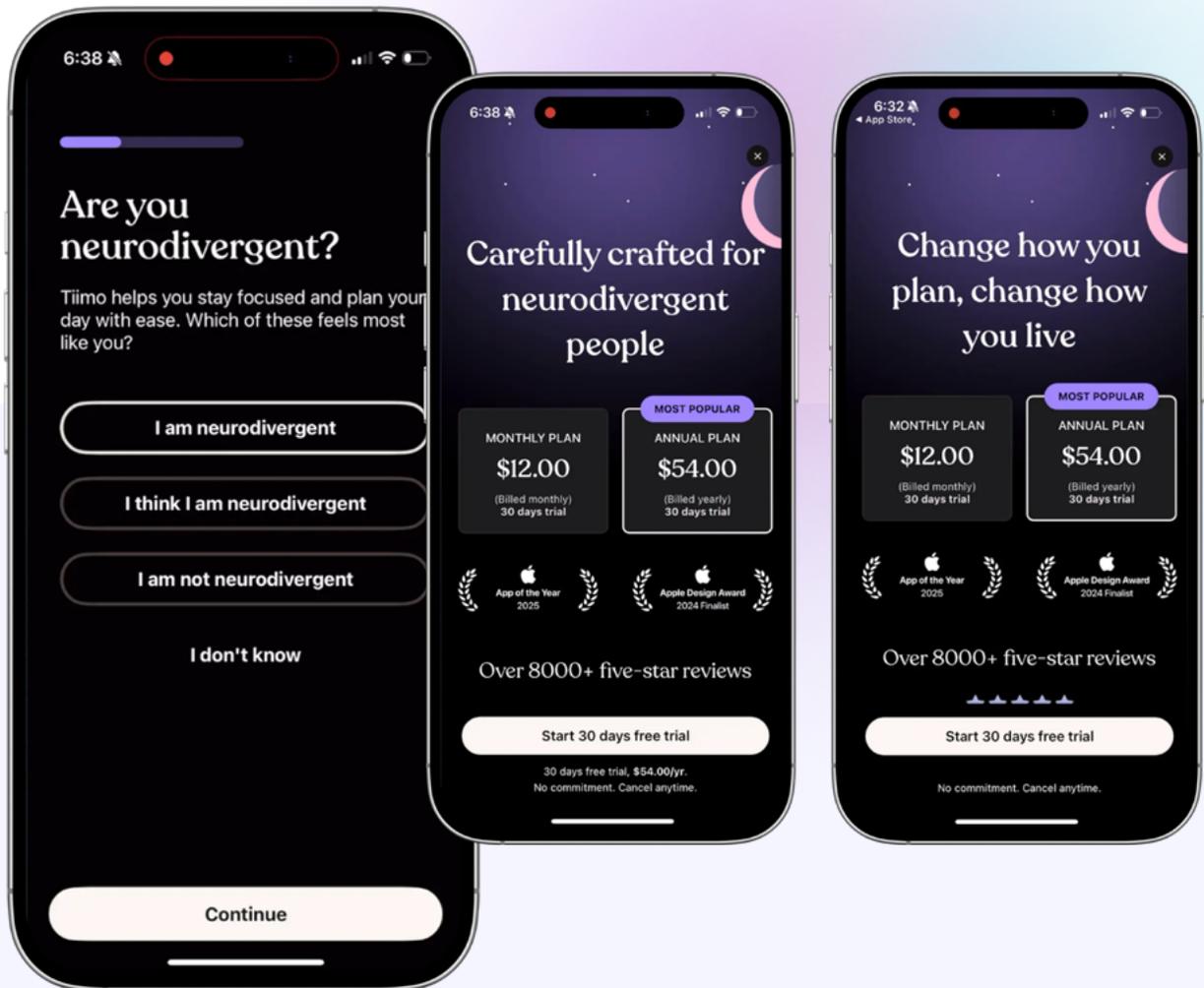
## 29. Use simple but meaningful paywall personalization

Tiimo asks whether users are neurodivergent, and if so, personalizes the paywall title — an easy personalization layer that increases relevance without complex ML.

- Even simple string replacements like “For users who want X” can increase perceived relevance and conversion.

### How to apply

- Ask a quick question during onboarding (e.g., user goal or preference) and surface that answer in your paywall text.



“

*Ask the user questions during the onboarding and use these to tailor the experience on the paywall. And second: Use conditional onboarding to filter out the high intent users from the “I cancel after the free trial” users. Both will increase your conversion rate.*



**Sven Jürgens**

”

## 30. Offer alternative purchase flows outside Apple's IAP

The new App Store rules allow apps on the US storefront to include external links or other CTAs that send users to a web purchase flow.

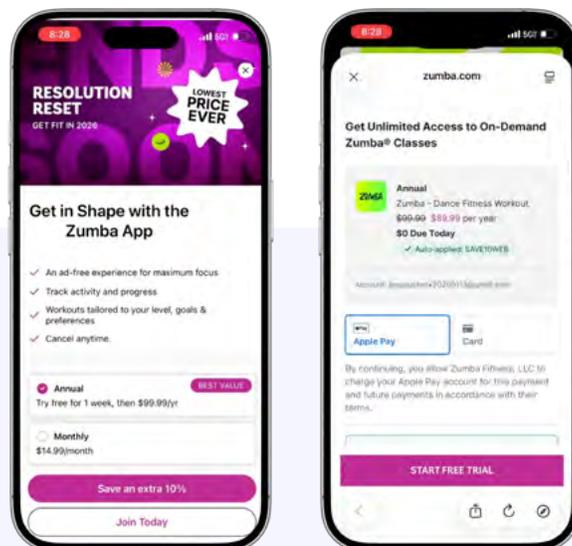
### Why this matters for subscription apps:

Apple's standard in-app purchase (IAP) fees are 15–30%, while web payment processors like Stripe typically charge ~3–4%, meaning you keep ~27% more revenue on purchases you drive outside IAP

You can reduce friction and tailor pricing more flexibly in web flows (e.g., trial offers, pricing tiers that don't fit neatly into Apple's structure).

### Actionable steps to explore:

- ✓ Test a web checkout link on your paywall or in strategic places in onboarding. Early tests suggest you don't necessarily need both IAP and web options visible. One button can point to the web purchase flow and still be allowed.
- ✓ Integrate the web purchase in an in-app web view (like a drawer or modal) so users don't fully leave the app. This has historically outperformed external browser redirects in conversion tests.
- ✓ Start with post-initial paywall upsells (e.g., discounted upgrades or alternative plans) rather than replacing your primary IAP flow right away. This can limit risk while you understand impacts.





*There's no right or wrong when talking app to web.*

*Test based on your setup and push the limits.*

*At first we had to include both web and IAP options, then not really, and now there's apps doing Apple Pay directly on the paywall. Still, you might do the same and get rejected. Apple is being ambiguous on purpose.*

*Therefore, factor in the risks, go ahead and test and see for yourself. There's enough examples out there already.*

*If you're using a paywall builder they might already offer a technical solution. If not, you can integrate the Stripe SDK and use payment sheet or directly Apple Pay.*



