

convert

99

Conversion Tips & Testing Ideas

No more excuses about not knowing what to test. This whitepaper contains a comprehensive list of 99 tips and testing ideas designed to make your conversion rate skyrocket.

Introduction

As more and more consumers shop online and rely on Web-based transactions to manage their busy lives, it is imperative that websites do a better job of servicing their users and helping them find what they are looking for as quickly and easily as possible.

For website operators, this means that their conversion rate is one of the main determinants of their site's success. Since online consumers don't have the ability to try out a product, interact with the staff or get to know a store's reputation over time, the site's content, design and user interface must work coherently to successfully guide a visitor from click to conversion.

The following whitepaper contains 99 tips you can test and apply to make your site more appealing to visitors, more efficient to consumers and, ultimately, more profitable for yourself.



Support



Customer service has long been important for successful business offline. This certainly holds true for the online world as well. Depending on your site, customer service may very well be one of the first things a visitor notices about your site and it's a good way to immediately start building trust and pave the way to more transactions.

1. **Toll-free Numbers:** Websites should have a responsive and professional support system. A toll-free phone number displayed prominently on a business website helps boost user confidence and makes the site feel more trustworthy. It is also a great way for consumers to contact your business to quickly address any questions they may have, or roadblocks to conversion.
2. **Multiple Support Options:** It is important to have as many support options as your business can afford. Email, fax, phone and live chat are all options that can help your customers reach you in a way that is most convenient for them.
3. **Support Team:** If you intend to have a support team, make sure that the team is trained to not only understand the products or services you are selling, but the entire online experience a potential customer goes through on your site.
4. **Contact your Customers:** Use teleconferences, webinars, direct mail and phone calls to help increase conversions. Using multiple contact methods and touch points instead of just your website and email can help to improve your conversion rates.
5. **Live Support:** If your product is expensive or complex enough to warrant live support, let your visitors interact with your staff via a simple click-to-call or chat.
6. **Hours:** Let people know what hours customer service or support are available, whether it's within business hours or 24/7. Regardless of what it is, make sure this information is displayed close to where a visitor might feel the need to contact you.



Security




Security is a critical issue for most customers considering an online purchase. Despite the fact that people seem to be more confident entering their credit card information online than, let's say 5 years ago, if your website cannot make a visitor trust you and feel comfortable doing business with you, they will never feel confident enough to reveal any personal or financial information required to complete a transaction.

7. **Trust Seals:** Boosting customer confidence is the key to sales in any online business. Personal information pertaining to email addresses, credit cards, debit cards or any financial accounts needs to be protected. You should have your website certified for security by third-party organizations like VeriSign and then prominently display their certification seals so your visitors know their information is safe.
8. **Use your Credentials:** The more you can do to make your customers comfortable, the more likely they are to convert on your site. Obtain and display safe-shopping logos such as McAfee and Better Business Bureau to get the best conversion rates.
9. **SSL:** Electronic data security is of paramount concern in a site visitor's mind. To increase conversions, assure your visitors of the security precautions you have in place on your website. Getting your business website secured by SSL technology or 128 bit encryption (which is what Banks use) will help put to rest any concerns about data security. Display this information prominently throughout your website.
10. **HTTPS:** Display lock icons in the browser to let your site visitors are entering a secure connection zone.
11. **Physical Address:** Many websites neglect to display their physical addresses or phone number. On such sites, even if they have a fair amount of traffic, there are very few conversions because their visitors do not trust them. Displaying a physical address has been shown to boosts visitor confidence and leads to more conversions.
12. **Include Point of Action Assurances":** Always make sure that each aspect of your information requirement is complete and reassuring. For example, if you are requesting that a visitor provide you with an email address, clearly state that their privacy is important to you and you will not sell or share their information.
13. **Locks & Icons:** Test adding trust and security icons such as locks to reassure your visitors and let them know that they are browsing and completing a transaction in a secure area.



Reviews & Testimonials



Testimonials do the same job for a website as word-of-mouth does for a traditional offline business. Good endorsements can help build trust and confidence and should be displayed prominently on your site. A study by Foresee Results revealed that reviews drive 21 percent greater purchase satisfaction and 18 percent greater loyalty, making this especially important for ecommerce and retail websites.

