

HOW TO...

# PULL OFF A LIMITED DROP

Releasing products on a set date and in a limited number isn't just the preserve of streetwear brands living off hype. Bringing it into your sales strategy might make plenty of sense for your brand.



## THE OPPORTUNITY

As the name suggests, a limited drop is the release of an exclusive, one-of-a-kind item or collection, occasionally without much advance warning. These products aren't necessarily wildly expensive or difficult to manufacture, but their scarcity – be it as a consequence of small-batch production, limited retail locations or fixed purchase windows – makes them highly covetable. While the classic image might be of hypebeasts queuing around the block to get their hands on the latest fashion drop (see: Supreme), it's a sales strategy that can work for all kinds of businesses for several different reasons.

Perhaps the biggest benefit is the creation of a little FOMO: customers know they need to act quickly at a certain time or risk missing their chance. It's also a pretty effective customer-engagement tactic, as people know to keep a close eye on their favorite brands and stay in the loop about the latest developments. Finally, if manufacturing on a small scale suits the rate at which you want to grow, it might simply make sense for your business. It'll lessen customer expectations on stock levels and give them some transparency about how your production works – and why.

## HOW TO GET IT RIGHT

### 01. Create a sense of scarcity.

First and foremost, you need to build hype around your drop by highlighting the exclusive nature of your product. Emphasize the low number of items available, and sell them within a set time frame or through limited channels. Gamification can further whet consumers' appetites: for instance, ensuring that your product is available only to those who successfully complete a specific challenge can add another level of desirability to it.



## CASE STUDY: LOTTA BLOBS



### 02. Time your releases wisely.

Your limited-edition products will obviously lose some of their allure if there's a new drop every other day. Be considerate and intentional about when your releases come out – that might be weekly, monthly or spread even further apart.

### 03. Harness the power of social media.

Following on from that, there's nothing quite like social channels when it comes to word-of-mouth marketing, with engaged and excited customers liking, sharing and posting about your products to generate that buzz. Make sure that the details of your release dates are communicated clearly on your social channels and strive to build a sizable and engaged base of followers.

### 04. Consider partnering with personalities.

Shrewd collaborations can help you tap into new – and often unexpected – audiences, growing your customer base. You might struggle to land quite as big a name as this, but IKEA partnered with artist, architect and designer Virgil Abloh to launch a limited-edition collection in 2019 – piquing the interest of streetwear fans.

### 05. Ensure your product lives up to the hype.

At the end of the day, your product needs to be worth the fanfare. Above all, the quality needs to be good – if your product comes apart at the seams after several uses, customers will lose trust in your brand, tarnishing your credibility. One option is to chart your production process to show why it's so well set up for smaller-batch manufacturing. 🐣

Drop culture might be synonymous with streetwear, but plenty of savvy businesses are taking the concept into other verticals – such as Lotta Blobs, a homeware brand based in London. It's the brainchild of Shantelle Hyslop, who needed a creative venture to keep herself occupied while on furlough during the pandemic. The brand has amassed a following for its sculpted mirrors, which feature wavy clay frames in an array of pastel shades. They're only available via limited drops that take place every two weeks or so.



### THREE OTHER BRANDS MASTERING THE LIMITED DROP

#### 01. LAST CRUMB

Would you fork out \$140 for a box of cookies? Los Angeles-based Last Crumb has thousands of fans clamoring for a taste of its pricey bakes, which are released online via limited drops every week.

#### 02. HOTELNIGHT

The travel app has a Daily Drop feature where users can unlock a highly discounted room rate for their selected hotel and date. The time-limited deal is only available for 15 minutes.

#### 03. SPORTY & RICH

This health-focused activewear label releases all of its apparel via limited drops. Its aim isn't so much to build hype, but to streamline its inventory and minimize waste.

### PRACTICALITIES OF PRODUCTION

Lotta Blobs' limited drops are, in part, down to practical reasons – Shantelle has to balance running the business with her day job as a graphic designer for a lingerie brand. Then there's the unique nature of her product. The mirrors are crafted entirely by hand, with each one taking more than a week to make. However, Shantelle notes that the tactic also helps to fuel demand for her offerings. 'The limited drops have helped to build hype for my mirrors, as my customers see them as sought-after products,' she says. The mirrors usually sell out within an hour of launching – sometimes even as quickly as 10 minutes.

### GETTING THE WORD OUT

In order to let people know about her drops and build customer engagement, Shantelle uses Instagram. She usually announces upcoming drops on the Lotta Blobs account (@lottablobs), complete with a countdown timer on Instagram Stories. She also encourages her customers to turn on post notifications for her account so that they never miss an update.

True to the spirit of limited drops, there are no pre-order forms or waiting lists – instead, it's strictly fastest fingers first. To cater for international customers, Shantelle times her releases to 'allow everyone to grab a mirror' – typically around 2pm GMT (9am EST) on a weekend. Those lucky enough to snag a Lotta Blobs product often get their mirror selfies reposted on the brand's Instagram page. 'People like to buy into the exclusivity of anything, be it fashion or homeware,' says Shantelle. 'In an era when we're exposed to so much mass production, a limited product adds that sense of exclusivity that many people long for.' 🐣