



# Understanding the streaming subscriber journey.

How to reduce churn by knowing your customers better.

A man with a beard and dark hair, wearing a tan button-down shirt and white headphones, is smiling while looking at a tablet. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting. Overlaid on the image are several UI elements: a 'Subscriber Profile' card on the right, a 'Recommended for you' video player on the left, and a 'Subscriber retention' button at the bottom. The profile card includes a circular profile picture of the man, his name 'Dan Davis', his email 'dan@bodea.com', and his gender 'male'. Below this is a green line graph with four data points. To the right of the graph are three checkboxes for content preferences: 'Action' (checked), 'Documentary' (checked), and 'Drama' (unchecked). The 'Recommended for you' video player shows a scenic view of a waterfall with a large white play button in the center. A dotted line connects the bottom of the video player to the 'Subscriber retention' button.

**Subscriber Profile**



**Dan Davis**

Address  
dan@bodea.com

Gender  
male

☒ Action

☒ Documentary

☐ Drama



Recommended for you

Subscriber retention

In the dawn of the streaming age, services simply had to attract new customers. Now they must focus on keeping them.

Yet, users constantly reshape their subscription portfolios. They switch between premium and ad-supported tiers, subscribing, canceling, and resubscribing. They churn and churn again due to several factors, like more choices, hot new shows or films, and lack of relevant recommendations.

Serial churning used to be less common. In 2020, only 6% of total streaming video subscribers were serial churners. By 2023, that number more than tripled to 22% of all subscribers.

Streaming services still need to win new customers, but to be truly successful they must also retain existing ones, win back lapsed customers, and prevent customers from canceling again. That takes accurate and comprehensive data about customer subscription and viewing behavior. By using this data, service providers can meet customers' needs, offer targeted and personalized content and pricing models, and prevent churn.

## **This guide will explore:**

1. Causes and context for churn
2. Research-based best practices to build effective customer journeys
3. The role of customer data and personalization in retention strategies
4. Long-term solutions for streaming services to nurture loyal customer relationships

# The many sources of streaming subscriber churn.

Multiple factors are driving subscribers into on-again, off-again relationships with streaming services. These include:



## **More competing choices.**

An increased number of streaming services means more choices for consumers. According to Stream TV Insider, 48% of consumers switch to new services to view specific content that interests them.



## **Lack of personalized content recommendations.**

Without recommendations, it's more difficult for subscribers to easily discover engaging content they want, making it less likely to retain their attention.



## **Content fatigue.**

Too much content, without personalization, curation, or guidance built in, is overwhelming for customers. Sometimes canceling a service is easier than trying to navigate too much content.



## **Financial reasons.**

Customers will cancel streaming subscriptions during times of economic uncertainty. According to Deloitte, 25% of consumers regularly cancel and resubscribe because of budget concerns.



## **Social trends.**

A popular show can incentivize subscribers to prioritize one platform over others. Likewise, controversy around a platform may inspire subscribers to drop a service and replace it with one or more competing alternatives.



