Comm100

How to Structure Your Website for Better Conversion

The Five Principles You Should Bear in Mind

Site visitors that understand your message and can quickly locate solutions to their problems with minimal distractions will not only convert to customers, but they're highly likely to come back again and again. This white paper discusses 5 things to consider when designing your site. We hope that you enjoy reading the paper and it provides some real tangible benefit to your company by helping you structure your website.

01 Group Products into Clear Categories

Business websites need to convert visitors into customers. Unfortunately, this is not always so straightforward. There are many challenges on the road to successful conversion, and good web designers must excel at meeting each one. The art and science of product grouping is one such challenge. Even though each visitor arrives at your site with a set of unique expectations, you must present products in a way that seems customized for that individual.

This section provides some insight into the challenge of product grouping and offers some suggestions on how you may structure your own website for optimal conversion. Keep in mind that the art and science of product grouping applies only to casual shoppers. That is, it applies to people who don't know precisely what they're looking for until they find it. On the other hand, people who know precisely what they're looking for are not sensitive to product grouping. They only need a good search engine to get them to the product page, where they can compare pricing and availability.

The Casual Shopper

Casual shoppers understand their own needs, but they don't know your products. Once they find the right thing, they'll quickly convert into customers.

Casual shoppers are the most difficult to convert into customers. So they'll browse around for a short time, and if they don't find something they want right away , they'llquickly go somewhere else. The good news is

that casual shoppers can be very spontaneous. The key to success is to understand their needs and respond with the right products right away.

As a web designer, you don't know precisely what products your casual shoppers will eventually purchase, but if you understand your own products well enough to match them into groups that respond to your customers' needs, you'll at least have a fighting chance to make the conversion.

For example, an attractive and well-dressed young man walks into an automobile dealership. If you were the salesperson, would you take him to look at used station wagons or hot new sports cars? Without even talking to him, you can tell by his age, the way he dresses and the lack of a wedding ring that he's looking for something to boost his image. Your website should respond in the same way.

Searching for the Right Handbag

34% of ecommerce visitors didn't convert because they didn't find what they wanted.

To see how product grouping works, let's consider a specific example in depth. See Picture 1 below. You have an ecommerce site that sells handbags of different sizes, colors and styles. Why not just show all your handbags to all your site visitors?

Well, here's the problem: are your visitors willing to dig

through your entire inventory looking for the handbag they want? Probably not. It's not that the websites they visited didn't have what they wanted, but the desired products simply couldn't be found.

So how do you help your casual shoppers find the specific handbag they're looking for without forcing them to search your entire inventory? You can start by applying some of your expert knowledge on customer demographics.

To begin with, you know that handbags do more than carry personal items. Handbags make statements about the individuals carrying them. These statements may be varied and complex, but in general, they can be placed into a small number of categories:

1. **Style** – there are many different styles of handbags that appeal to different customer requirements. Shoulder bags, tote bags, clutch and evening bags, for example.

2. **Status** – some people value their status above all else, so their handbags, however impractical as a means for carrying personal items, must reflect that status.

3. **Popularity** – while individuals may not necessarily like a particular handbag style or color, they will often go with a popular brand so they can fit in with the rest of the crowd.

4. **Color** – the handbag color must blend well with the existing wardrobe as well as seasonal variations.

No doubt, there are more categories for handbags, but the above list can give you an idea of how to think about product groups as a function of personal statements. You simply create a group for each of the items in the above list.

The Handbag Heaven website, pictured below, serves as a good example. They've broken out their groups into price, style, color, size, trend, specials and a category called "where seen." Along the left margin, they've provided a way to view handbags in each of these groups, thereby helping the casual shopper quickly get to the right group.

Group Spanning

Product groups should not be mutually exclusive.

Keep in mind that a product can span more than one group. For example, a handbag can fit in the "red" color group as well as fit in the "less than $65" group.

Picture 1 - A handbag store with clear product categories

Though this may seem trivial, this information is very useful when designing your website. You'll need to ensure that the underlying database supports "many-to-many" relationships of products and their groups. And you'll need to know this information early in the development cycle; otherwise you'll create a great looking website that still forces visitors to search through all the items within a specific group. (The Handbag Heaven site in the above example suffers from this problem. Once you ask for red handbags, you no longer have the ability to select subsets based on size, style or any other group.)

Summary

Casual shoppers visiting your website should be viewed as potential conversions. They come to your site without a specific product in mind, yet they will quickly buy something if it addresses their needs. Your job as a website designer is to understand your customers well enough to categorize their needs and then group your products around those categories. You must then provide a mechanism for your visitors to quickly locate those groups, keeping in mind that products can – and often do – span more than one group.