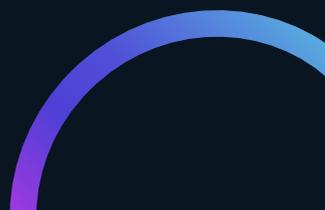
**Cristian Rotari**





**CHAPTER**  
**03**

**Retention,  
Engagement &  
Lifecycle**

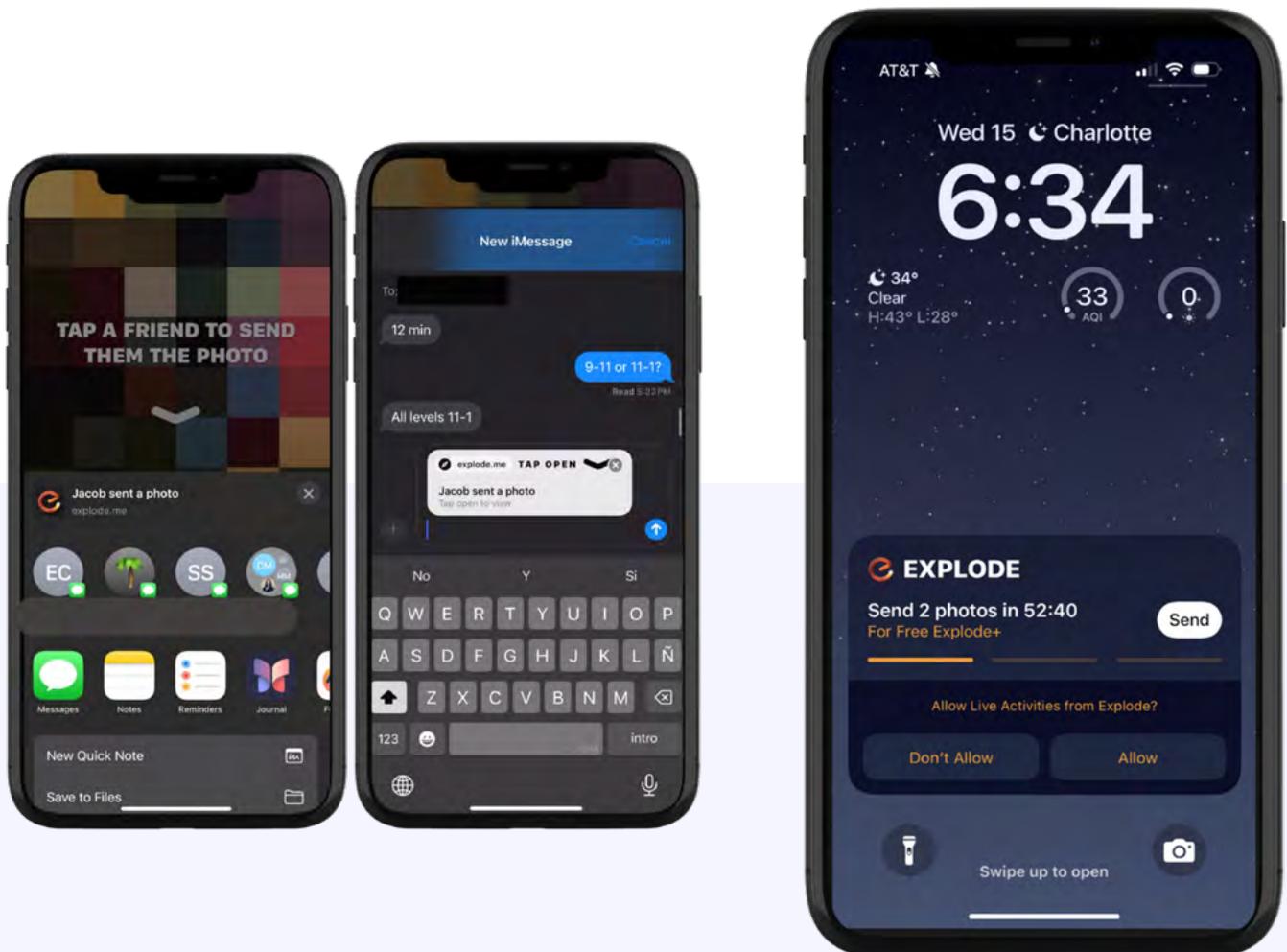


## 31. Get creative with OS-level features to boost retention and re-engagement

Explode uses App Clips to let people try core features without install, and Live Activities to surface timely offers outside the app (like timers and reward prompts).

### Examples to adapt:

- **App Clips:** let users experience key value instantly before subscribing (e.g., preview core features or a mini interactive tutorial).
- **Live Activities / Lock Screen Widgets:** surface dynamic subscription reminders, streaks, or usage prompts that pull users back in contextually.



## 32. Use rewards to make user behaviors more resistant to churn

A variable reinforcement schedule, where rewards arrive unpredictably around a consistent average, is far more motivating and habit-forming than giving the same reward every time. This is the same principle that makes slot machines addictive: users keep engaging because they don't know when the next reward will hit, but they expect one eventually.

- Tie rewards to meaningful behaviors (e.g., completing routines, using the app consistently) rather than random taps
- Aim for average consistency (like every 5 sessions the user gets something rewarding), but keep the exact timing variable so users stay curious and engaged.

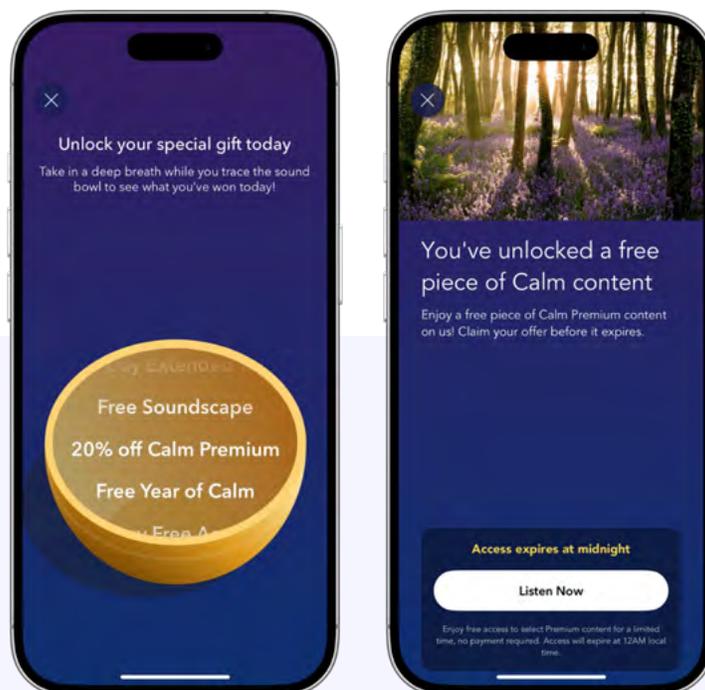
### How to apply this in a subscription app:

- Reward actions unpredictably rather than every time (e.g., sometimes unlock premium content after a user completes a session or goal, sometimes give bonus content or perks).

### Actionable experiment:

Run an A/B test where one group gets fixed rewards (e.g., one free item every day) and another group gets variable rewards (unpredictable unlocks/bonus content). Measure engagement depth (sessions per week) and retention (D7/ D14) to see whether unpredictability drives stronger habits.

### Calm rewards



## 33. Use iOS Widgets and Live Activities to stay top-of-mind without notifications

Widgets on the home screen and Live Activities (lock screen) can keep your app visible and useful even when users aren't actively in it. These surfaces are "glanceable". They deliver value at a glance rather than demanding attention like push notifications do.

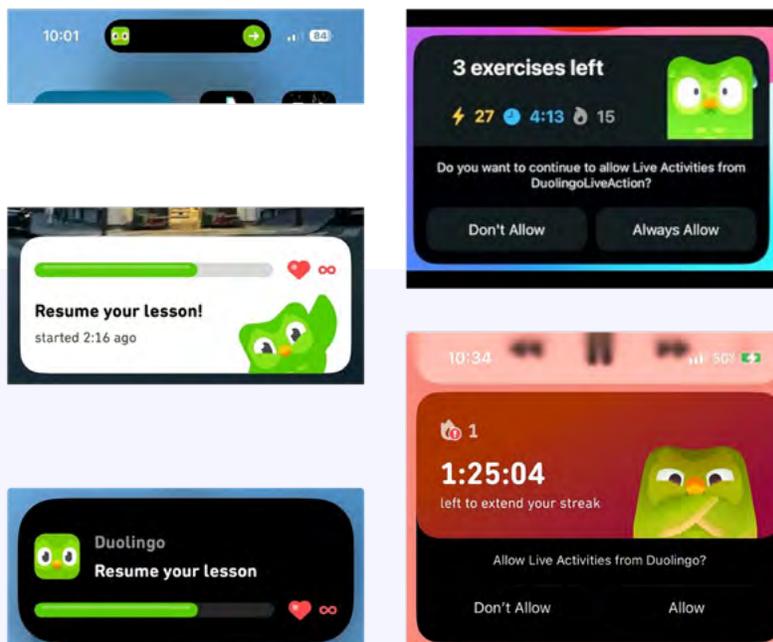
### How this helps you:

- Increase recurring engagement:** Users who add your widget are reminded of your value every time they see it. Widgets can show key metrics (e.g., progress, streaks, next tasks), and Live Activities can update in real time during ongoing sessions
- Reduce push fatigue:** Many users ignore push messages; widgets and Live Activities offer persistent presence without noise.

