Chief Marketer B2B Special Report

The Path to Conversion

Conversion optimization requires a clear focus on the customer's needs and journey

Your social media presences, SEO intiatives and email blasts are driving tons of prospects to your website. But what are they doing when they get there?

If they arrive at your landing page and don't see a clear path to take, you won't make the sale. As B2B customers wait later and later in the sales cycle to connect with a vendor, optimizing your website for conversion is more important than ever. Is your organization up to the challenge?

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of the over 1,100 marketers surveyed by Econsultancy's for their recently released Conversion Optimization Report—89%—cited conversion rate optimization as crucial or important to their digital marketing strategy. However, *none* of the respondents described themselves as very satisfied with their conversion rates, and only 22% said they were "quite satisfied," a 15% decrease from last year. So what's the solution?

GET PERSONAL

When designing a site for optimal conversion, marketers need to consider the persona they are targeting and the path they want to take them through, notes Claudia Hoeffner, senior director, demand generation and channel strategy, Acquia. "A lack of personal experience makes a site not relevant to the end user."

Both B2B and B2C marketers have a variety of online and offline touchpoints that drive sales for their organization, and both paid and organic media are driving prospects to your site. "You need to consider how all these experiences will ultimately drive conversion," she says. "Don't assume that personalization is a luxury. How are you tailoring the experience to your customer?"

"You need to customize the content on your site to make it more relevant to type of business you're talking to, beyond just having a drop-down menu for vertical markets," says Peter Isaacson, CMO, Demandbase. "Identify at the front door what type of company the person is coming to your site from and engage them [appropriately]—*that's* the way you get conversion."

The best sites create a dialogue with the prospect on the first visit, Hoeffner says. It's important to ask the right initial questions, and make the prospect feel like you understand the value of their time.

"If I've shared with you who I am, I don't want to have to tell you again over and over," says Hoeffner. "I've told you who I am, so deliver relevant content. It's not okay to get people to come to your site and then give them a very generic experience if they've given you data."

DRESSING FOR SEO SUCCESS
A REIMAGINED APPROACH TO SEARCH BOOSTS DICKIESSTORE SALES

A focus on improving SEO helped DickiesStore.co.uk boost transactions by 36%.

The site for the Dickie's U.K. work wear clothing brand caters to both corporate accounts and individual professionals looking for work gear. The brand worked with digital marketing agency MediaVision to revamp its search and social strategies to increase conversions on the site, which was performing well but was totally product-oriented. DickiesStore was looking to to connect with consumers with relevant content beyond the overalls, boots and safety jackets it sells, according to Sasha Reisler, partner development specialist with MediaVision.

"This concept had been floated for some time with [MediaVision], and [last winter they] were fully committed to assisting with rolling out all the required changes," says Mark Tapper, general manager, DickiesStore. "Naturally, seeing these results come in and having had a hand in making it happen is most pleasing. Records being smashed week on week, month on month can't help but please stakeholders,".

The plan began with reviving the DickiesStore blog, and breathing some new life in the brand's Facebook page. Community engagement was driven through product giveaways and lifestyle related posts featured on the blog, Reisler says.

The social media plan was designed to increase brand awareness and credibility by building and nurturing the DickiesStore online community, steering the content away from just products and towards the consumer lifestyle. The blog now serves as the hub for the majority of content that is being shared through the social channels and aims to engage, entertain and educate the DickiesStore audience, according to Reisler.

Conversions and revenue have seen a big uptick as a result of the changes. Online sales targets had been set at 15% growth for 2013. Comparing visits from 2014 to the same period in 2013, DickiesStore has seen a 29% average increase. Visits were up 44% year over year and transactions were also up by 36%, according to Reisler.

The brand's search positioning has improved considerably as well. DickiesStore also claimed the top ranking position for the "workwear" search term, and also claimed top spot for "Dickies" last November, outranking the official Dickies European site as well as the U.S. parent site for the first time ever, Reisler says. *—Patrick Gorman*

STICK THE LANDING

Landing pages often don't live up to what marketers have promised in the promotion that drew the prospect to a site. "That can be a big mistake. If I go to your site, I expect the experience to connect with the execution," she says. "High value content is critical. You need to test each aspect that you have on your site. You can replicate assets in different executions and offer value."

