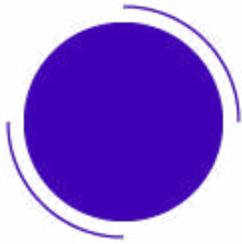




**MADISON
TAYLOR**
Marketing

MARKETING RESOURCES

Conversion Optimization



INTRODUCTION

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Conversion Optimization

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What's Conversion Optimization?

Conversion optimization, also called conversion rate optimization (CRO), is a method of using user feedback and analytics data to turn passive website visitors into active users. CRO can be focused on any number of key performance indicators (KPIs), depending on what's most important to your business, but it's usually focused on acquiring new customers, registrations, downloads, or sales.

At its most fundamental, CRO is about figuring out what your site visitors want when they come to your page. It's about getting the right offer or incentive in front of the right person at the right time to give them that little push into becoming a customer.

The best part is that you're not reinventing the wheel — you're just optimizing and rearranging what you already have to make it work better, whether that's streamlining your conversion funnel, making your call-to-action (CTA) more obvious, or moving it to a more traffic-heavy page.

Why Should You Care?

Because in one form or another, you're probably paying for all that site traffic, whether it's boosted social posts or paid search results or a good old-fashioned billboard. You need to be making a return on your investment to make all that marketing worthwhile, and CRO can help you get there.

Chapter One: Defining Your Goals

While “conversion” is often just another word for “sale,” not every conversion is about getting a visitor to make a purchase. In fact, sales might not be your top priority, and your CRO efforts should be focused accordingly.

Conversions might refer to lead generation instead of sales. In that case, phone calls, email signups, filling out a form, or even just clicks on your CTA might qualify.

If you're trying to increase the productivity of your email marketing, focus on open rates and clickthroughs. Your mailing software will track those stats for you, and you can find industry standards online so you know what to expect.

Take some time to figure out what goals are most pressing for you — it's ok to have more than one goal, but don't go overboard or you'll end up splitting focus too much. Make sure your goals are high enough that they're still a challenge, but not so high that you'll be discouraged if you don't meet them. Use past metrics as a yardstick to keep things realistic.

And if your conversion goal is sales, that's great! It's a very tangible, trackable goal. If you want to take stock of where your conversion rate is now in order to set goals for the future, [use this handy formula](#).

Chapter Two: Defining Your Audience

Use Your Buyer Personas

You could put all the time in the world into building content and promoting it, but if the right people aren't seeing it, your efforts are going to waste. In the inbound marketing methodology, your goal is to attract buyers using persona insights.

A buyer persona is a broad-strokes idea of your ideal customer. It's a cornerstone of every facet of your marketing approach, and it's an important consideration when trying to increase conversions. It will include a lot of aspects of whom you want to sell to, from basic demographic info like age, gender, and location to more abstract things like their interests and desires.

Why do people buy your product over your competitors? If you're a premium brand, what makes them buy it over a cheaper alternative? Ask your existing customers what attracted them to you.

What do you customers want to get out your product? What problems are they trying to solve? This is another great chance to ask your customers what they like about your product.

Keep the negative in mind too — knowing why people don't buy from you is as useful as knowing why they do. Are there misconceptions floating around the marketplace about you? Is your price point set right?

Finally, consider where you're finding your audience. Is it in person, in the form of walk-ins or trade shows? Is it through social media or your website? Fleshing out exactly who your audience is and where they're coming from is key to converting them.

Chapter Three: Defining Your Content Strategy

Use A/B Testing To Refine Your Approach

A/B testing is a great technique to try out new things at relatively low risk. Try different landing pages and CTAs on your site and take note of what works best so that you can continue in that direction. When it comes to emails, experiment with subject lines, content, even time of day.

Which emails are getting opened the most? Which ones are generating clickthroughs? Which of your CTAs is getting the most attention? Are they located at the bottom of the page or in the middle of an article? Use trackable links for each version you test so you can tell where your best traffic is coming from.

Consider the content itself as well. What kind of articles do people like best? Short-form posts or long-form, detailed blogs? Do social posts get more attention than the content on your site? Are people more likely to click through if the title has a number in it? Every little detail counts.