### Actionable ways to implement:

- ✓ Build a core value widget that shows meaningful metrics (like goal progress, streaks, minutes used, etc.)
- ✓ Use Live Activities for real-time events tied to user activities (e.g., a meditation timer, session tracker, or countdown to next recommended action).

For widgets, only a percentage will ever use them, but those who do will have much stronger retention!



## 34. Use a breadth of email types to guide users through your funnel

Simple (a weight-loss coach app) sends 15+ distinct email types that each serve a different purpose in moving users toward value and conversion. The sequence evolves over time, first driving users toward a core action and then toward conversion offers like quizzes, personalized plans, or discounts.

### Actionable ways to apply this in your app:

- ✓ Map out multiple email triggers that correlate with key user behaviors. e.g., account creation, first core action, first inactivity day, approaching end of trial, etc.
- ✓ For each trigger, create different themes such as:
  - A value reinforcement email (e.g., “Here’s how others succeed using this feature”)
  - A behavioral incentive (e.g., “Try this first task to unlock insights”)
  - A personalized opportunity (e.g., “Your plan matches these goals”)
  - A limited offer or discount email
  - Send sequences rather than single blasts, so you can nurture users who didn’t act on the previous one.

### Simple email examples

Hey there 🌟

Looking **to burn fat faster**, boost your energy, and feel lighter every day?

💡 There's a simple, science-backed method that works — **intermittent fasting**. And when you pair it with gentle physical activity, the results can be life-changing.

#### Why this combo works:

- ✓ Fasting activates **cellular cleanup** (autophagy)
- ✓ It **lowers insulin levels** — your body starts burning fat for fuel
- ✓ Your hunger hormones rebalance — **cravings go down**
- ✓ Add in light exercise — and **fat loss accelerates**
- ✓ Even a daily walk or stretch + fasting = **real, lasting results**

Thousands have already transformed their lives with Simple's personalized fasting and movement plans. Now it's your turn.

👉 [Take the quiz to get your custom plan](#) — it only takes a few minutes.

Start now for up to 50% off

Simple

# Take our quiz

Get your personal weight loss blueprint

**START NOW**



## The SIMPLE difference

Curious to know how SIMPLE stacks up against other weight loss apps? Here are 3 things that make our unique method shine.

Simple

Your order is incomplete

## We've reserved your personal plan price for the next 48 hours

**Get 50% off now →**



Simple

94%

## We calculated that you're a 94% match

Based on your answers so far, we've crunched the numbers—and you're a 94% match for a **Simple personalized plan** at our best discount!

Use promo code: **TOP70**

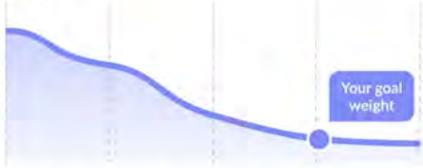
**Start now for 70% off**

SIMPLE

## Welcome to SIMPLE!

We are so happy you're here.

Your weight



**Hey Jacob! Welcome to SIMPLE!**

You have some important goals. Like losing weight. Changing your relationship with food. Feeling in control of your eating habits.

Goals like this can feel pretty daunting. **Let's make this process as easy as it can be**, by committing to just one SIMPLE task for the week ahead.

**Your daily action this week:** Track your food 

It's a powerful habit to kick off a weight loss journey.

- It creates awareness of your food choices — and awareness enables change. (You can't change what you don't know.)
- It lets you practice taking action — and action moves you forward.
- It allows you to make a promise to yourself then keep it — building confidence in your ability to progress.

Log your food at least once a day and you're on your way to weight loss.

**START NOW**

## 35. Use win-back at key lifecycle points

- Trigger win-back offers not only at cancellation, but also when trials or full subscriptions expire.
- For users who started but didn't complete a trial or purchase, show them a second free trial or an immediate discount on an annual/subscription plan. This can re-ignite interest by lowering friction or cost barriers at a moment of indecision.

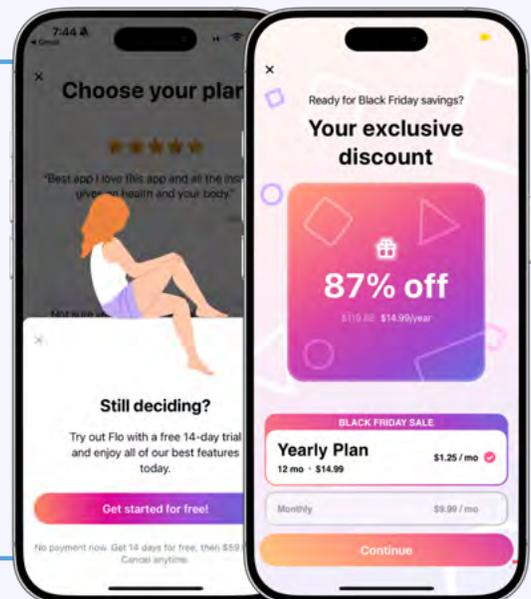
### How to apply this:

- ✓ Add logic to your churn/offboarding flows that automatically segment and re-targets users who canceled or let a trial lapse with a tailored offer (e.g., "Welcome back, here's another trial" or "Save X% if you re-subscribe today").
- ✓ Use behavioral signals to trigger exit offers with lower-commitment pricing or extended trials.

Speed matters here. Usually, the sooner you send or show the offer, the higher the impact.



*Winback offers are the single most under utilized strategy in subscription apps. They can easily add 10-25% to your bottom line.*



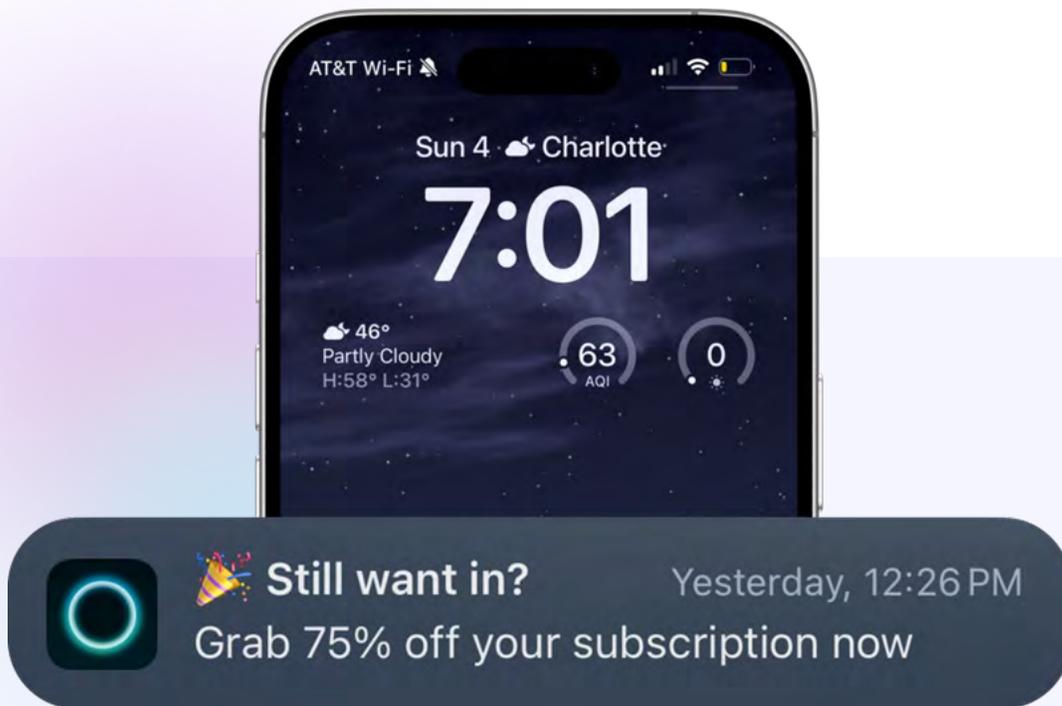
**Vahe Baghdasaryan** is the founder of Tangent, the leading revenue-intelligence consultancy for subscription apps. Tangent partners with some of the most recognizable apps in the world, including Cal AI, NGL, ReciMe, and more.