02 Add a Human Touch to Your Website through Live Chat

Automated website conversion is a tricky process. You lure visitors to your website using the latest SEO practices, and once they land on your pages, you have to compel them to stay. While there are a lot of great things to say about sophisticated website software that automates the conversion process, the reality is that real human interaction often makes the difference between a bounce and a conversion.

In this section, we'll look at the implementation of human interaction on your website through the use of live chat. Live chat works best when it is woven into the structure of your website in a way that keeps it invisible until it's really needed. Think of live chat as a store clerk that offers to assist you at the precise moment that you have a question. Indeed, a good clerk won't interrupt you when you're just browsing, but by watching your body language, she will know exactly when to approach you and offer help. Live chat is your virtual store clerk.

Background

A recent Forrester Research paper proclaimed that 38% of respondents who purchased online indicated that live chat was directly related to their purchase decision. 62% of respondents said that they are more likely to purchase again from the merchant who offered live chat.

Wells Fargo was one of the early pioneers of live chat. They originally started the service over a decade ago (way back in 2002), and though the results were not initially encouraging, they stuck with it. By 2008, they were seeing a double-digit increase in their conversion rates due to live chat.

Clearly, live chat has caught on with consumers, and businesses are beginning to sit up and take notice. In other words, human interaction during their decision-making process directly resulted in the conversion.

There should be little doubt that live chat can have a direct and powerful influence in your conversion rate.

Best Practices

While the above information may tempt you to rush out and install live chat on your website, understand that it's not something you simply fire-up and forget. Live chat is a highly interactive feature that requires planning, resources and training. Your website structure must be capable of supporting live chat in a way that delights your visitors and, for the most part, remains invisible until it's needed.

Below we've outlined a number of best practices that will help you implement live chat on your site.

1. **Allocate resources.** – An understaffed live chat feature is worse than not having the feature at all. You don't want your visitors to click your live chat button, only to have nobody available to answer the call. Ensure management has set aside a budget to support a staff of chat agents.

2. **Train your chat agents.** – Your chat agents are on the front lines, so they should be trained to be courteous, proactive, positive and professional. Additionally, don't overlook the importance of proper grammar. Remember that your agents represent your company, and they will be communicating through the written language. If they cannot express professionalism through proper mastery of the written language, they have no business communicating with your precious visitors. For example, if they use expressions like, "Me and Kim had coffee at lunch," they are in severe need of training on the English language!

3. **Be proactive, not intrusive.** – There's a fine line between being helpful and being a pest. Carefully analyze your site's traffic patterns to determine the precise moment to offer a proactive chat session. Many live chat services, such as Comm100, offer fine-tuning in this area. See Picture 2 below for some scenarios. For example, a customer who spends more than 1 minute on a particular page may have some questions, and he may appreciate a slide-in tab that offers live chat. Another thing to watch is the cart abandonment pattern. For example, from what page does a customer usually leave the site after having put products in the shopping cart? Perhaps there may be a structural problem with the page, and an offer to chat might help assuage that issue. Many merchants have a policy to initiate a live chat session with visitors as they complete their purchase, just to answer any last minute questions or to look for upsell and cross-sell opportunities.

4. **Ensure every page on your site features a chat button.** Offer to speak to your visitors whenever they need help. The chat button should appear in a location that is consistent from one page to the next. Many sites choose the upper right-hand corner for this feature. Other sites implement a clever "slide-in" tab that visitors can access along the left or right margin.

5. **Respond immediately.** When a customer hits the chat button – indicating she needs help – how long does she wait until a chat agent answers her request? Focus on minimizing this number. Many

Picture 2 - Proactive engagement with live chat
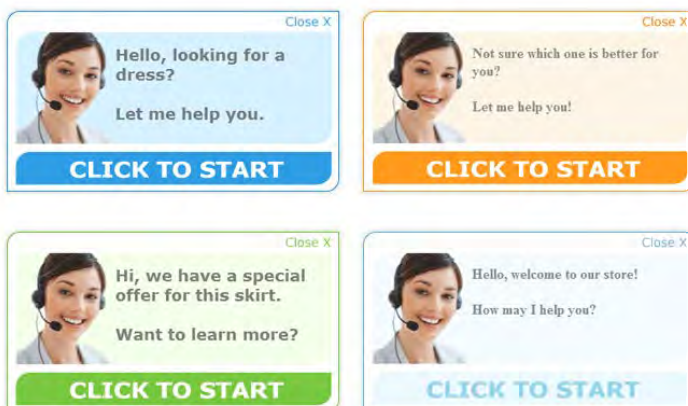
Picture 3 - Post-chat survey
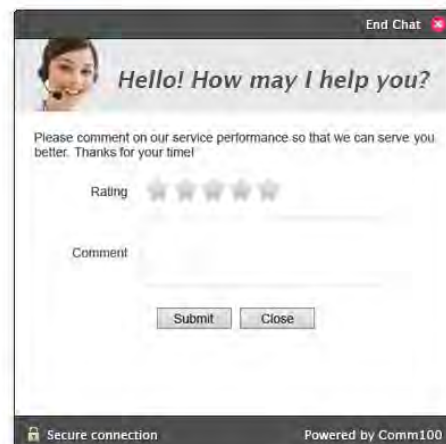
companies have a policy of 10 seconds maximum. This could present a problem if you're understaffed. Track your response time, and if it starts to exceed some minimal amount, raise the issue with management. You may need to hire more staff or outsource the overload to an outside firm.