A typical mistake with landing pages is that many companies try to design them as catch-alls. "They try to communicate everything they have to offer in a single landing page. They have five different calls to action and hope you choose one, rather than tailoring a call to action for a specific type of vertical by offering an appropriate whitepaper, webinar or whatever," says Isaacson. "There's an absence of understanding the type of account and the [appropriate] pathway."

In the past, marketers concerned about conversion optimization focused solely on the design of their site and things like the length of the lead gen form. But increasingly, marketers are taking a look at the psychological triggers that can spur a prospect further down the funnel.

"It's about building trust in new ways. For example, people are considering social proof, the concept of how many people have already used a product or service," says Alhan Keser, director of optimization strategy at WiderFunnel. "Or if you're a service company, you can promote that you have the availability to take on new clients."

Video can also play a role in boosting conversions, says Keser. Use it to motivate the user by showcasing important assets of your business, like the people who drive your success. And don't underestimate the power of good copy and how easy it is for prospects to read.

"There's only so far you can go with your design," he adds. "There's often more room for improvement in building desire and communicating your call to action."

Site visits were up 44% year over year.

KNOW YOUR PATH

Of course, to be successful you need to know what you want to accomplish.

"Start with the goal that is of most value to you and your visitor," says Keser. "A lot of times, a big problem is that B2B companies don't know what they want people to do when they get to the site."

Take a step back, he advises. A lot of companies have tons of great content, in a variety of formats, from demos to webinars to case studies—and they're just throwing everything out there and seing what works. A better approach can be isolating those different potential lead sources and focusing on just one call to action, to test and see the results.

"You may have some attrition, but does the ben-efit outweigh the loss?" notes Keser. "You can have all sorts of content but if you're not leading some-one down the path you want them to take, they're not going to find it themselves."

Most companies have gone through numerous website redesigns, and it can be a painful process. "At some point, you have to stop, because there comes a point where [a redesign] just doesn't pay off," he says.

A better strategy for refreshing your site may be evolutionary site redesign, where new template elements are tested one at a time, to see what works. Over the course of a year, the site has gone through a gradual redesign. Sometimes, changing one word can make a huge impact. For one Wider Funnel client,

EMBRACING SOCIAL
PROPERLY LEVERAGING SOCIAL CHANNELS CAN LEAD TO INCREASED ONLINE ENGAGEMENT AND CONVERSION

Engaging customers and prospects via social media adds another dimension to B2B campaigns that can have big benefits for building relationships and sales.

"Many B2B enterprises are using social as an ancil-lary channel, but they aren't real-ly looking at it for engagement," notes Mike Neumeier, principal, Arketi Group.

Of course, there is the question of whether professionals *want* to really engage with vendors and partners in their work life socially. "I love Oreos and I might get pas-sionate about Oreos as a con-sumer," notes Neumeier. "But, do I love my ERP system? I might like it, but I'm probably not going to Facebook about it."

But there are B2B marketers taking advantage of social tools, to surround vari-ous aspects of their campaign with increased visi-bility for the brand and it's offerings, he adds. While in the past direct mail and email might have driven the charge to drive web traffic, now social is being added to the mix to help take some of the strain off of prospecting and client lists and avoid overmailing.

"I can take an email list of 9,000 people we're tar-geting, upload it to Facebook and use Facebook Audience to find matches. A 9,000 name list might have 2,800 matches, and we can advertise to those people," says Neumeier. "Even if you don't click on my ad, when you're scrolling through and see it that reinforces other creative you might have seen else-where, like in an email. And it makes your compa-ny seem even bigger, for a small investment. You're everywhere and that's a win."

Of course, to make all this work, you need to know what you want to accomplish, notes David Jones, CMO of Jackson Marketing. "The challenge starts with having a strategy. In the past, a lot of marketers jumped on social because it was cool and seemingly free, but you need to have focus."

To pull it all together, Jones suggests capturing the learn-ings you glean from social and inputting them into your CRM system. "Make it actionable to help your sales team connect the dots."

Twitter is the first priority for most of Jackson's clients socially, but Facebook performs best for some. One truck fleet owner, for example, finds that Facebook works better to engage drivers on the road.