## 36. Send a push notification immediately after new users exit your app

Right after a new user closes the app without converting, send a push notification that includes a conversion-oriented offer (e.g., a discount or trial reminder). This works because new users have the highest intent and may just need a nudge or reminder.

### How to implement

- Trigger a notification minutes after first exit if the user hasn't started a trial.
- Deep link to a discount paywall in your app.

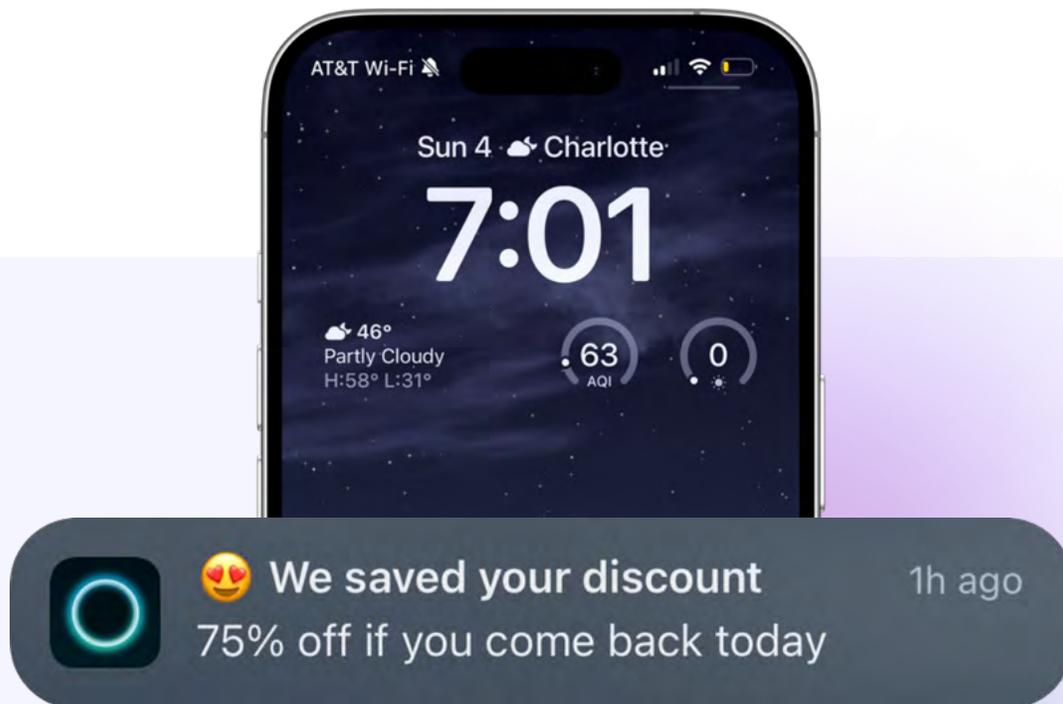


## 37. Send a second offer the next day

People forget. If someone doesn't act on the first conversion push, follow up the next day with the same offer. This simple repetition can capture users who were simply distracted or wanted more time.

### How to implement:

- Schedule a day-later push with the same or slightly tweaked offer copy.
- Keep the message concise and reminder-focused, like "Still thinking about it? Here's your chance again!"

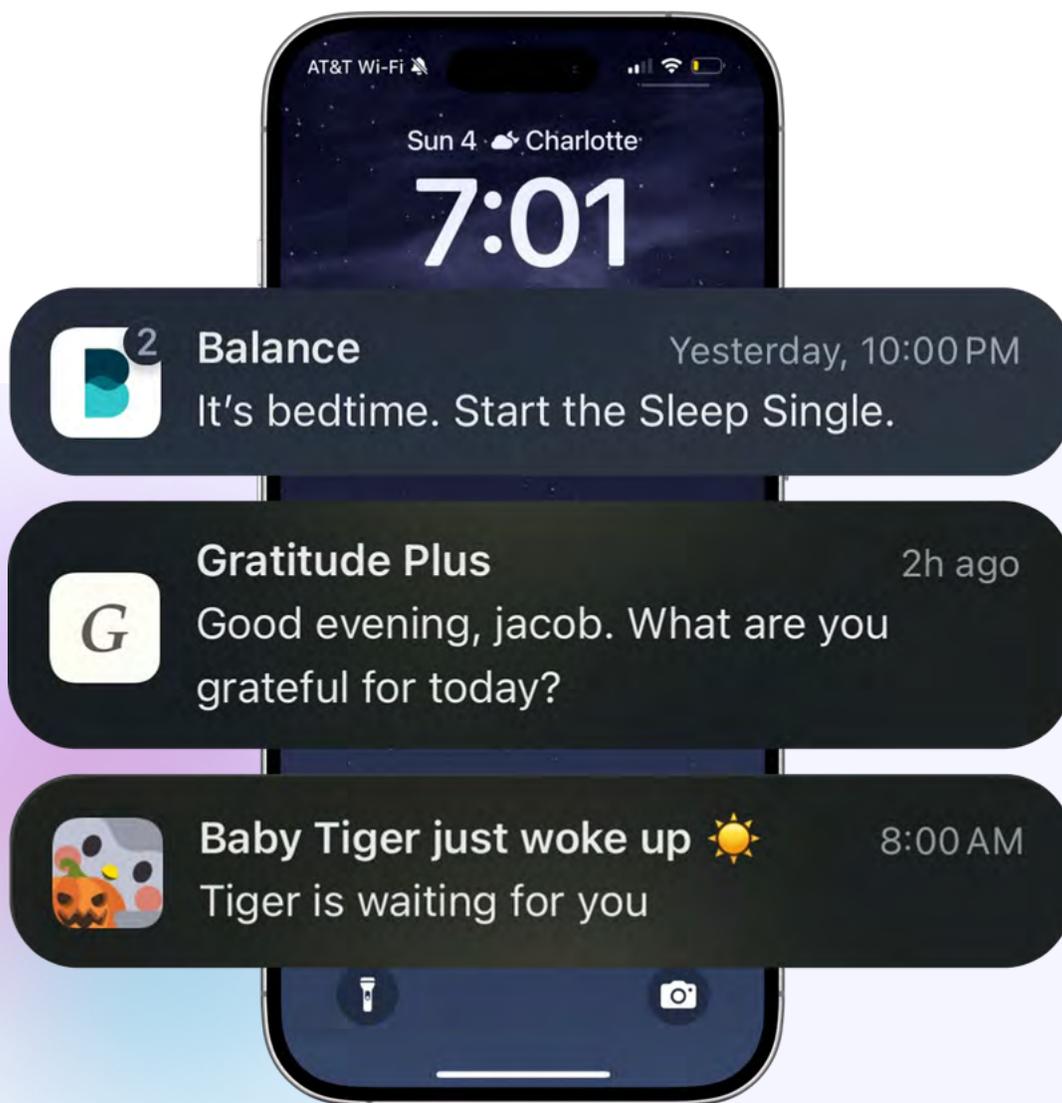


## 38. Use push for a regular reminder tied to your product's real use case

If your app has a habit or recurring use pattern (e.g., fitness sessions, meditation, journaling), send reminders that tie back to real-world user behavior. This is the foundation of most “reminder” pushes — and it works because it aligns with user expectations.

### How to implement:

- Identify the natural frequency of your product (daily, weekly).
- Trigger reminders at expected times based on that cadence — for example, the morning for wellness apps or after typical work hours for productivity.



## 39. Don't focus on lifecycle marketing until the rest of your funnel is strong

The ceiling for revenue uplift from lifecycle marketing (email, push notifications, and SMS) is limited because most subscriptions convert early, often on Day 0, so lifecycle work only moves the needle so far.