6. **Establish chat service hours.** You may not need to staff your live chat service 24×7, so make sure your chat button indicates: A) the hours that your chat service keeps, and B) whether the service is currently active. If all your chat agents are currently busy, your chat button should indicate that the service is either unavailable or that there will be an extended wait period.

7. **Follow up.** After a chat service has concluded, offer to send a copy of the entire session to your visitor. Additionally, ask a percent of your visitors to fill out a quick survey form indicating their satisfaction level with the service and what might be done to improve it. See Picture 3 for details. Your website developer should automate this follow-up process.

8. **Do not spy.** Although many live chat services provide the ability to see what pages the visitor

has viewed prior to the conversation, do not tell them that you have this information. This information should only be used to provide context to the chat agent. Nobody likes to be spied upon!

9. **Do not guess.** Chat agents should be honest, and if they do not know the answer, they are obligated to find the answer. If the process of acquiring the answer will take a lot of time, your chat agent should offer to email the answer to the visitor.

10. **Review.** Management should perform periodic quality audits to ensure excellent service to all visitors. Survey results and direct customer feedback should be analyzed for potential issues with the live chat service.

Summary

Live chat allows you to implement the human element directly into your online customer interaction, dramatically increasing conversions. However, there are many structural and procedural issues to consider as you implement this feature. The set of best practices in this section will help you implement live chat on your site.

03 Guide Visitors for Upselling and Cross-Selling

The art of upselling and cross-selling has been around since humans began trading seashells for leather. Throughout history, many businesses have incorporated upselling and cross-selling as part of their selling strategy. McDonalds, for example, typically asks, "Would you like fries with that hamburger?" Unfortunately, the art of upselling and cross-selling isn't always incorporated into ecommerce sites, and as a result, online merchants often leave money on the table.

This section suggests ways that you can incorporate the concepts of upselling and cross-selling directly in your ecommerce site and see a direct boost in your sales.

What Are Upselling and Cross Selling?

First, a quick definition of upselling and cross-selling:

1. An upselling occurs during a purchase, where the customer is made aware of the ability to get even more of what he or she was looking for.

> For example, you can book an economy class trip to Maui for $750, but for an additional $200, you can upgrade to business class and get more comfort.

2. A cross selling occurs either during or immediately after a purchase, where the customer is made aware of ways to accessorize the deal.

> For example, now that you've booked your trip to Maui, you can, for an additional $350, get four nights at an upscale hotel on the beach along with a rental car.

How to Upsell and Cross Sell

The real art in upselling and cross-selling begins with an intimate understanding of your products and how they solve problems your customers may have. Your job is to understand these problems and align your product presentation to provide the solution. For example, a customer arrives on your site looking for a mid-range SLR digital camera. His main concerns

(problems) may be:

1. **Pixel count** – is it detailed enough to get the clarity he wants?

2. **Stability** – Will he require a tripod for stability?

3. **Lens** – does the camera's stock lens satisfy everything he needs, or should he upgrade to a higher quality zoom lens?

4. **Filters** – will he need UV, ND or split filters for his shots?

The above list provides is only a small sample of the concerns your customers may have upon arriving at your site. Your product pages should speak to these concerns and offer accessories (cross sells) where necessary. Picture 4 is the Ritz Camera product page for the Nikon D3100, features two cross sell opportunities to help accessorize the sale.

Upselling and Cross-selling Guidelines

The suggestions below can help guide you in your efforts to upsell and cross sell products and services on your site.

1. **List opportunities** – Make a list of all your

Picture 4 - This product page pro-actively identifies cross sell opportunities

products (or at least a large sub-set of your most popular products) and itemize all the corresponding upsell and cross sell products. Of course, you can't upsell something that is already at the top of the line, but you can always think of ways to accessorize (cross-sell) compatible products. Even if you're just selling batteries or spare memory cards, the customer will always need something besides the product he's currently purchasing. Then use this list to modify your product pages as appropriate.

> **Tip:** Make it possible for customers to add accessories directly to the shopping cart (similar to the Ritz Camera example) without having to click off the page.