The Impact of Social Media

When it comes to your social posts, consider where along the buyer's journey you're encountering your customers. Ideally you'll be making contact with them at several points, but you can't always control that. Are you educating them about the existence of your industry, or are you pointing out the specific benefits of your product?

Make sure your content is well-designed and deliberate, not haphazard. Your online presence may be the first or only point of contact that your customers have with you, so it's vital that your content be error-free and well thought-out. Sloppy grammar and spelling or poorly executed design elements will drive traffic away.

Use relevant links throughout your social media campaigns to push customers to your website — they can't make a purchase if they don't get to the site in the first place.

Make relevant content offers, too. The exact nature of the offers will depend on your business, but deals that create urgency — “limited time only” or “while supplies last” — or exclusive offers like event tickets, whitepapers, or digital downloads that can only be accessed through social media will drive conversion.

Dial In Your Email Marketing

If your focus is on email conversions, make sure your email campaigns are focused and professional. The number of emails you should send in a month is a subject of debate, and there's no one right answer for everyone, but [the majority of marketers send fewer than five emails a month](#). When customers unsubscribe from emails, [69% of them say it's because they're receiving too many, so don't overdo it](#).

More important than quantity is relevance. Even though 80% of email marketers are sending the same emails to their entire list, the numbers indicate that your email is much more likely to be opened if it's targeted. For example, don't send emails asking users to sign up for premium accounts to users who already have them.

These days, it's easier and easier to gather more data about your subscribers — if they made a purchase, what they purchased, age, location, gender, etc. — so you should be targeting your emails accordingly.

When it comes to email content, the same rules apply. Be clear, precise, and

professional. Make yourself templates so that your emails appear consistent – users swiping through their inbox should instantly recognize your style before they even start to read.

Be clear in what you're offering, too. Is it a new product? A new offer? Membership perks? Users should know exactly what each email is for, and the relevant links and CTAs inside the email should be obvious as well.

Converting Through Your Website And Blogs

If your conversion goals are focused on your site or blogs, first you need to define exactly what those goals are. Are you trying to get more readers in general, to establish yourself as an authority in your field? Are you trying to drive clicks on a certain CTA, or get people to download a certain ebook?

Make sure your content is crisp, clean, and error-free. Don't overuse industry jargon if you don't have to – it doesn't make you sound any smarter if newcomers don't know what you're talking about.

Chapter Four: User Experience Must-Haves

User experience on your website or blog serves to guide your visitors to the information they need to solve their problems – it doesn't do you any good to have the best copy in the world if no one can find it or read it. Good UX also makes a difference in your SEO, since Google has started to tweak its algorithm to consider things like pop-ups and autoplaying videos.

Your CTAs should be short and sweet – make clear exactly what you're asking users to do by clicking on it. They should also stand out from the body of the text, by color or even a small graphic. Think of where to place them – usually more than halfway down the page, so you know the people seeing them are already invested in what you're writing.

There's an old rule in UX that users should be able to find what they want on your site in three clicks or fewer. While the "three-click rule" isn't hard and fast, the principle stands. Don't hide important information behind a maze of

menus and hard-to-read dropdowns.

Load time is important — according to Neil Patel, [25% of users will abandon a page if it takes more than four seconds to load](#). Mobile users are a little more patient, waiting 6-10 seconds before bailing, but the window is short regardless. Loading your site up with too many graphics or behind-the-scenes software will drive load times up and people away.

Make sure your website is current, and updated regularly. Search engines will punish stale sites, and users will be put off by websites with outdated references. Visitors want to see that you're actively working to publish new and useful information, and are more likely to trust you if you do.

Visitors should be able to find out how to contact you quickly and easily, whether through a Contact tab, info in the footer, a contact form, or all three. You don't want any friction between your website and a potential lead who wants more information. Make sure your site is mobile-optimized — mobile devices make up half of web traffic worldwide, and that number is only going up. Mobile is the way of the future, and if visitors can't get just as much use out of your site on mobile as they can on desktop, you're kissing customers, leads, and business goodbye.

Chapter Five: Nurturing Your Leads

Always Keep The Buyer's Journey In Mind

You wouldn't propose to someone on the first date, and you wouldn't jump off the high dive your first time at a pool. Your visitors feel the same way. They don't want to feel pressured into committing their hard-earned dollars to a new purchase the moment they first hear about it — they want to come to that conclusion on their own.