14. **Icons:** Stars are typically the most common rating icons, but that doesn't mean you can't personalize them to fit your brand. Bloomingdale's, for example, use purple hearts instead of yellow stars for product ratings. Test different rating icons to find out what suits your brand and resonates with your customers and potential buyers.
15. **Formats:** Check if your review platform allows for formats other than text and encourage buyers to upload pictures and images of themselves.
16. **Dimensions:** Your customers aren't copywriters and not all shoppers will take the time to read lengthy reviews. Create different rating dimensions for your products and this way you can ensure that reviews are tackling the most important aspects of your product, reviewers have the option to click, write, or do both, and readers can get a visual "at-a-glance" snapshot of the review.
17. **Expert Reviews:** Getting a review from an expert or celebrity is great but, believe it or not, it's still something you need to test. According to a study by Bizrate.com, 59 percent of users considered customer reviews to be more valuable than expert reviews. Based on that, you should either test having an expert review, or show that you have a mix of regular and expert ones.
18. **References:** Testimonials can include references from previous clients, reviews from satisfied customers or even ratings for your products and services. When possible, include the contact information of the person leaving the testimonial, so your visitors will know they are legitimate. Make sure that these testimonials are authentic and use real photographs to help tell the story. Do not use any information without permission and never use stock photographs.
19. **Certification:** Consider getting certification for your products. These official endorsements, often provided by industry regulators, can significantly improve sales and conversion rates.



Navigation



The easier it is for your customers to navigate your website, the more conversions you will have. Consumers do not want to have to hunt for what they need and they will often abandon a transaction before it is complete if it is too difficult to find what they are looking for. Don't make them think and don't make them search.

20. **Breadcrumb Trails:** Implementing breadcrumb trails is a great way to let users know where exactly they are on your site, and for them to navigate back and forth easily without having to use the back button. It's also creates a visual flow of your content or process and helps them understand where they are and how they got there.

21. **Scrolling:** Make sure your site is easy to navigate through and does not require excessive horizontal or vertical scrolling. All pertinent information should appear.

22. **Buy Now:** The "Buy Now" button should be prominent and consistent across the website on all product pages. In fact, it should be closer to the top of the pages. In the offline world, we say, "Eye level is the buy level" and in the online world, we say, "If you want it sold, put it above the fold."

23. **About Us:** Although many business websites do not lend much credence to the "About Us" page, it is one of the most important aspects of doing business. It is always advisable to include a link to a clearly written "About Us" page on the website. Believe it or not, a majority of customers visit this section before making a purchase. This page reassures the customer's confidence in your company and in your website.

24. **Home:** Always have the "Home" button on all pages. The home page contains some of the most relevant information and customers tend to refer to it often.

25. **Links:** Try shortening your links and using action verbs in them. Test to see what kind of effect this would have in terms of clicks.



Policies



Policies are for your protection and stating them clearly and transparently helps make your position crystal-clear to your customer, while letting them know exactly where they stand.

26. **Return Policy:** Be as transparent as possible and always define your return policy at multiple touch points in the checkout process.
27. **Money-back:** If you have a money-back guarantee in place, make sure to promote it and clearly state the terms and conditions that apply.
28. **Manufacturer Warranty:** If you are selling products that are covered under a manufacturer's warranty, make sure to state the policy and give out relevant geographical information for the manufacturer on the order form.
29. **Copyright:** It is important to have a current and up-to-date copyright statement page on your website. Update your copyright statements every year so your visitors know that the site is being updated and monitored on a regular basis.
30. **Privacy:** Ensuring the privacy of your customers and protecting the information they submit is especially important. Create a clearly written privacy policy to convince your visitors that their privacy is protected.



Checkout



Checkout is the most important aspect of any transactional website and paying attention to the details can help you build a reputable and sustainable business.

