

TRUSTe WHITEPAPER

Driving and Converting the Right Traffic

Trust-Building Best Practices for Web Marketing and Ecommerce Professionals

How to Boost Sales with Marketing, Website, and Shopping Cart Design



55 2nd Street, 2nd Floor

San Francisco, CA 94105

415 520 3400 tel

415 520 3420 fax

privacyseals@truste.com

©2010 TRUSTe. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Driving and Converting the Right Traffic	3
a. Intro	3
b. Relevance and Driving Traffic	4
c. Specific Ideas About Value Perception and Positioning Your Offer	6
2. Trust and Confidence Building Website Design.....	8
a. Simplifying Design Features and Reducing Clutter.....	8
b. Supporting the User’s “Mental Model”	8
c. Testing Design.....	9
3. Boosting Online Conversion Rates	10
a. Minimizing Purchase Delay	10
b. Increasing Cart Conversions	11

Driving and Converting the Right Traffic

Andreas Ryuta Stenzel, Online Marketing, TRUSTe

INTRODUCTION

The goal is to give you a few guidelines on overall approach and strategy you should think about when doing online marketing, as well as a handful of free and cost effective tactical tips to help improve your marketing.

Consider who your specific target buyer is. What type of company and industry do they work in, what are their job titles and those on the buying team, what are their decision making processes and buying behaviors. And what pain points are they servicing by buying your goods and services?

Now consider what your buyer truly values in the purchase. Is it a purchase out of necessity, convenience, price, or brand preference?

Your Overall Approach and Marketing Strategy

Overall Strategy:

Where we recommend you start is to think very carefully about these two things – 1. Who your target is, and 2. How they buy. Once identified, finding what is and isn't working and prioritizing your marketing plan and calendar is more straightforward.

Then work backwards from the sale to build out internal and external teams, budgets to your departments, allocations to partners etc. You can quickly apply the 80/20 rule to see where you can optimize resources just by thinking about this now.

How is the demand for your offering versus your sales effectiveness? Is the value proposition so high that lousy sales and customer service people still win and retain desirable customers? Think Apple's i-anything and kids waiting in lines for hours and days. This is a brand purchase. Consider virtualization in the tech industry. This is a necessity purchase.

If the value proposition is not core to your target customers needs, your offer, the placement timing of delivery of that offer, and the flow in your webstore or salesperson follow-up needs to be optimal for you to win.

Tactical Tips:

Your ideal customer

Look at the information you have about last 100 customers and their purchases in your ideal growth market. What are their job titles, their industries, their original and most recent activities with you. It may seem elementary, but if you can't answer those 3 things with decent accuracy, then take a look to do some level setting. You may find the marketing person in a company is screaming for your services, while the purchasing department is lukewarm at best when they finally get around to you.

What is working and what is not

This is a simple exercise you can do to map out the flow of activities you do to get your visitors to buy. If you are in a larger organization with multiple products and sales channels then look specifically at a target growth area for your sales. What specific activities are and are not driving sales?

Map out the touch points that come before the successful sales. Track the number of visitors in the upper funnel steps and you will spot the broken pieces quickly.

If you have good marketing tracking systems, you may likely find that many of your marketing and sales activities may drive and service "early sales stage" awareness and interest, then may or may not follow consistently in the consideration and purchase phases. Alternatively for Ecommerce sales, compelling sales and marketing pitches that drove visitors to the cart, drop off as product page specs take over and these visitors lose interest.

RELEVANCE AND DRIVING TRAFFIC

Consider who your specific target is that buys from you.

Overall Strategy:

What type of company and industry, job title, buying behavior, and pain points are they servicing by buying your goods and services?

Tactical Tip:

Look at the content syndication networks where you can drive targeted traffic by filtering on title levels and verticals, and income levels in the consumer space. With a simple lead form or landing page, you can filter or drive those with purchasing power to your promos. The web has never been more powerful in these regards.

What is driving your specific target to your site to buy?

Overall Strategy:

What percent of your activities actually drive your specific targets into your sales funnel, and how can you improve that number dramatically?

Tactical Tip:

Consider how your marketing efforts are optimized. Consider your marketing activity goals and objectives and how they can align to attracting your target and moving them through the consideration phase to purchase. Seriously validate the effectiveness of volume-based and cost-based goals that like Cost per impression (CPM) that are difficult to tie directly to the sale. Online marketing venues have become much more Cost per Acquisition (CPA) friendly in this recession.

When selling into larger organizations, even over the web, consider all the touch points in the decision making cycle. You may need to drive marketing activities or introductions into the finance and purchasing departments so ensure deals don't slip.