### What to do with this insight:

- Fix your product conversion and onboarding first. Strong early engagement gives lifecycle campaigns something to amplify. Campaigns won't overcome a weak core funnel.
- Only invest in a lifecycle tool (and possibly a person to manage it) once you can reliably convert a good baseline of trial users.
- For smaller apps, start simple with product-triggered messages (e.g., push reminders, basic email triggers) before layered lifecycle sequences or heavy automation.

A good rule of thumb is that you can increase revenue by 10% with lifecycle marketing. Plan your investment based on this number.



*If you do the basics ( turn on some winback campaigns, run some sales campaigns, re-engage inactive users), it's likely closer to a 10% increase in revenue ceiling.*

*So if your app is doing \$1M ARR, and you think you can increase your revenue 10%, you can spend \$100k.*

*But ideally, you make some money, so you want to spend less than \$100k.*

*That could justify \$10-20k on a marketing tool. And another \$30k per year on a part-time lifecycle marketer.*

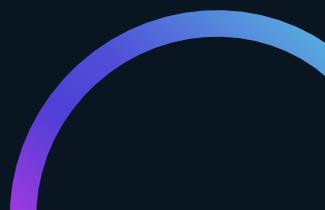




**CHAPTER**

**04**

**Analytics,  
Segmentation &  
Testing**

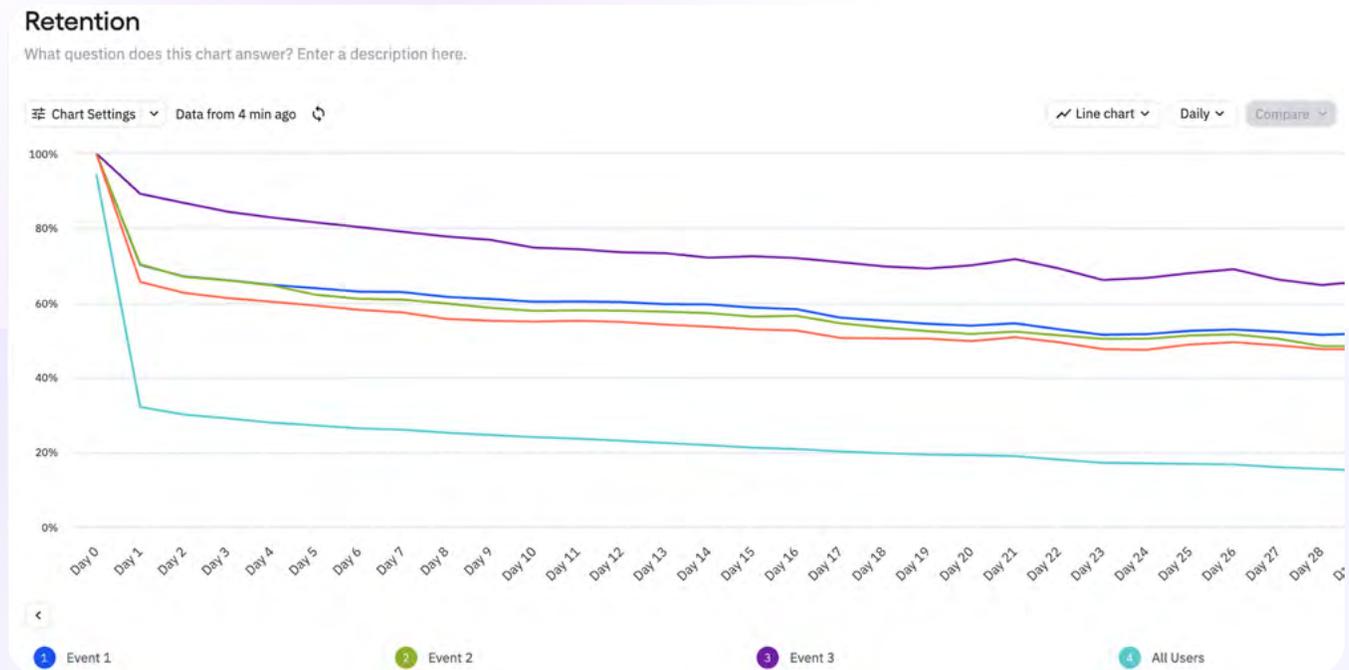


## 40. Define a Specific Activation Metric (not just “activated”)

Activation should not be vague. It should be a quantitative metric tied to user behavior that predicts long-term retention and value. It’s not enough to say “user onboarded”; you must define a metric that correlates with later retention and monetization.

How to do it (step-by-step):

- ✓ Brainstorm a set of candidate events that users might complete early and that signal value received (e.g., “completed first core action,” “set a goal,” “finished 2 sessions”).
- ✓ Select events that are:
  - Meaningful — tied to value your app promises
  - Early — can be completed soon after signup
  - Predictive — correlated with longer-term retention
- ✓ Combine events into a defined activation metric (e.g., “completed 2 core actions within the first week”).



## 41. Treat the Aha! Moment as a sequence, not a single event

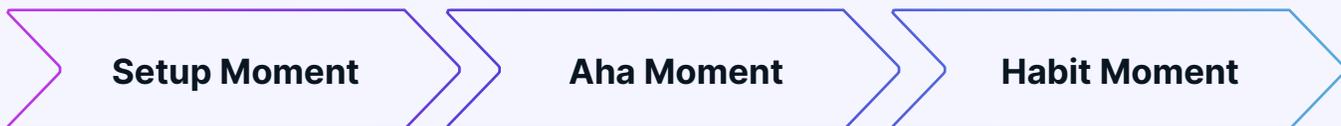
The Aha! moment — where the user realizes your app's value — might be different from the numerical activation metric. Activation can be a series of steps leading to that Aha! moment.

### Actionable steps:

- ✓ Map out your user journey to identify:
  - **Setup moments:** preliminary actions necessary before real value can be experienced
  - **Aha! moments:** the first real emotional/value breakthrough (e.g., first completed task, first meaningful result)
  - **Habit moments:** events that indicate the user is forming a pattern (e.g., repeated use)
- ✓ Make your onboarding explicitly guide users from setup → Aha! → habit by:
  - Highlighting why each action matters
  - Rewarding progress with feedback or UI cues
  - Removing steps that don't contribute to reaching Aha! quicker

### Work backwards to start building a habit

- 01** Doing the core product action multiple times is a Habit Moment
- 02** The "Aha!" moment is when a user first realizes the product value
- 03** The Setup moment is the step(s) that lead a user to the Aha Moment



“

*I came to think that the phrase ‘aha moment’ is actually misleading. It implies one big moment. A single instant of clarity. Developers get in their head about that.*

*The apps converting best don’t chase that moment. They engineer a sequence: a peak start moment, a visual insight or action before the paywall that justifies the ask and deliberate steps that build a habit from there. At each point, the job is to deliver value and make sure the user recognises what they just received.*

*Don’t look for your aha moment. Make it. And make it a sequence.*

”



**Marcus Burke** is a Meta Ads expert, consultant, growth advisor, and one of the most savvy minds on subscription apps out there. He’s been featured on the Subclub Podcast, GrowthGems, Business of Apps, and the Price Power Podcast for subscription app growth expertise.

## 42. Use Segmentation and Correlation to Validate Your Activation Metric

Whether an activation metric is meaningful depends on whether it's predictive of retention. It encourages checking correlations between potential activation events and long-term value.