2. **Track progress** – If possible, track the upsell and cross sell sales on your site. This is important because it will provide an ROI (return on investment) on your upsell and cross sell efforts. These efforts require an investment of your time, so you should probably understand how that investment is paying off. Like any other business decision, if the investment shows value, you may decide to put more effort into your upselling and cross selling efforts.

> **Tip:** The same algorithm for upselling and

cross-selling opportunities can also insert special hidden HTML codes that identify it as an upsell or cross-sell. When these items are placed in the shopping carts, you can read these codes to track your success.

3. **Be natural** – Don't overdo it! If you're too overt about your upselling and cross selling efforts, customers will feel as though you're treating them as the next sale rather than as human beings. Your upsell and cross sell messages should never get in the way. See the example of the "You May Also Like" cross sell ad from Staples below. This cross sell actually appears well below the fold, and it only scrolls into view when you get to toward the end of ordering business cards.

> **Tip:** As a general rule, don't try to accessorize the deal until the customer decides to make the purchase.

4. **Be aware of upsell opportunities** – Don't give away your possible upsell opportunities. For example, you may advertise free shipping on all your products. Consider using your free s hipping as an upsell opportunity instead. You could say something like, **"Free shipping on all orders of $75 or more!"** This may compel people

Picture 5 - This cross sell appears close to the check-out area

with $50 dollar orders to add a few more accessories that they were going to purchase elsewhere, but now they'll order them through your site just to get the discount on shipping.

> **Tip:** Make a list of all your "freebies" and reconsider each one in terms of using it as an upsell driver.

5. **Analyze your existing sales** – Use purchasing data from your existing customers to help determine cross sell opportunities. Analyze what they put in their carts and see if you can draw relationships between the products. Keep in mind that this may not be possible if you're not selling the right accessory products. If you suspect this is the case, you can poll some of your customers and ask them to help identify cross sell opportunities.

> **Tip:** Capture all shopping cart information, regardless of whether it's a purchase or abandonment. This information provides useful insight into your customers' minds. Use "Big Data" techniques (such as

autocorrelation) to draw relationships between products and suggest cross-sell opportunities you may not have thought of.

By the way, if you haven't already set up your ecommerce site, you may want to head over to the Top-Ten-Reviews report for ecommerce software. It itemizes side-by-side comparisons of the most popular ecommerce software packages. You'll see that all ecommerce packages offers upsell and cross sell features, though some are add-on packages that may increase your software cost.

Summary

Though the art of upselling and cross-selling products has been around for a long time, not all ecommerce merchants have been using it. You can put a lot of time and effort into identifying and implementing these features on your site, but if done properly, the effort will yield more sales. This section describes how you might implement upsell and cross sell features on your site and identifies some key points to guide your way.

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04   Keep Visitors Focused on Your Website

Capturing and maintaining website visitors' attention can often feel like herding cats. Visitors will wander around on your site, clicking here and there, perhaps converting into customers, and perhaps – just as easily – going elsewhere to find what they're looking for. Your job as a web designer is not to celebrate your SEO successes, for all you've done is brought potential customers to your site. The reality is that SEO is not even half the battle – the real work begins once a visitor has landed on your site and needs to be convinced to do business with you. To accomplish this difficult goal, you need to keep your visitors focused

on your site and lead them down a simple path toward the ultimate goal of conversion.

This section presents ideas and examples that will help you capture and maintain your customers' attention while they familiarize themselves with your products and services. We will highlight 7 specific website design concepts and offer concrete suggestions on how you can keep your visitors focused on your website.

1. **Get clear on your goal.** This is perhaps the most important factor in capturing and maintaining

your visitors' focus. You must at all times understand and have clarity of the goal of the overall website, as well as each individual page.

Be warned that you can easily lose sight of your goal, because you'll often be tempted to implement fancy animation or eye-catching graphics simply for the aesthetic beauty and nothing else. This is not to say that you shouldn't implement crafty artwork or fancy animations or cool videos; you simply need to review such additions in light of your website's true goal.

You should break down your website goal into the following three sub-categories:

• **Who is your target audience?** Understand the type of customers you're targeting. Are they engineers? Accountants? Soccer Moms? Once you're clear on this demographic, you'll have an easier time structuring your content and graphics. Engineers, for example, appreciate endless lists of features, whereas car enthusiasts want lots of cool pictures of sports cars.

• **What is the desired action?** This question breaks down in different ways, depending on the specific page being designed. For example, one page may consider the subscription to an email newsletter to be a conversion, whereas another page considers a click on a shopping cart button a

conversion. In all cases, you must identify a desired action on each page.

• **What's in it for the viewer?** Never lose sight of the value proposition to your customer. Each page must provide some sort of take-away for the customer, whether it's an informative list of suggestions or an instructional video that helps customers understand your products or services.