Consider sales stage when marketing and prioritizing spend to later sales cycle activities first. Promoting price or even free trials too early may cause enough pause to lose the targets interest.

What is converting these target visitors into customers?

Overall Strategy:

Implement and conduct ongoing information and feedback gathering activities

Tactical Tip:

Web analytics platforms are a great way to do this for Ecommerce companies, and many marketing automation companies including Genius and Rightwave do as well. Google Analytics is free and a great place to start.

If you don't have the data from web reporting tools above, follow up with customers directly to better understand how and why they purchased from you. Capture abandoned cart contact info and follow up with an email survey or over the phone.

The objective is to find where the break points are in their information gathering, consideration (short listing), and purchase phases. Did they come to you and your resources in each phase? If not, where did they go and how can you get into that path? Likely other purchase decisions are being made this way.

SPECIFIC IDEAS ABOUT VALUE PERCEPTION AND POSITIONING YOUR OFFER TO DRIVE INTEREST

Buyer intent

Overall Strategy:

What are you really offering? What is the buyer truly buying and why?

Tactical Tips:

Buyers tend to buy out of necessity, convenience, and preference. What they mostly buy however is a result. It is a product at a certain price, with a certain amount of time and/or effort, and from a vendor they like (that is you). Consider wrapping around their specific need that brought them to your business.

If it is likely an online transaction made out of convenience, ensure your website loads fast, has ample product detail, and smooth, easy checkout functionality, as these are likely drivers for shopping online.

For longer sales cycle consultative selling, encourage prospects to use neutral third party sites where they can learn of competitive offerings on their own – of course with some guidance from you.

Positioning yourself as a neutral third party resource early in the buying cycle resource can be a great trust building exercise for prospects.

Consider the Value of Associative Branding with Trust and Reputation Authorities

Overall Strategy:

Is your brand well known enough to have consistently positive reviews in major publications, blogs, and other consideration stage

Tactical Tips:

If you are a smaller business, consider third party trust, security, and reputation seals to associate yourself with credible brands. The more credible offerings, like TRUSTe, usually take some active involvement on your part to implement, but give recognition to your business by offering transparency into your security, reputation, and/or privacy practices and policies that show pervasive care of customer information throughout your organization.

To Learn More, View Our Recent Webinar "[Ten Cost-Effective Ways to Market Your Business Online and Inspire Customer Trust](#)"

Basic Principles of Effective Design

Travis Pinnick, Product User Interface Design Manager, TRUSTe

SIMPLIFY THE DESIGN FEATURES

Users are much more likely to engage with a design they can quickly interpret and feel comfortable using. Be aware of your design enough to be able to separate what's important from what is not. More features don't always make for a richer experience, they usually just lead to greater user frustration.

A lackluster design with excessive features usually stems from a requirements gathering process with too many stakeholders in the kitchen and not enough designers to push back.

Renowned interface design Alan Cooper says excessive functionality interrupts the flow of the intended activity of your design. When in doubt, ask yourself if a feature is really necessary. If the answer is no it probably needs to go.

Reduce Visual Clutter

Clarity and simplicity make your design more usable. Bad design pushes too much content without attention to ease of interpretability. Good design is clean and simple. Arrange your content into logical clusters, and it's both easier to read and interpret.

Try to create a design that has only a few sparse dominant elements (the most important content) by making it bigger, or bolder, or by using an attractive image to draw attention to it. Don't try to fill every pixel with content - white space is usually a good thing when used properly.

Strive for a design that is clean and simple, and it will reinforce your content rather than detract from it.

SUPPORT THE USER'S MENTAL MODEL

Users want to feel good about using an interface, but they don't necessarily need to know everything about it. Make it as simple as possible for the user to achieve that feeling by supporting the way a user thinks about using it.

The goal is to make your user comfortable and confident. Most users don't need to know that an array has been created to hold a list of items, but they can easily understand the metaphor of a checklist because that's a concept they can relate to.

User-centered design expert Donald Norman calls this the “designer’s model” - present information in a way that supports how the user thinks.

TESTING DESIGN

Most small businesses are afraid of testing because they think it’s too expensive, will take too long, etc.

Usability expert Jakob Nielsen says you can find 75 percent of the major problems in a design within the first four user tests. Whether you know it or not, you’re too involved with your design to see its flaws. Even if you only put the design in front of 4 people who have never seen it (your spouse, your HR guy) any testing is better than none, and is bound to reveal design issues you hadn’t noticed.

Also, outside of the pages themselves consider testing other operational tactics like load times. You in the graphic design seat may have a T1, but consider what percentage of your audience uses dial (still). Test against these with Yslow or other load time testing tools. Screen resolutions, operating systems, and browsers vary among users as well, so test those before go live.