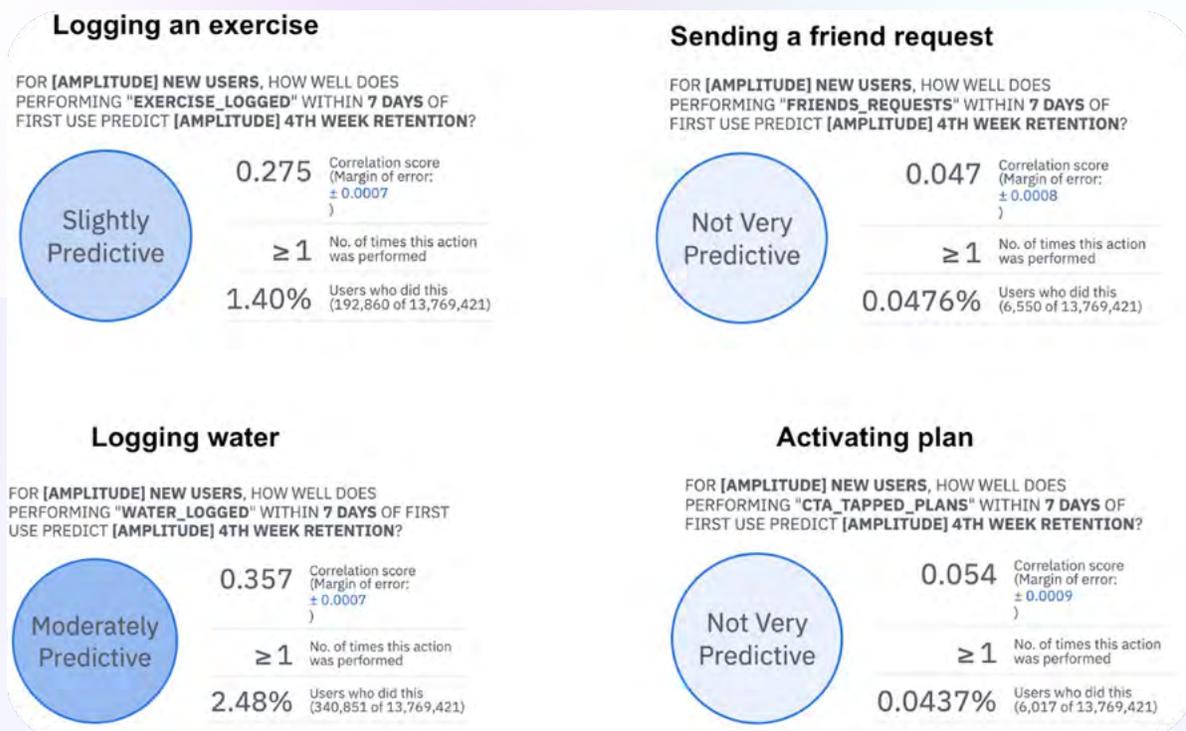
### Immediate practice:

- ✓ Run cohort analysis on potential activation events:
  - Split users by whether they completed Event X early
  - Compare retention and monetization between groups
- Prioritize events that predict both retention and revenue outcomes

### Example segmentation tests:

- Users who completed Feature A vs. those who did not
- Users who finished onboarding screens vs. users who abandoned early
- Users who hit the activation metric vs. those who didn't

From Olga's post





*Sometimes, even when you follow best practices, the data doesn't return the expected output. Or it doesn't make sense.*

- o Check if your data is significant. This is the most common cause of flawed analysis. You may not have enough data for certain actions, even if they are core features. If this is the case, you have to work with qualitative data - use user surveys and research. You can't model Activation just yet if the data isn't there.*
- o For subscription apps, measure Activation against paid renewals. Do NOT measure Activation against just any retention metric in Mixpanel. Activation should be tied to paid renewals for each plan you offer. If your app is new, you may not have enough renewal data, especially for annual subscriptions. In this case, you may try your luck with a proxy metric - use activity data for paid users.*



**Olga Berezovsky** led a product analytics team at MyFitnessPal and previously worked at Change.org, Microsoft, First Republic Bank, and quite a few big and small startups. She is the author of Data Analysis Journal with 30k+ subscribers, and runs her own Data and Analytics consulting company, Scopeclarity.

## 43. Add a How Did You Hear About Us question

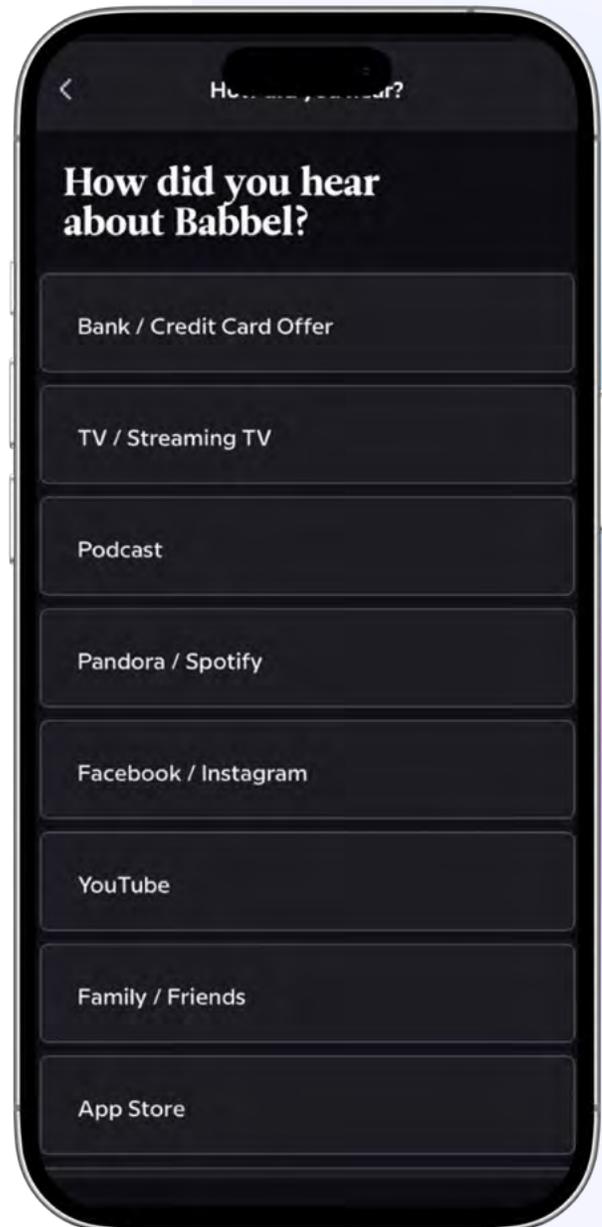
A “How did you hear about us?” (HDYHAU) question doesn’t replace traditional attribution (like SKAN, App Store Connect sources, or modeling), but it adds another valuable perspective to what your tools show you. Especially in a post-ATT world where last-click data is imperfect.

### Why this matters for subscription apps:

- Self-reported data gives you qualitative context that analytics often miss. A user might recall seeing your brand on TikTok before they ever clicked a UA ad.
- When you correlate HDYHAU responses with performance (e.g., segments with high LTV), you can identify high-value channels that your attribution system might undercount.

### How to apply it:

- ✓ Add a short HDYHAU question later in onboarding (e.g., after users complete key actions) so it doesn’t hurt conversion, but still captures recall.
- ✓ Collect it in a way you can join with your analytics data
- ✓ Compare self-reported sources vs. attributed sources to spot discrepancies worth testing in UA campaigns.





**Sylvain Gauchet** is a Full-funnel growth advisor and consultant for subscription apps and writes one of the best newsletters in the business, **Growth Gems**. (He's hard at work mining gems everyday, that's why he looks like the way he does...)



**Thomas Petit** is one of the most knowledgeable people in the mobile growth space. And he is very generous with sharing his insights. Follow him on **LinkedIn** or **X** to get a little smarter (and at a minimum, be entertained).

**Sylvain:** Having it early in the funnel doesn't do anything for UA, it's more of an onboarding optimization topic. Several apps like Duolingo have it right away, others right before email sign up. You have to test what works best.

**Thomas:** Attribution is by nature imperfect, even more so in these post-ATT times. The IDFA-based measurement was never perfect, but the simplicity to rely on it made it the standard for most. Any last-click based attribution (the most common) is flawed. There is no perfect substitute, and I recommend to embrace complexity by comparing different methods to make more informed decisions.

HDYHAU is a complementary method on top of the above. In my opinion, never a real substitute, given user's perception may differ from the advertising spend, and some channels are harder to match (in particular gaming adnetworks, DSP, Admob, etc.)