31. **Checkout:** This is one of the most important aspects of any transactional website. The checkout process itself should be as simple, usable, intuitive and reassuring as possible. The conversion (and sale) can be made or lost here and losing someone at this point in the process would be a critical loss.
32. **Repetition:** Don't ask customers for repetitive information. Once you have asked for the name, address or email, make sure that it appears across the session for that customer. If a customer needs to type the details again, they may find it cumbersome and simply abandon the process.
33. **Information Copying:** If the same information is required twice in the checkout process, make sure that it can be copied instead of requiring someone to type it again. For example, if a customer has the same billing address and the shipping address, have an option to use the same information.
34. **Distractions:** In the checkout process, it is important to remove any distractions so the customer can focus exclusively on completing their transaction. The navigation menu and any moving graphics should be avoided in this area.
35. **Step Indicator:** Always make sure that the checkout process is indicated in steps to the customer. If the checkout process has 3 steps, indicate what step they are and how many steps there are in total to complete the process.
36. **Information:** Clearly identify what information is required in your checkout process to avoid future confusions and delays.

37. **Error Messages:** In the event that you are using error messaging, make them friendly and easy to understand. No "INCORRECT USER INPUT IN PHONE FIELD!" messages. Instead, try "Please enter your telephone number."
38. **Error Areas:** In case the checkout error messages occurs on a page other than the page with the errors, preserve the information that the user has already inputted instead of asking them to enter it again.
39. **Pricing:** Make sure that you clearly display your prices and shipping charges and tax BEFORE the checkout process is completed.
40. **Confusion:** Do not display complex formulas for shipping prices that will confuse the client. Just calculate the price and show it to them in a definitive manner, even if it's just a close estimate.
41. **Free Shipping:** Consider making shipping free, if your business can afford it. Your conversion will improve remarkably if you are able to offer this advantage.
42. **Simple:** Always keep the checkout process simple with as few clicks as possible. The more pages you add between the sales page and checkout, the more risky your sales process becomes.
43. **Stock:** Display the stock status of your items and do so BEFORE the user puts the item in their cart. This is to make sure that the user does not make it all the way to the end of the process, only to find out that the order cannot be fulfilled.
44. **Products:** If you have products that you do not sell anymore on your site, remove them. This can be demotivating for users who are interested in the products that you don't sell.
45. **Reaffirm:** Always restate the offer and guarantee/warranty on the order forms. Shopping cart abandonment is always an issue. Do your best to curb this by displaying the offer again on the order form.
46. **Delivery Time:** Always estimate the delivery time and make sure you convey this to the customer. It is always useful if you add a margin to the delivery time. It is better to deliver before the time than to deliver afterwards.

47. **Delivery Method:** make sure to mention the delivery methods available and provide a reference number and tracking information for followups.

48. **Payment Methods:** Since the Internet is a global marketplace, it is important to make sure that you have as many payment methods available as possible. Make sure that you display all of these methods clearly in the checkout process.

49. **Payment Flexibility:** Offer different payment options such as three payments or even a "try before you buy" offer (have them pay shipping upfront and the rest in 30 days). Innovation is the name of the game.



Site Requirements



Your website is your face to the online world and it reflects on your professionalism and commitment to the business. The better this impact is, the better is your conversion rate.

50. **Qualified Traffic:** Traffic can be relevant or irrelevant. Make sure that you advertise in a smart way to attract the right traffic -- traffic that is interested in your product or service and traffic that has the resources to buy. For example, if you are selling Mac software, don't advertise that you sell Windows software (or just software) just to get more traffic. This will drive more visitors (at a greater expense) with no intent to purchase and decrease your conversion rate.
51. **Relevance:** Advertise every product or service you have by using keyword rich articles. This will help your website rise on search engine results and can give you tons of targeted traffic.
52. **Provide Clear Images of your Products:** Seeing is believing, so always make sure your product photographs are clear and detailed. The better the photographs, the better your conversion rate.
53. **Make Sure That the Site is Error-Free:** All content must be clean and accurate. Always run a spell-check on your site whenever you change content. There aren't many things more unprofessional than spelling errors and even if they are "no big deal," they will harm your site's credibility.
54. **Reviews:** Reviews can be a great way to attract new users and also increase conversion. Getting a few good reviews from shopping authority sites like shopping.com, epinions.com and bizrate.com can be a real asset to your conversion rates.
55. **Load Times:** Find out what the load time of your site is and what steps you can take to reduce it. Gone are the days of dial-up. The faster, the better.
56. **KISS:** As the saying goes, "Keep it simple, stupid." Never try to force people to install any crazy plug-ins just to make a purchase from your site. Stick with Flash (if you must), JavaScript, and the other standards that are normally available to any Internet user.
57. **Look and Feel:** The overall look and feel of the website should be professional and trustworthy. Research suggests that up to 50% of all lost sales are due to design.