Boosting Online Conversion Rates

Shirley Tan, Founder of AmericanBridal.com now TheKnot.com

MINIMIZING PURCHASE DELAY

Purchase Delay Defined

Purchase delay is defined as, the number of days or hours it takes for your customer to return to your website to actually make the purchase. There are no industry standards for this metric , it can take minutes, hours, or even months.

Understanding your customer's shopping patterns and buying cycle is crucial to reducing purchasing delay.

Natural Flow

To minimize purchase delay and pause, your website should be well structured. It should be intuitive, logical, and natural for your customer on what actions you want them to take on your site. For example, first click a category, then a product, then "add to cart", next click check out button, and finally confirm purchase. This flow should be seamless.

Complete Product Info

Another important piece is having complete information on product pages such as sizes, color options, shipping availability, shipping charges, are the items in or out of stock,

Appropriate Imagery

Clean, clear photographs of your products always help the sales process, especially when shoppers can zoom, rotate, and even change color options and trim. Use graphics or drawings only as a last resort as it can cause shoppers to question, pause, and abandon the purchase flow.

To ensure satisfaction beyond the initial purchase, also try to keep the pictures appropriately and clearly scaled so shoppers who do make the "Add to Cart" purchase decision actually get what they think they are getting.

Trust

Payment options, and ample, easy to find contact info are simple ways to build trust. Professional site design as discussed above is another way. Consider FAQs, user reviews, feedback mechanisms, and other "deeper" methods for shoppers to investigate your site and products.

Consider again third-party trust seals that accelerate shopper interaction and transaction times with your site.

INCREASING CART CONVERSIONS

Shipping Rates

Unknown, unclear, or unusually high shipping rates are one of the biggest culprits causing high shopping cart abandonment. Ideally, you want to display your shipping rates on the product page before the user even adds items to your cart. Your customer wants to know how much shipping will cost, what their delivery options are, and when they can expect their order to show up. Your goal here is to prevent “shipping rate sticker shock” when your customers enters your shopping cart.

Tactical Tip:

Study your data or log files. For those of you using Google Analytics, you can review your current goal funnel visualization data and compare it to historical data to see if your site funnel is improving or getting worse. If it's worse, one question to ask yourself is “Have you recently increased your shipping rates?”.

Shopping Cart “Editability”

Make it easy to change out shopping cart items and ensuing pricing, discount, and shipping information. The key to reducing shopping cart frustration is to make it easy for the customer to swap out quantity, add more items or take out items out of the basket, change out their personal information like billing address or shipping address.

Ensure entered information in carts is preserved when the “submit” button is clicked. Users who click and discover that they have missed information and lost their entry will likely not start all over again - ever. Reprogram submit buttons to avoid this. Also avoid the use of reset buttons unless necessary. Lastly, ask for information that you really need.

Use of Promotions

Make sure that if you are running a promotion on your site that you are consistent on promoting the coupon codes as well on your checkout page. Nothing is worse than having your customers stop in the shopping while looking for a current coupon code to use on your site. Where it makes sense, consider pre-populating your cart with a coupon code to avoid further distraction from the check out process.

Don't make your customer enter a free shipping code, if their order qualifies for free shipping, automate this step. Then you won't get CSR calls saying that they couldn't find the free shipping coupon but know that it exists and that you should credit them back the shipping charges. By making it easy on your customer, you're making it easy on yourself.

Evaluate your shopping cart cross-sell, many guru are touting that cross sells on the shopping cart pages helps increases AOV. But test this on your site, as it is different for each site, brand, and product set.

Average abandonment cart emails are sent within 6 days of the customer leaving. There is no specific industry standard, I would recommend that you don't do it too soon and don't always offer a coupon to return, perhaps the email can ask a question on why the customer didn't buy or take them to a short/quick survey.

On the "About page", consider a photo of your employees standing in front of your office or warehouse. This helps put a face to a name and to remind customers that they're dealing with real people.

If you'd done everything else, you can always try to create a sense of urgency using promotions like limited quantity or availability or gift with purchase are always enticing.

Finally, many shoppers use the cart as a placeholder for thinking about what they want to buy, so don't fret over your abandonment rates too much.

Special Thanks to the author of this section on Boosting Online Conversions, Shirley Tan, Founder of AmericanBridal.com now TheKnot.com .

To Learn More, view our recent Webinar with Shirley Tan, Founder of AmericanBridal.com, as she discusses purchase delay and cart conversion with real-life examples from American Bridal .com.