2. **Don't make your visitors search for your message.**

> How often have you landed on a website only to search endlessly for information on what the company does? If you spend more than 10 seconds searching for the answer, consider yourself in the minority. Most people are not so patient.

This is perhaps the #1 problem with most business websites. Your website should instantly convey what it does and make the journey for your visitor simple and fast.

Picture 6 below shows the website for F5 Networks. Is it immediately obvious what they do? The only hint you get is "Applications Without Constraints." Though this is a compelling

Picture 6 - Show clearly what your company does

statement, it could be argued that visitors won't "get it" and leave. Imagine wandering into a store, and the first thing a salesman says is, "Applications without constraints." Immediately you know he's not going to be of much use, and you're probably going to turn and leave.

3. **Walk your visitors through the website.** Though it may seem silly, big buttons and an obvious path through your site will yield success. Keep in mind that your visitors simply want a solution to their problem, and if they believe you have what they need, they will follow you. Think about it: isn't it easier to follow a leader than to forge your own path through the jungle?

As a good example, scan your eyes down to Picture 7 for the QuickBooks landing page. You'll quickly see a placard that says, "Run your entire business with QuickBooks. Track your sales and expenses, get paid faster, and even run payroll with it." This message gets right to the point, and as your eyes scan down from that message, you see a big button for "Shop and Save Now." This button leads you directly to a price sheet, where you can immediately compare features and the associated prices. But if you want to learn more before purchasing anything, you simply click on the "Learn More" link. You are then taken to a page that breaks out the main features of QuickBooks. And on that page, there is yet another "Learn More" link, which takes you onto the next step in your journey to eventual conversion.

Picture 7 - Tell visitors exactly what to do step by step

Picture 8 - Keep it simple
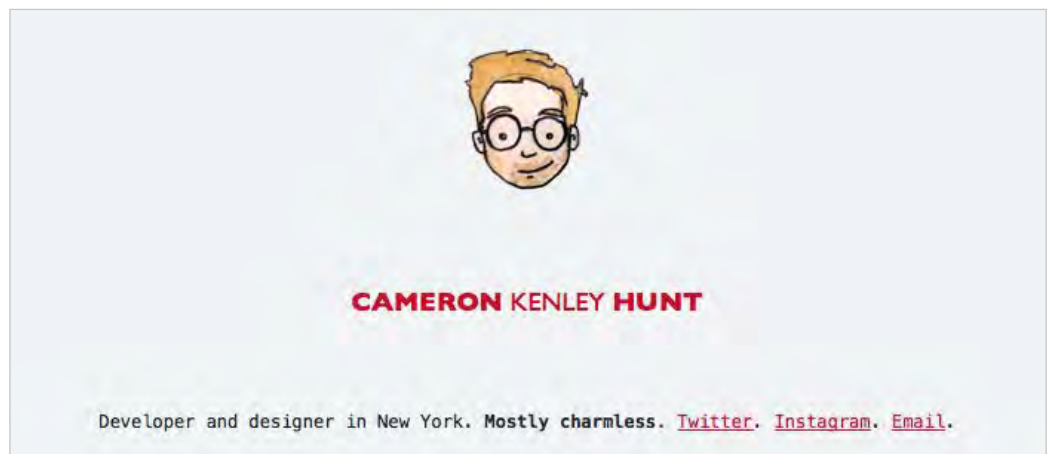
4. **Keep It Simple (KIS).** Keep in mind that visitors don't come to your site because they enjoy clicking on links. They are looking for information, and your site design – clever as you may think it is – can only get in the way. Be conscious of the clutter on the screen. How many messages are you sending to your visitors? Does each of these messages reflect your website's goal? Also, **understand the simple beauty of white space**. Important information will not stand out if flashing banners, clashing colors and inconsistent font styles surrounds it. Surround your most important messages in a "quiet" buffer zone of white space. It will reduce the cognitive load on the human brain and help it focus on the message.

   Picture 8 below may be a bit extreme, but notice how this clever landing page for cameron.io gets you to focus on a message that's minimal in size but significant in magnitude.

5. **Use concise writing.** Get to the point. Quickly. Keep in mind that website writing is different than print writing. When people want to read a book, they'll make time for it in their schedule. But they rarely come to your site with the same attitude.

They will refuse to read long passages of promotional writing. If you can't keep your writing short, then break it up with images and highlight the important text with bold letters. Break out multiple concepts into bulleted lists.

Additionally, avoid using company-specific language except where absolutely necessary. Use standard terms to refer to standard concepts.

> For example, use a button labeled "Learn More" when referring to more text, rather than something like, "Explore." Use the standard buttons for RSS feeds, Facebook Likes, Twitter, and so on.

See Picture 9 below and notice how Sugar CRM breaks up different features into small bite-size chunks, each with its own graphic. They use the "Learn More" links to provide more information about each specific feature, so if you want to read more, you can. But if you stay on this page, you can quickly scan the features without spending a lot of time digging through text.