58. **Size:** The length of Web page is an important factor. If the content is long and drawn-out, consumers may get bored and will not stay around long enough to complete a transaction.
59. **Graphics:** Eye-soothing graphics always look the most professional. Avoid using gaudy colors on the website and don't include images that don't help to tell your story.
60. **Download Icons:** Add icons of file types next to links that lead to PDF, DOC, etc.
61. **Fonts:** Fonts on the website should be easy to read and should not be too small or too big.
62. **Extra Information:** If you have any extra information to offer that you think will be useful to the users but that doesn't affect the transaction process, do not clutter the site by putting it in a prominent spot. Instead, include it separately with a link or as a download in PDF format and clearly indicate why it would be useful.
63. **Headline:** The headline on your website is the first thing that a visitor reads. It should be compelling and interest consumers to continue further into the website.
64. **Copywriting:** Copywriting is an art and it sells more than any visuals. Visuals only attract. It is important to become a student of copywriting and persuasion or to hire someone that is. It is a part of everything you do in your online business -- from writing PPC ads to drafting product descriptions.
65. **Bullets:** Use bullet points in your copy wherever possible to describe product or service benefits. Very few people "read" online product descriptions. Instead, they skim them. Use bullets, sub-heads, short descriptions and graphics to tell your store and keep your audience engaged.
66. **Test Run:** Before the big launch, have a potential customer or even a group of them go through the site for you. Are there any parts you've missed? How can you better explain it? Is there anything they don't understand? Address the questions and make sure it's perfect before you "go live."

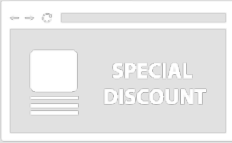
67. **Regular Testimonials:** Keep adding regular testimonials. This tells visitors that the business is consistent and ongoing. The more relevant those testimonials are to your target audience, the better they are. Your visitors want to see testimonial from people just like them.
68. **Check your Text:** Test headlines, intro paragraphs, pricing, and other content. You can always refine text to make little improvements along the way. The effects that even small changes can have on conversion rates may surprise you.
69. **Highlight the USP/UVP:** Make sure the unique selling or value position of your offer is easily found on all pages of your website. Why should someone buy from you instead of every other option out there? That's the question your USP or UVP must answer.
70. **Link the Shopping Cart:** Always link the shopping cart to every product page and have a checkout beside it. This will encourage the client to proceed with the transaction and minimize the steps to complete an order.
71. **Tell a Story:** Find a sales hook in a story about the business owner, product, or service you're offering. The easiest way to grab and hold your visitor's attention is through a true-life story.
72. **Exclusivity:** As in traditional advertising, exclusivity matters. If you are the only seller of medium-sized green widgets in the country, state it and be proud of it. Make sure it appears prominently on the website.
73. **Search:** If you are selling multiple products and services, make sure that you have a site search feature and it works perfectly. Not only will this allow users to find what they want, it will give you insight as to what they are shopping for and what terminology they are using so you can tailor your copy and navigation accordingly.
74. **Focus on the Benefits:** Don't just focus on the features of your product, but rather on the benefits those features provide to your customers. Don't just say "We have folding green widgets;" instead, say "Our folding green widgets will save you valuable space in your garage."