Let's say you make a premium foam mattress that costs around a thousand dollars. That's a lot to spend, so customers need to be convinced. You've built your content around every phase of the buyer's journey — awareness,

consideration, and decision – and now you want to help guide your visitors through that journey to making a purchase.

If visitors are reading your article entitled “5 Reasons a Good Night’s Sleep Will Make You Happier,” they’re still in the awareness phase. They’re not sleeping well, and they’re feeling the effects and trying to learn more. They’re moving toward identifying the problem, but they haven’t settled on a solution yet. Now’s not the time to push a sale, it’s the time to guide them toward the consideration phase.

If visitors are watching video testimonials from happy mattress owners or reading “How Much Should You Spend On A Mattress,” they’re in the consideration phase. They’ve decided that a premium mattress is the solution to their problem, and they’re researching various options. At this phase, it’s your job to convince them that a foam mattress is the best solution to their problem.

Once they’re on the product page, or they’re watching videos about the proprietary layers and foam you use, they’ve decided on a foam mattress and they’re wondering if yours is the best for them. This is the point where you can start to brag about all the features you offer, free shipping, trial periods, etc. Offer them a limited time coupon or a free set of sheets if they buy right away!

The point of keeping the buyer’s journey in mind is that your visitors and leads need different levels of attention and information, depending on where they are in the process. You don’t want to come off as pushy because you couldn’t recognize that. Tune your CTAs and related links accordingly to keep people interested.

Where Are You Looking To Convert?

The stage in the buyer’s journey is important in deciding how you’re going to attempt to convert potential visitors, leads, or customers, but equally important is the context in which you’re meeting them.

Are you making first contact on social media? Make sure your links and messaging are clear, so that customers know exactly where to click and where the link will take them when they do.

Use a mixture of content to attract customers at every stage of the buyer's journey – remember, you want your social media campaigns to have several touchpoints with the consumer along the way.

If you're paying for ads or boosting posts, remember to segment and target accordingly. There's no reason to show your content to people who won't be receptive to it, and if you've put the work into building your buyer personas, you'll know exactly who that is.

When visitors arrive at your website, your conversion goals will change. Depending on where they're coming from – your analytics will help with that – they may already be educated and interested in your product, and just need a little push to turn into a paying customer.

Think about whether they're reading your blog, arriving at your front page from search, or clicking directly through to a purchase page.

Think about your CTAs specifically. They should be visually striking, standing out from the page itself. The copy should be short and sweet, compelling you to click the offer. The language should be action-oriented – make it clear exactly what you're asking visitors to do and what they'll get out of it when they do.

Location is important too – CTAs should be easy to find, blending in well with the flow of the page. They should be far enough down the page that you know your reader is invested by the time they get to the CTA. Make them large enough that they're easy to see, but not so much that they distract from the content.

When it comes to email, make sure your subject line is catchy and grabs the reader's attention. It should be clear enough that they know what they're opening when they click on the email, and the offer should be clear when

they open the email itself.

While it's a great idea to make the contents of the email compelling in and of themselves, don't give away the farm! The email should encourage clicks through to your website, and your site should make the relevant offer clear and obvious when they arrive.

If visitors are coming through email, they're almost certainly in the decision phase of the buyer's journey. They signed up for your email newsletter because they've learned about your company, they like what you do, and they're interested in knowing more. Don't waste energy treating email subscribers like first-time visitors.

Chapter Six: Workshopping A Successful CTA For Blog, Web, And Email

Let's put all this to work! Here are some specific tips to get started building, implementing, and testing your CTAs.

Make Your Copy Action- AND Benefit-Oriented

You'll see a lot of tips online about action-oriented CTAs, like "download now" or "click here." While those are technically action words, what they fail to address is why the user should download, click, submit, request, etc.

Instead, focus on action phrases that also indicate a benefit to the visitor. Don't tell them to "sign up for our newsletter," tell them to "stay connected with news and deals." Turning the focus from the action you're asking of them to the benefit they're going to get out of it will make them more likely to convert.

It might also help to consider using first-person language. It won't always be possible, depending on what you're offering, but [according to one experiment](#), switching from "your" to "my" — as in "download my free ebook" rather than "download your free ebook" — increased clicks by 90%.