6. **Communicate with a clean visual design.** Suzanne

Picture 9 - Use concise writing
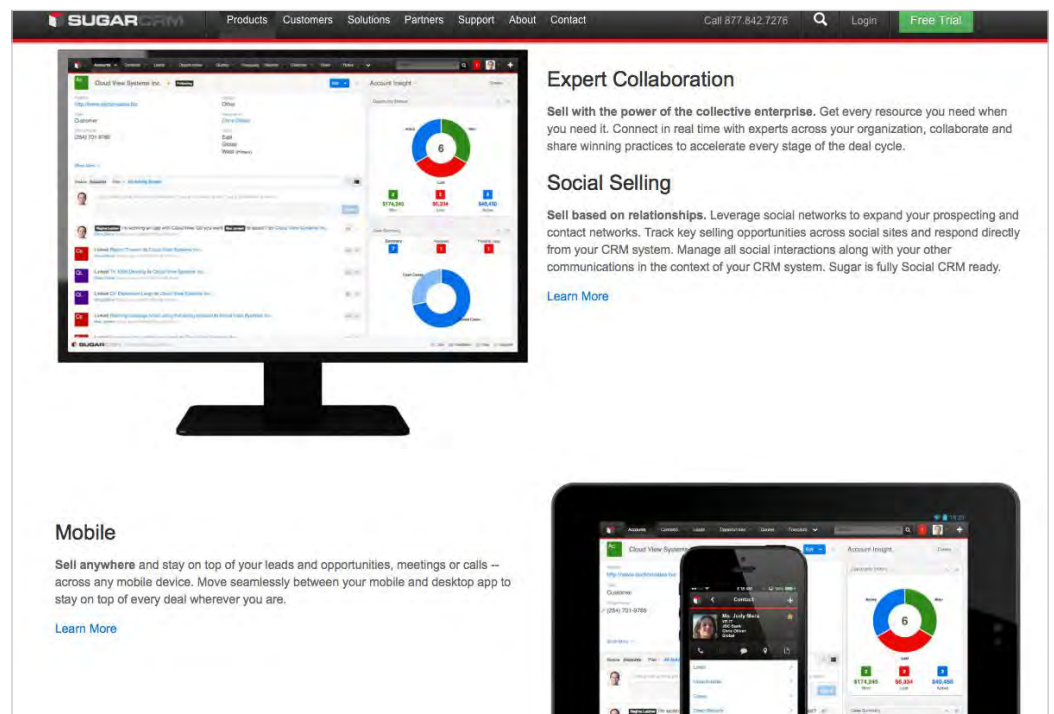
Martin compiled an excellent write-up on this concept. In general, you need to be aware of how the human brain visually perceives information. The main concepts are visual organization and standardization. Picture 10 below is a sample taken from the Martin's page. It clearly demonstrates how a chaotic layout can adversely affect visual communication.

7. **Maintain an objective perspective.** It is well understood that creative people lose their objectivity when working on the same project day after day. Web designers in particular can get so enamored with their code that they lose sight of the usability factor. It is therefore imperative that the website get evaluated by stakeholders on a periodic basis, so that a set of objective eyes can provide guidance.

   Objective reviewers must not only look at the design with a fresh set of eyes, but they must keep the overall goals in mind as they review each page. This can be difficult, especially when the reviewer has a sense of pride in the company. For example, the reviewer might say something like, "Let's feature our industry awards on the front page where everyone can see them!" This desire is most likely counterproductive, for the reviewer has forgotten that the web page is for the potential customer, not for employees who are enamored with the company.
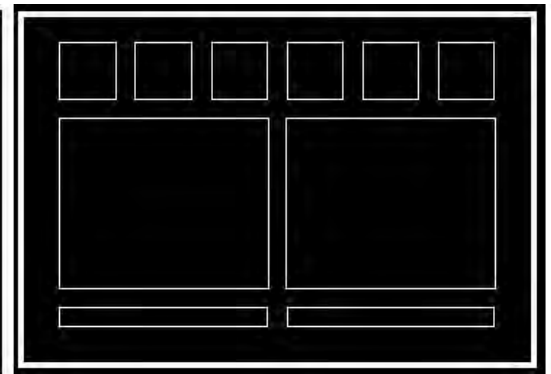
Summary

Capturing traffic on your website is indeed a good SEO challenge, but captured traffic does not equal conversion. SEO is only the beginning of the long battle for customer business. To keep potential customers on the site, you need to structure the site to maintain the visitor's focus and interest. This often involves leading her through a simple path toward conversion. This section highlights some of the challenges in sustaining that interest level and offers specific suggestions to convert visitors into long-term customers.