75. **First-Time Visitor:** It is very important to make a “first-time visitor” page and let your regulars skip straight to your product catalog or whatever section is most interesting to them. The first-time visitor page is your opportunity to explain why you’re different from your competitors and why they should shop with you.
76. **Registering:** Although list building is an important aspect of online businesses, always have options for the customer to purchase from your website without registering on it. This simplifies matters a lot for consumers and will help your conversion rates soar. You can always communicate with the customer later to encourage them to register, since you will have their email (make sure you also have their permission).
77. **Language:** Make the site highly interactive. Use active verbs in your headlines whenever possible. For example, don’t just have a link that says “privacy policy,” but rather “read the privacy policy.”
78. **Internal Linking:** This is one of the most important aspects of a website. Logical and context-sensitive linking can help customers navigate easily and improve your conversion rates.
79. **Broken Links:** Make sure that your website does not have any broken links. When a customer encounters one, it comes across as highly unprofessional and harms your trust. It also bad for search engines indexing.
80. **Be Direct:** Don’t use “clever” names for your shopping cart and other features, like “wicker basket” or “widget box.” This will only confuse your customers.
81. **Empty Cart:** Provide shopping instructions in an empty cart. Don’t just say “Your cart is empty.” Putting a positive spin on things will help set the tone for your site.
82. **Page Loading:** Periodically check your page load speed. On long sales copy sites, you may want to break up your tables with one table up top with a page or so of your text, and the rest in a second table. The top table will load first and the visitor can start reading it.
83. **Persuasive Copy:** Avoid complex and sales-y phrases and stay away from jargon. Find that voice and use it consistently throughout your site.

84. **Content:** Test using things like open-ended questions and measure the impact it has on your engagement and conversion rates.
85. **Collect Opt-in Email Leads and Follow-up.** This one should be no surprise to you if you regularly follow Internet marketing techniques. This process is vital to increasing your conversion rates. At a minimum, collect your customers' email address. If possible, get their physical address and phone number for an even higher response.
86. **Newsletters and Offers:** Make sure that you are in touch with your customers constantly on a weekly or a biweekly basis. This will make sure that you are in your customers' mind (and maybe inbox), when they are ready to buy again.
87. **Trust and Credibility:** The golden rule is that trust and credibility sell and this can only come by instilling confidence in the customers who are interested in making a purchase.
88. **Use Audio if Possible:** Add audio to your website, in the form of an introduction, recorded teleconference call, or interview. This helps your visitors to feel like they know you better, which leads to more transactions. Make sure the audio does not play automatically. Instead, make it clear that the visitor must click to listen.
89. **Use Exhibition Videos:** Use videos to demonstrate the use of your product. Well-made video demos of the product will often improve response and conversion rates. Be advised, though, poorly quality videos can harm your credibility, so don't throw one out there just for the sake of having one.
90. **Blog/Forum:** Have a blog and a forum on your website and encourage customers to post on it from time to time. This will help customer interaction and will help you to address their problems better.
91. **Calls-to-Action:** Test their wording, shapes, colors, and locations throughout your site.



Product Presentation & Special Offers



Many people shopping online are looking for discounts and special offers and it can be one of the best methods of increasing your traffic and conversion rates. The better your offers, the better your sales.

92. **Multiple Product Lines:** If your website offers a lot of products, allows users to sort them by important criteria price, size, color, etc. This helps organize the information and gives customers the tools they need to make their buying decisions.
93. **Comparison:** Always provide a way for customers to compare details of similar items. This will help them make an informed decision.
94. **Choices:** Don't make the user specify a choice when there aren't really any to be made. If a product only comes in blue, don't make them select the "blue" radio button or choose "blue" from the dropdown.
95. **Discounts:** Always provide a different "sale" or "clearance" section to attract budget-minded shoppers. This helps drive your conversion rates higher on products that may not be selling otherwise.
96. **Offers:** Always have two offers - basic and deluxe options. While this may or may not increase your conversion, it will increase your income per visitor. Some will choose the basic. The ones who choose the deluxe boost your profits.
97. **Prove:** Always prove your claims about any product or service. Your visitors don't believe you just because you say it. Give them facts, samples, videos, and demos. Show checks, charts, endorsements, etc. If you can't back it up, they don't believe it.
98. **Authenticity:** Make sure that all material you post on your website is authentic and not misleading in any manner whatsoever. Use disclaimers to explain complicated issues.
99. **Offer Outstanding Guarantees.** Many companies offer full money-back guarantees. You can offer double your money back guarantees, keep all the bonuses guarantees, etc. Offer a guarantee that's unusual or different and the conversions will skyrocket.

Conclusion

Improving conversion rates both an art and science. Testing and applying these tips can definitely help improve your site, make your visitors happier and drive conversion rates higher. The underlying principle is to present your products in a clear and professional manner and make the transaction process as smooth as possible for your consumers.



About Convert.com

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