## **Advertising.**

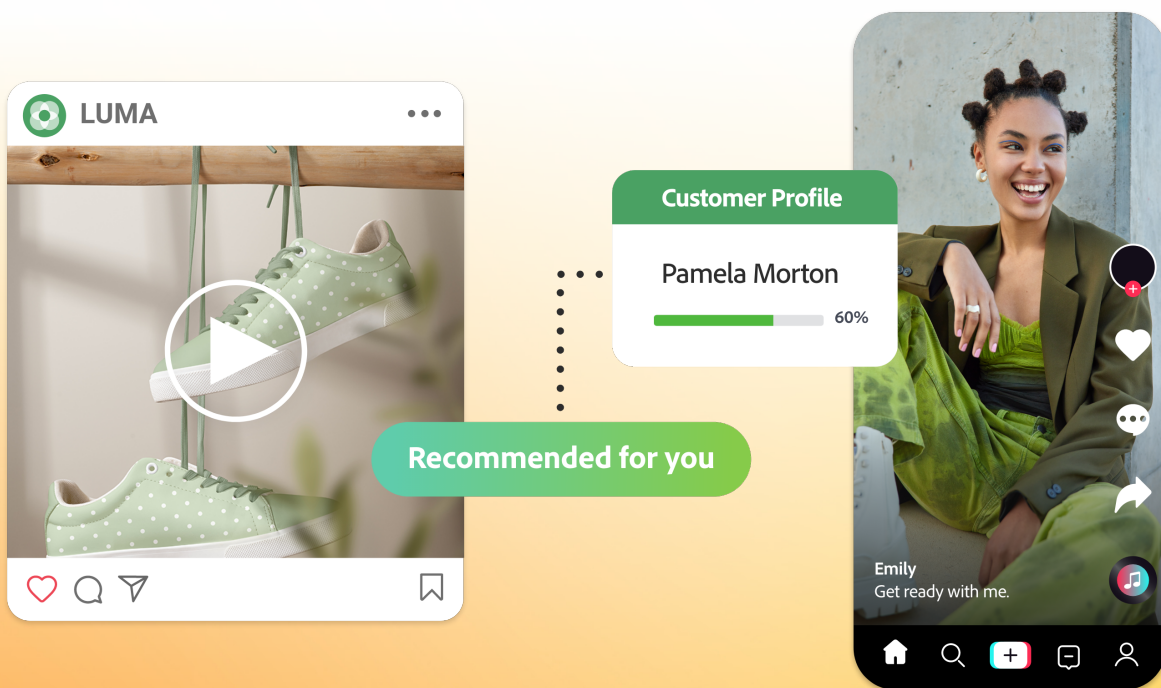
Some consumers prefer to watch without ads, and will cancel ad-supported streaming services in favor of services without them. Other consumers who don't mind ads will cancel more expensive streamers in favor of cheaper ad-supported options.

# Streaming is still a growing industry.

Despite the prevalence of churn, the streaming industry is growing and still holds a great deal of opportunity. According to Statista, over-the-top video revenue reached an estimated US\$154 billion worldwide. Streaming video on-demand amounted to an estimated 1.2 billion subscriptions worldwide—a figure that's estimated to grow by over 400 million in the next five years.

The big players in streaming know their customers and can keep them watching. Earlier this year the Wall Street Journal reported that Disney+ is the top streaming video service in the US, appearing on 11.4% of television screens. YouTube, meanwhile, accounted for 10%, as of May 2024. At the same time, a 2023 TechCrunch study reported that children aged 4 to 18 watched a global average of 112 minutes of TikTok per day.

Video companies like YouTube and TikTok provide insight into successful retention strategies and tactics, such as integrating social features or gaming elements into user experiences. They're adept at creating tailored recommendations and experiences that introduce viewers to relevant new content and keep them engaged. They have finely honed recommendation engines that serve new content to viewers based on user data and previous watch behavior.



# Strategies for streaming success.

Despite the overall growth in the streaming industry, future expansion won't resemble the initial surge. Rather than casting a wide net to attract subscribers from anywhere, services will focus on targeted approaches to engage new and potential users.

## Global expansion opportunities.

Based on growth projections and trends in the industry, services can continue to grow by exploring international markets, localizing content to unlock new revenue streams, and reducing their dependencies on single markets. Streamers have enormous opportunities in markets like India and Indonesia, where there's a growing demand for streaming video. What's more, even global populations that don't have access to laptops or smart TVs still consume streaming content. Smartphones are popular the world over, and anyone with a screen and access to a cellular network is a potential viewer. Providing content for diverse cultural preferences can strengthen global reach and make streaming video on-demand more worthwhile to more audiences.

## Audience insights from subscriber profiles.

By collecting data from customer surveys, analytics tools, and market research, streamers can develop detailed personas and customer models that represent different segments of their subscriber base. These personas can include demographics, content preferences, watch behavior, and pain points. By continuously updating subscriber models based on real-time data and analytics, streamers can proactively adjust offerings to meet evolving subscriber needs and keep customers loyal. Changes to streaming offerings can be as simple as serving up a personalized watch list or as large as in-app UI and UX changes informed by thousands of data points from customers all over the globe.

