

Athena Club recovered 73% more revenue from failed payments with Recover by Butter.

How an omnichannel personal care brand replaced a brute-force retry tool — and launched in one month, without adding a line to the engineering roadmap.

+73%

REVENUE RECOVERY

+78%

INVOICE RECOVERY RATE

−22%

INVOLUNTARY CHURN



ATHENA CLUB AT A GLANCE

INDUSTRY

Personal care / CPG

FOUNDED

2017 · New York, NY

SUBSCRIPTION PLATFORM

Recharge

BUSINESS MODEL

DTC subscriptions and e-commerce, plus retail through Target and Walmart

CHALLENGE

Involuntary churn from failed recurring payments, with limited engineering resources

SOLUTION

Recover by Butter · live in one month

THE OPPORTUNITY

Solving involuntary churn to drive sustainable growth

Athena Club is an omnichannel brand that makes everyday personal care products better. It sells high-quality items — such as the best-selling Razor Kit — through its direct-to-consumer e-commerce website and retail stores, including Target and Walmart.

Since launching in 2017, the New York-based brand has grown quickly on the strength of its subscriptions. While many brands focus solely on the front-end experience, Athena Club made sure every touchpoint — from product formulation to checkout — was seamless and efficient. That included its payments stack.

In 2023, the brand set out to improve that stack further by resolving a persistent issue: **involuntary churn**. Also known as passive churn, it happens when a subscription lapses because a recurring payment fails, not because the customer chose to leave.

“For a long time, passive churn made up a significant amount of our overall churn. We were worried because we had worked hard to earn those customers and wanted to keep them in our ecosystem.”



EMILY VON BORSTEL · CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGER, ATHENA CLUB

THE OLD WAY

Testing a bare-bones retry solution

Acting quickly, Athena Club implemented a legacy retry solution. Although the brand saw some success, the tool didn't perform as well as Athena Club had desired.

Alexander Sokolov, senior director of software engineering at Athena Club, spearheaded the company's campaign to reduce involuntary churn. "Our initial retry solutions used a rudimentary approach, and we knew right away that it wasn't right for us," he recalled.

That solution relied on brute force. It ignored the reason a payment failed and simply retried the transaction until it went through — for Athena Club, six retries in a single day, repeated every six days.

THE OLD CADENCE

6 retries in a single day

6 days between rounds

Decline codes used: **none**



"Retrying six times every six days was okay, but not great. It was mostly just random luck when a payment went through."

ALEXANDER SOKOLOV · SENIOR DIRECTOR OF SOFTWARE ENGINEERING,
ATHENA CLUB

Athena Club knew it needed a more nuanced solution, but faced a crucial challenge: development resources were limited. The answer was to partner with a payments optimization platform that offered a turnkey integration with the brand's payment service provider.

Turnkey payments optimization powers success

After a thorough search, Athena Club chose Recover by Butter to solve its involuntary churn challenge. Three clear benefits stood out.

01 Turnkey integration with Recharge

Butter offered a turnkey integration with Recharge, Athena Club's subscription platform — one of several leading processors and platforms Butter supports, alongside Braintree and Stripe. Athena Club launched in one month.

“The less work we had to do, the more likely it was we were going to adopt a solution,” Alexander said about the brand's search for a payment optimization platform.

02 Advanced AI and machine learning

Unlike other solutions, Butter uses machine learning to analyze hundreds of data points associated with each transaction, then determines the most effective retry strategy for each payment category.

One of those data points is the date and time a transaction is charged. In Athena Club's case, Butter determined the optimal date and time to retry payments that had failed for insufficient funds, which increased recovered invoices by 16%.

“Butter's AI and self-optimization were really key. It's important to have a solution that understands your use case and your data, and improves over time — which was something the other solutions weren't doing.”

ALEXANDER SOKOLOV · SENIOR DIRECTOR OF SOFTWARE ENGINEERING, ATHENA CLUB

03 Payments and subscription expertise

In addition to a quick launch, Athena Club required a retry solution staffed by a team with deep expertise. Most of Butter's employees are technical, and many built in-house payment systems before joining.

That expertise shows up in how Butter handles decline codes. Declines fall into two categories that call for very different responses.

● Soft declines

An incorrect address, a wrong PIN.
Temporary, and generally safe to retry — this is where recovery effort belongs.

FOCUS HERE

● Hard declines

An expired card, a wrong card number.
Typically permanent — retrying them usually costs fees and produces nothing.

USUALLY DON'T RETRY

Rather than writing off every hard decline, Butter's team worked with Athena Club to identify the ones still worth retrying — recovering revenue the brand had previously given up on.

During Athena Club's search, Alexander said he learned that other solutions claimed to use AI, but couldn't back up the claim. "Nowadays, a lot of businesses say they use AI, but when you press them, it becomes obvious they're just using it as a buzzword," he said.

"The fact that Butter actually uses AI and can easily explain how they use it to reduce failed payments sets them apart."

ALEXANDER SOKOLOV · SENIOR DIRECTOR OF SOFTWARE ENGINEERING, ATHENA CLUB

THE RESULTS

A 73% increase in recovered revenue

After 12 months with Recover by Butter, Athena Club saw these results, measured against its prior retry solution.

+73%

increase in revenue recovery*

+78%

increase in invoice recovery rate*

–22%

decrease in involuntary churn*



“The results speak for themselves.”

ALEXANDER SOKOLOV · SENIOR DIRECTOR OF SOFTWARE ENGINEERING, ATHENA CLUB

BEFORE BUTTER

Six retries a day, every six days, on a fixed schedule that ignored the decline code. Recovery came down to luck, and passive churn made up a significant share of total churn.

WITH RECOVER BY BUTTER

Retry timing and strategy set per transaction from hundreds of data points, with hard declines triaged by AI — live in one month on Recharge, with no engineering lift.

*Relative to Athena Club's prior retry solution, measured over the 12 months following launch.



START TODAY

See how much revenue you're leaving behind

Every failed payment is a customer you already won. Butter finds the ones worth recovering — and recovers them — without adding a line to your engineering roadmap. Most teams launch in about a month.

[Get a free recovery analysis →](#)

[Talk to a payments specialist](#)