**Sylvain:** Age is good to have alongside HDYHAU to compare with what you see in Meta. The most useful I've seen age be is when launching new channels (or campaigns with new optimizations or audiences) in order to understand how the traffic differs compared to what you usually have. Typical example is launching a new channel and conversions are crap: strong chances are you're bringing in younger users than usual.

**And one last parting thought from Thomas that emphasizes attention to detail is important:** Don't forget that wording is critical here. The microcopy can change the answer distribution A LOT. Some options are simple (TV?), some are not at all. For search & the appstore in general: do you mark "appstore"? "search"? Does search include brand or not? And cover appstore & google web? Do you need to know featurings vs search? ASA vs not? Hard choices to make!!

## 44. Structure your A/B tests properly. Isolate variables, calculate sample size, and run tests to completion

### Key parts of a rigorous test:

- ✓ Calculate sample size and test duration in advance
  - Don't guess. Estimate how many users you need based on baseline conversion and expected lift.
  - Consider your minimum detectable effect so you don't end tests before there's enough data.
  
- ✓ Test one thing at a time
  - Isolate variables (e.g., just copy, or just layout) so results are attributable to a single change.
  - Avoid overlapping experiments that can muddy results by splitting your audience unintentionally.
  
- ✓ Don't stop early! Even if you hit statistical significance early
  - Let the test run for the full pre-determined length. Results can swing day-to-day if you stop too soon.
  
- ✓ Randomize audiences and check tracking
  - Make sure your experiment assigns users randomly and consistently (the same user should always see the same variant).
  - Double-check that all events you plan to measure (e.g., trial starts, key actions) are being tracked before you launch. This avoids discovering missing data after your test runs.



**Actionable checklist before launching any test:**

- Hypothesis written
- Sample size / experiment length estimated
- Single variable isolated
- Tracking validated
- Experiment schedule aligned with other tests

## 45. Break down core KPIs by segment (don't look at averages)

Evaluate retention, conversion, activation, ARPU, renewal, and cancellation rates for each segment, not just the overall average.

### Start with:

- **Platform:** iOS vs Android vs Web
- **Geo/demographics:** Country, age bracket
- **Attribution source:** Organic vs paid channels

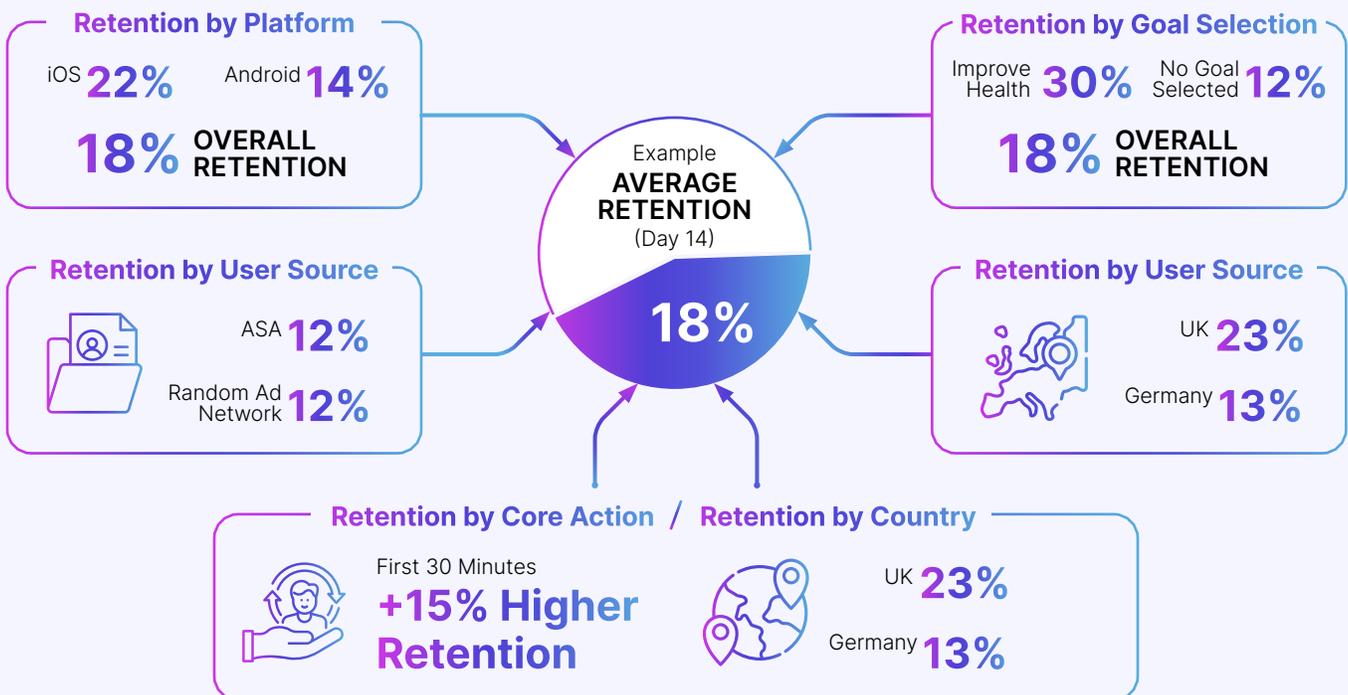
- **Zero-party data segments:** Onboarding questions like “What’s your goal?”
- **Behavioral segments:** First 30-minute actions, feature usage patterns

### Actionable test:

Build dashboards that show D7/D14 retention and trial conversion by segment → pinpoint segments that overperform and underperform, then design experiments targeted specifically at underperformers.

## Averages Don't Tell the Whole Story

If you only look at aggregated data, you risk missing key insights.



Different segments have very different **retention rates**. Dig deeper to uncover **actionable insights**.

## 46. Use cohorts to isolate changes over time

Segment users by install date (cohorts) when you analyze retention and conversion. This tells you whether product or marketing changes actually move the needle.

- Compare segments like “users from ASA campaigns in Week X” vs “users from another channel in Week X.”
- Look for patterns in drop-offs, not just overall retention %.

### Actionable steps:

- Build weekly/monthly retention cohorts and track changes after product updates or campaign launches.

Understanding user cohort analysis is one of the most important steps for user acquisition and monetization teams.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	New Users	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10
May 1, 2022	2426	51%	41%	32%	27%	24%	23%	22%	21%	19%	19%
May 8, 2022	1261	49%	39%	30%	25%	22%	21%	20%	19%	17%	17%
May 15, 2022	3153	52%	42%	33%	28%	25%	24%	23%	22%	20%	20%
May 22, 2022	1808	53%	43%	34%	29%	26%	25%	24%	23%	21%	21%
May 29, 2022	3374	48%	38%	29%	24%	21%	20%	19%	18%	16%	16%
June 5, 2022	3686	47%	37%	28%	23%	20%	19%	18%	17%	15%	15%
June 12, 2022	4622	45%	35%	26%	21%	18%	17%	16%	15%	13%	13%
June 19, 2022	5293	38%	28%	19%	14%	11%	10%	9%	8%	6%	6%
June 26, 2022	5699	48%	38%	29%	24%	21%	20%	19%	18%	16%	16%
July 3, 2022	5756	49%	39%	30%	25%	22%	21%	20%	19%	17%	17%
July 10, 2022	6235	50%	40%	31%	26%	23%	22%	21%	20%	18%	
July 17, 2022	5923	51%	41%	32%	27%	24%	23%	22%	21%		
July 24, 2022	6379	52%	42%	33%	28%	25%	24%	23%			
July 31, 2022	7139	50%	40%	31%	26%	23%	22%				
August 7, 2022	9907	49%	39%	30%	25%	22%					
August 14, 2022	7841	52%	42%	33%	28%						
August 21, 2022	9355	53%	43%	34%							
August 28, 2022	8711	52%	42%								
September 4, 2022	7741	40%									

## 47. Segment A/B test results to find hidden wins

A/B testing is possibly the most underutilized segmentation opportunity.

The normal pattern of behavior is: “Let’s A/B test this. Darn, it didn’t work. Or, great, it won! Roll it out to everyone!”

In reality, the results of your A/B test are much more complicated.