Finally, don't be afraid to create a sense of urgency in your CTAs. Limited-time offers, timed coupons, and "today only" deals are all helpful. Even just adding the word "now" — as in "Increase Social Conversion Now!" — might be the push your visitors need.

Make Your CTA Consistent With Your Content

If your article is about "How To Create More Effective CTAs," the CTA at the bottom shouldn't say "Sign Up To Learn More!" Not only is that copy too vague, but it doesn't call back to what the article is about in the first place. You already know that the copy in your title worked to draw in the reader — they're reading it, after all — so stick with the same messaging for the next step.

Appearance Is Important

Your CTA should be big enough to stand out, but not too big. How big is that? You're just going to have to find out for yourself with testing (we'll get to testing in a minute).

On the high end, what you're trying to avoid is the appearance of a banner ad — "[banner blindness](#)" is a real thing, and describes the tendency of web users to ignore ads or things that look like ads. If your CTA is too big or flashy, users will think it's an ad and they'll glaze right over it.

On the other hand, you want your CTA to stand out, and a link in line with text isn't enough to do that. The CTA needs to be big enough that it's obviously not just part of the article text itself, and it helps if it uses contrasting colors like red, orange, or whatever stands out from the main colors you use on your website.

Keep in mind that an increasing number of users will be viewing your content on mobile, which means they'll be tapping, not clicking. According to Apple, [clickable items on mobile should be at least 44x44 pixels](#) to be user-friendly, but you'll almost certainly want to use bigger buttons than that.

If you're going to use an image in your CTA, make sure it's relevant — no generic stock photos. Use a high-quality graphic or photo of the product itself or of someone using it. Make sure the graphic has plenty of white space to isolate it from the surrounding text.

Finally, think of the hierarchy of your buttons. Most of the time, your CTA won't be the only clickable thing on the page, but it is the most important one to move visitors down the funnel. As such, you don't want to upstage it with other links and menus on your site. Make the other buttons on your content pages smaller or less obvious to keep attention on your CTAs where you want it.

Location, Location, Location

If your CTA is for a particular offer, put it lower down in the article or even at the end, so you know the people seeing the CTA are already invested in the content they're reading.

If the CTA is for a middle-of-the-funnel action like requesting a phone call or demonstration, don't interrupt the flow of your content by sticking those right in the middle of the page. Save those for the kind of page that indicates that a visitor is ready to buy, like the product listing, pricing pages, or user testimonials.

The idea is to think about where in the buyer's journey your visitor is, what frame of mind they might be in at that time, and what would interest them.

It's also keeping in mind that in the majority of languages in the world, viewers read from left to right and top to bottom. Take advantage of that natural flow by putting CTAs on the right or at the bottom of the copy they're related to. CTAs above or to the left of the content feel out of place and don't get as much attention.

Never Stop Testing

There's no such thing as the perfect CTA, and you'll never find one that you

can just leave on your page and sit back. Hubspot and other marketing softwares make A/B testing very easy, so you can serve different versions of your CTAs to different users or at random to see how they perform.

Hubspot suggests a goal of 1-2% click through, followed by 10-20% conversion. Test different iterations by color, marketing copy, button size, CTA placement on the page, or any combination you want to try out. When you find a version that works better than another, create more iterations of that version and keep going.

Chapter Seven: Tracking Your Success

Now that you've made a goal, implemented your best practices, and tested different iterations, all that's left is to see if it's working! Are you getting more conversions in the areas you wanted? If so, is it creating the need to raise conversions elsewhere to keep up?

For example, maybe you revamped your social media strategy, and you're getting a ton more clicks through to your site than you were before, but they're bouncing too quickly.

For your next step, you tweak your content strategy on your site, making your content more engaging, legible, and helpful. But you're not seeing sales!

So you make over your CTAs, testing their size, color, wording, and location to make them as appealing as possible. Now your visitors are becoming leads and your leads are becoming customers, just like you wanted.

It's a long process, but it's worth it. Without conversion, you're just spinning your wheels, wasting time and energy on social posts and web content that don't get anywhere. Hopefully these tips will help — and when they do, set loftier goals and keep going!