# How to reduce and prevent churn.

The best way to deal with churn is to prevent it. Subscribers are less likely to cancel and resubscribe when they can consistently enjoy tailored recommendations that are relevant to their interests. Dynamic pricing structures, bundling, discounts, and incentives can also keep customers loyal. Instead of canceling and moving to a competitor, customers can migrate to an ad-supported tier or take advantage of a promotion.

When streaming services are equipped with accurate customer personas, models, and data, they can take measures to appeal to subscribers and make sure they don't become at-risk for unsubscribing.

These strategies include:

- Using AI to provide tailored content recommendations based on individual viewing habits.
- Enhancing the streaming platform's designs and features according to user interactions and preferences.
- Offering loyalty programs and incentives to encourage long-term subscriptions and retention.
- Incorporating dynamic pricing options, including different service tiers such as ad-supported or premium ad-free versions.
- Introducing extra features such as watch parties to foster a sense of community among viewers.
- Identifying at-risk subscribers and deploying targeted retention campaigns.

Each of these strategies relies on real-time customer data to effectively connect services with what consumers want, ensuring a positive viewing experience and sustained subscriber engagement.

# How Adobe can help.

By gaining deeper insights into subscriber behavior and preferences, streaming services can proactively tackle churn triggers—such as the lack of personalized recommendations, viewer fatigue, and pricing concerns. Adobe offers an integrated suite of solutions that work with existing tech stacks to transform serial churners into loyal customers who stay subscribed and keep watching month after month.

[Adobe Real-Time Customer Data Platform](#), [Adobe Customer Journey Analytics](#), and [Adobe Journey Optimizer](#) empower streaming services to segment audiences; track, analyze, and model customer interactions; and activate tailored offers across the customer journey. With this information, services are better positioned to deploy strategies that delight their subscribers, keep them loyal, and reduce churn. Embedded AI technology makes those strategies much easier to implement, such as automating offer recommendations and personalized content for individual users, tailored to their preferences.

Forrester reports significant benefits from Real-Time Customer Data Platform, Journey Optimizer, and Customer Journey Analytics including:

**30%**

increase in analyst  
productivity

**20%**

improved  
marketer  
efficiency at  
orchestrating  
campaigns

**431%**

total ROI

**11%**

business growth  
due to increasing  
audience,  
conversions,  
and order value

**1M**

\$1 million  
recovered per year  
from greater ad  
spending efficiency

Learn more about how Adobe solutions can help turn customer insights into customized experiences that transform would-be churners into loyal fans in [this article produced in partnership with Antenna](#), and dive even deeper with [this webinar](#).

[Explore Adobe's integrated suite of solutions for personalized entertainment experiences.](#)



# Sources

["2022 Digital media trends, 16th edition: Toward the metaverse," Deloitte Insights, March 20, 2022.](#)

Masha Abarinova, ["Nearly half of streaming subscribers regularly switch between services – Parks," StreamTV Insider, December 13, 2022.](#)

["Adobe solution delivered a 431% return on investment," Adobe, December 6, 2023.](#)

Brendan Brady and Sam Garfield, ["Understanding the Streaming Subscriber Journey," Adobe, April 17, 2024.](#)

["Colder weather and NFL playoffs drive increased TV usage in January," Nielsen, February 20 2024.](#)

Lauren Forristal, ["YouTube dominates TV streaming in US, per Nielsen's latest report," TechCrunch, February 20, 2024.](#)

Sarah Krouse, ["What's on TV? For Many Americans, It's Now YouTube," The Wall Street Journal, May 14, 2024.](#)

Kaila Squires, ["Adobe and Antenna partner to bring valuable new insights into the streaming customer journey," October 19, 2023.](#)

["Video Streaming Worldwide—Statistics and Facts," Statista, May 12, 2023.](#)



Adobe and the Adobe logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Adobe in the United States and/or other countries.

© 2024 Adobe. All rights reserved.