Don’t treat A/B tests as binary wins/losses. Segment the results by meaningful groups such as:

- Device type (iOS/Android)
- Geo/country

- Onboarding choices or zero-party inputs
- High vs low activation groups

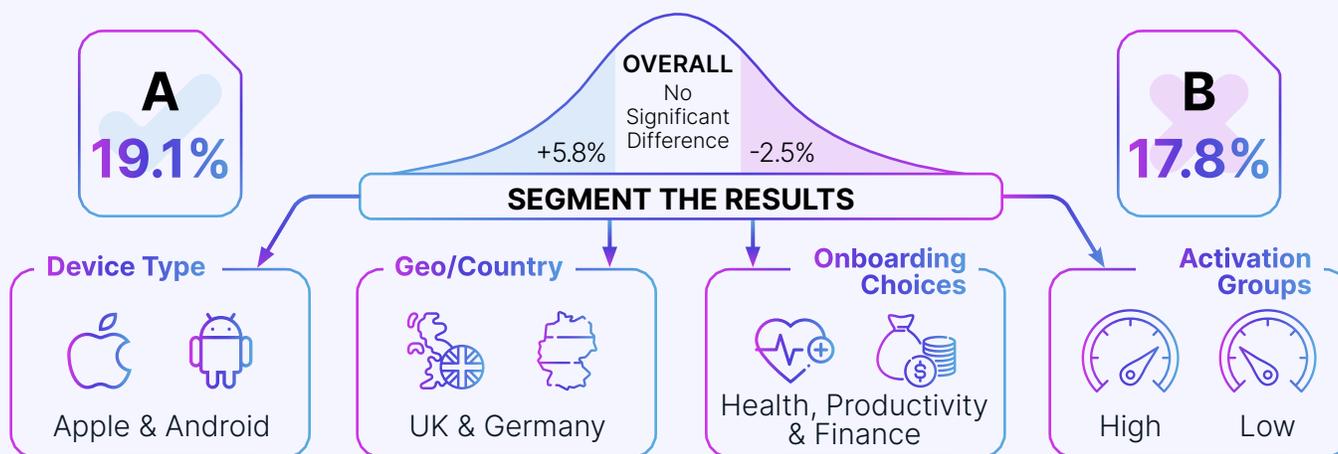
This will lead to understanding what is actually happening with your A/B test.

### Why this matters:

A test might show no overall lift, but could reveal a strong positive lift for a specific segment (e.g., age 25–34 or users from specific acquisition sources). That lets you roll out a variant only to segments that benefit.

## Segmented A/B Test Results: Go Beyond Simple Wins & Losses

Don’t judge A/B tests as binary outcomes. Dig deeper to find valuable insights for specific user segments



### Why It Matters

A test might show no overall lift, but could reveal **a strong positive lift for a specific segment.**



## 48. Blend zero-party data with real behavior over time

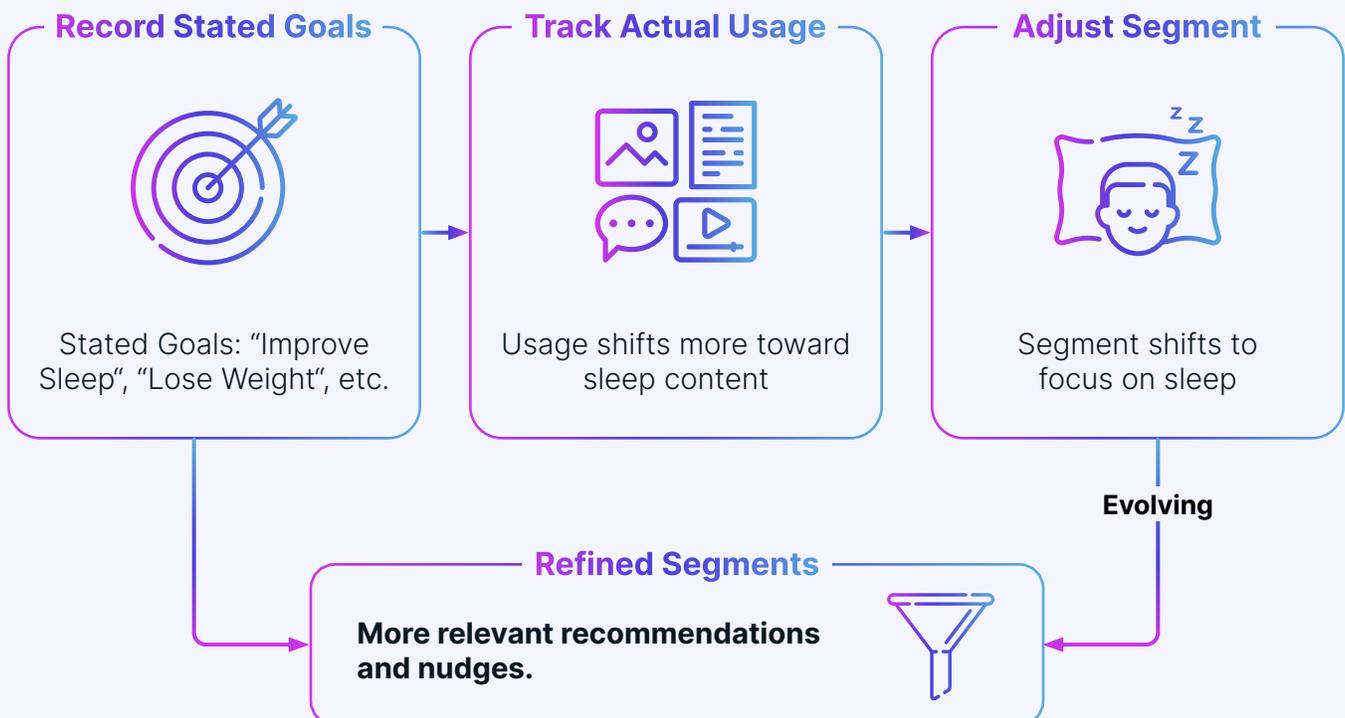
Zero-party segmentation (like goals chosen in onboarding) is useful — but over time, you should let actual in-product behavior override stated preferences.

### Steps you can take:

- Record stated goals early (e.g., “Improve sleep” or “Lose weight”).
  - Track actual usage over weeks and adjust segment assignment when behavior diverges.
  - Use this evolving segmentation to refine recommendations, messaging, and feature nudges.
- This prevents stale personalization that no longer matches user actions.

### Zero-Party Segmentation Adjusts Over Time

Don't just rely on initial preferences. Let actual in-product behaviour refine segment assignment.



# Closing Words

**You made it to the end!**

**Now it's time to go apply what you learned.**

If you enjoyed this, the biggest compliment you can give us is sharing this with a friend.

**If you would like more, you have a few options:**

- You can go watch some episodes of the Price Power Podcast where we try to create the same type of tactical and actionable content. Find it on Spotify, Youtube, Apple Podcasts, and more:



- Or you can go read some other posts on the [\*\*Botsi Blog here\*\*](#), or subscribe to [\*\*Retention.Blog here\*\*](#).
- If you missed our Subscription Optimization Handbook, created in collaboration with [\*\*Vahe Baghdasaryan at Tangent\*\*](#), you can [\*\*download that here\*\*](#).
- Lastly, if you're looking to take your app growth to the next level, go check out [\*\*Botsi\*\*](#). Botsi is AI Pricing for Subscription Apps. We help you show the optimal price, product, and paywall to each user to maximize LTV.

EXPLORE



## AI Pricing Models

Show the right price to the right user to maximize user value. Your model autonomously trains and optimizes on your app's specific performance.



EXPLORE



## How Botsi AI Pricing Works



### **We train a custom AI/ML model on your data**

Botsi learns from your app's user behavior, purchases, and context signals.



### **You add a few prices & paywalls**

Our team helps you safely introduce additional price points and paywalls.



### **Botsi picks the best paywall in real time**

For every user, Botsi presicts which price and paywall will maximize LTV.



### **The model continuously improves revenue**

Every outcome feeds back into the system, making pricing smarter over time

**Interested in learning more?**

[Click to Schedule a Demo](#)



Learn more at [Botsi.com](https://botsi.com)