No matter that the social channel you choose to drive people to your website, using content market-ing to position yourself as a B2B thought leader is increasing in importance. "It should be visually rich and 'snackable,' something you can serve up in bite size chunks such as infographics and videos," says Jones.—*BNV*

Tag, That's It!

The benefits of tag management systems

Digital marketing technology is changing and evolving at a rapid rate. A week doesn't go by that we don't read about or meet with a vendor that has a new method of targeting, tracking, delivering or optimizing digital media.

One constant, however, is the use of tracking tags, aka conversion pixels, to connect actions by users on the client website with the media delivery or analytics system. Virtually every digital marketing technology relies on a way to connect their service — whether it be media delivery, data service, customer analysis, reporting or optimization—with the critical actions on a website—a visit, sale, lead or other conversion activity. Tracking tags are snippets of code that are generated and "owned" by the digital technology and placed on the client website to make this connection.

Along with better and faster reporting, tracking tags can deliver other benefits, including:

- **Real-time media optimization:** By connecting the media delivery system (ad network, email, etc.) with a valuable action on the site (conversion, lead, etc.), you can dial up media that is working and dial down media that is not, automatically.
- **Allows you to measure and optimize beyond the click:** If you are still optimizing your media based on clickthrough rate, you are wasting media dollars. There is a large digital gap between a click and a valuable action on your site.
- **Connecting and appending data across systems:** This is particularly true with cross-device tracking and media optimization.

The use of tracking tags has been around since the '90s, but as marketing technology has exploded, so has the number of tags required to make these technologies work. One of the biggest challenges with having so many tagging needs is the impact on your website developers to add, delete, QA and manage the tags.

Traditional tag management involves requesting tags from the technology vendor, getting the right tags for the right pages to track the right consumer action, supplying the info in a structured request to the developer, implementing the tag during the

"next website update" (which can be anywhere from weekly to annually), QA'ing the tag and then removing it when no longer needed (if you remember to remove it). If you are aggressive with testing new technologies and growing your digital program, tag management is a major pain point.

Essentially, a tag management system is like a content management system for tracking tags. A single container tag — generated by the tag management system — is placed on all critical pages of a website. As new digital media vendors are selected, the new tags are placed on the webpages through the tag manager interface and not through a development process. What are the potential benefits to using a tag management system?

1. **Operational Efficiency.** Tag management systems dramatically increase the speed and ease in which tags can be placed on specific pages, as well as how quickly tags can be removed or updated/fixed. By shifting the effort from a web developer task to a marketing ops task, the cost and timetable for adjusting tags is cut dramatically, freeing up developers for more important tasks.
2. **Website Loading Speed.** Tag management systems have evolved to show tags based on business rules — for example, you can insert a tag into a page only when a certain type of

traffic visits that page, such as someone from that ad network or vendor. This creates flexibility in how the tags are delivered and reduces the number of tag loads required, which will help speed up the website performance — a high-impact element in improving user experience.

3. **Data Unification.** Advanced tag management systems can associate user level data from other systems, whether they are first-, second- or third-party marketing technology systems with a single first-party cookie. The potential of this capability is tremendous as it gets marketers closer to the ideal state of consolidating all digital touch points into a single customer view. Ad targeting, site personalization and user analytics will all benefit from this.

There is a wide variety of tag management systems in the market currently — everything from a free system like Google Tag Manager or more sophisticated systems like Ensighten and Adobe Dynamic Tag Manager. Organizations interested in reaping the operational efficiency and website load speed benefits should look hard at the free tools, while organizations with a greater digital marketing footprint should explore the more sophisticated tools. —*Scott Fasser, director of digital innovation, Hacker Agency*

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doing just that led to a seven percent boost in sales.

"As marketers, we are more enabled by technology than ever before, but with so much dedicated to automating the lead management process, in a way, we've forgotten about the customer," says Katie Martell, a founder of Boston-based start-up Cintell. "You need to understand your customer on a human level."

Relevancy is key to encouraging engagement and conversion optimization, she says. "Everyone is pushing more and more content out there and it's becoming overwhelming—you need to have a sense of your space to stand out."

Behaviorial data can help a marketer determine the way your audience wants to receive content as well, and help you create the right path for them to follow on your site, that will lead to a sale, Martell notes. "You need to know whether your [prospects] are visual learners or text based learners. The experience should be driven by what they want to do, not by what you want them want to do." !

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