Picture 10 - Communicate with a clean visual design
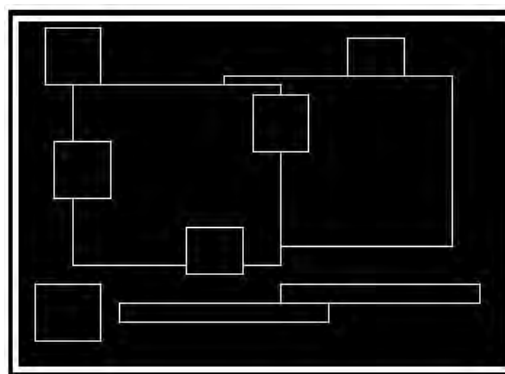
Example: Chaotic Screen   Example: Ordered Screen

05 Understand Customer Pain Points

One of the sad truths of life is that nothing motivates a person like pain. In this context, we're not talking about physical pain; we're talking about the emotional pain we experience every day. This pain can be related

to time pressures, social issues, work-related problems or family concerns. We naturally gravitate toward products or services that promise us a resolution from that pain. For example, if your daughter is failing at math, you get a math tutor. If you're struggling with scheduling resources at work, you purchase and install project-tracking software. If you're too busy to mow the lawn this weekend, there's a kid down the street who would happily do it for ten bucks. In every case, you sense a problem – a pain point – and automatically search for a solution.

An effective salesperson understands customers' pain points and positions products to address those points. Website designers should incorporate some of the same thinking in their designs. More specifically, as a web designer, you need to position your solution and product pages in a way that shows you understand your viewer's pain points. This section focuses on how you can understand and use your knowledge about customer pain points while designing web pages.

Identify the Pain Points

A well-trained salesperson understands how to find pain points. He accomplishes this task by briefly introducing himself and his company, providing a few anecdotes on how his products have helped other customers, and then – most importantly – he pivots the conversation toward the customer and asks open-ended questions. If the salesperson has done his job well enough, the customer comfortably divulges the pain points and asks the salesperson for help. The salesperson then merely needs to show how his products directly address those points.

Unfortunately, this is considerably more difficult for you, because your interaction with potential customers is limited to online activities. Your website is generally a one-way communication medium, so it is impossible to have these types of two-way conversations. Your search for customer pain points therefore becomes an online information search. Fortunately, there are several ways to acquire this information.

1. **Launch a blog patrol** – Identify a list of blogs related to your products or industry. Google has a blog search engine that can assist you. Create your own top-ten list of blogs and peruse them several times each week. This is an excellent way to find out what your potential customers are saying about their pain points.

Let's say, for example, you sell camping gear. You search on Google's blog site and immediately find a site for the American Camp Association. See Picture 11 below. The first article you see is entitled, "Summer Camp: The Social Supplement for Modern Society." Upon analyzing this blog post, you immediately see a pain point: Kids are not spending enough time outdoors, and their

Picture 11 - Launch a blog patrol

lack of exercise is jeopardizing their health and education. That's a pain point! So what can you do with this information? Analyze your own product line in light of this pain point and see how it might mitigate the pain. Prepare a story around the pain point and create blog articles of your own.

Tip: You can help drive business to your site by leaving comments on your target blogs. Be very careful, however, because overt advertising through blog comments can quickly get you banned from commenting on blogs. Learn the proper etiquette for blogging before attempting to blog and / or leave comments on existing blogs.

2. **Appeal directly online** – Similar to patrolling blogs, you can peruse through online organizations and forums. LinkedIn, for example, hosts hundreds of online groups, where each group consists of hundreds – if not thousands – of like-minded professionals dealing with similar problems. The barrier to entry is fairly low, and you can either silently monitor these groups or post pain-point-seeking questions of your own. For example, you can join the Business Analytics group and ask an open-ended question like, "Has anyone experienced issues trying to analyze customer surveys?" Over the course of a few days, you'll get many responses, each related to pain points.

Tip: You can start up your own online forum, hosted directly from your company, via a third party forum provider like Comm100. A hosted forum allows you to communicate directly with your customers and identify their pain points.

3. **Analyze your competitors** – Is your competition causing pain? Look for online complaints regarding your competition. Make a list of the top 10 complaints. Inevitably, price will be one of them, but price is always going to be a complaint, so don't be so quick to put it on your list. Instead, look deeper for fundamental issues like customer service, quality and reliability issues. Look for shortcomings in product features, like limited battery life or a confusing user interface. Online, people are especially honest – brutally honest – and you can use that honesty to get an idea of your competitor's pain points, and then use that information to help position your own product or

service.

Tip: Don't forget to look for complaints about your own products or services as well! You can bet that your competitors are analyzing complaints against your company, and they will try to use those pain points to position their product or service against yours.

4. **Talk to your salespeople** – This may sound obvious, but many companies are so vertically organized that the web designer doesn't even know any of the salespeople. If you have salespeople in your company, make a point to engage with the best ones at least once every quarter. Salespeople are full of front-line information, and after a short interview, you should have a sizeable list of customer pain points.

Tip: If your company is big enough to host annual sales meetings, get yourself scheduled to attend. At the meeting, you can run a focus group with the best performing salespeople, where over the course of an hour, the group compiles a top-ten list of customer pain points.

Now What?

Now that you've identified the pain points that your products or services will address, summarize them into short sentences. It is very important to compile this summary, because these sentences will form the basis of your website content that speaks directly to the pain points.

For example, one issue with backup power supplies is that they fail silently. In other words, you plug your computer into the backup supply, and you plug the backup supply into the wall power outlet. As long as the power company supplies power, you'll never know the difference. The backup supply is supposed to kick in and keep your computers running when the power company fails. There is a critical pain point in this solution, however. The power company may be reliable for a year or more, and all the while, the batteries in your backup supply are slowly fading and wearing out, even though they're not being used. But you won't know the batteries are failing until that

inevitable moment when the power company fails. At that time, your batteries also fail, and your computer will crash. Had you known the batteries were failing beforehand, you would have replaced them and avoided the pain.

So if you were selling a superior backup power supply, how would you use this pain point to position your product?

Our backup power supplies tell you when the batteries need changing
BEFORE your next power failure

You can probably make the summary even shorter, but you get the point. You've crystalized the pain point and shown – in one sentence – how your products make a difference. This sentence immediately resonates with your online visitors and lets them know that you "get it" and understand the pain point.

These one-sentence summaries constitute the basis for all your solution pages on your website. They should be featured prominently on each solution page, at the top, where people will see them right away and immediately identify with your solution.

See Picture 12 below of the Taradata solution page for Data-Driven Marketing. What are the pain points? Loyalty and profitability. The one-sentence summary on this page is deceptively short, but it directly addresses two pain points and sets the tone for the rest of the page.

It's interesting to see that pain points often work their way into company slogans. Some well-known examples are:

"Better sound through research" – Bose, addressing an audiophile's pain point over inferior sound

"Intel Inside" – Intel, addressing a pain point over concerns of computer quality

"At Linksys – We are making connectivity easier" – Linksys, addressing a pain point over the complexity of computer networks

"Can you hear me now?" – Verizon, addressing a pain point over mobile phone quality

Summary

People are naturally pain-averse and will therefore look for ways to avoid pain. Companies must understand their customers' pain points and look for ways to address the pain through their products. Locating and understanding customers' pain points was traditionally performed during face-to-face sales meetings; however, this is not possible online. This section suggests some ways to find customer pain points and briefly discusses how you can use this knowledge to enhance your website.

Picture 12 - Find customers' pain points
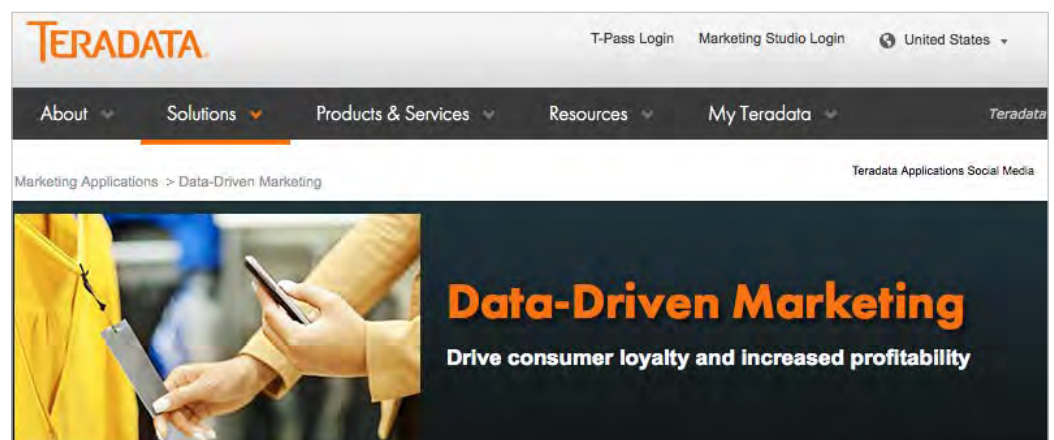
About Comm100

Comm100 is the global provider of live chat, email marketing and help desk software. With "100% communication, 100% success" as our motto, we are committed to making customer communication simple and effective for you.

Comm100 Live Chat is an enterprise-grade live support solution that enables businesses or organizations to engage their website visitors in real time so as to improve conversions, sales and customer satisfaction. Our clients include Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Toronto Public Health, Stanford University, Whirlpool and many more.

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