

Ecommerce part 2 - Improving conversion rates

Below are 7 things that you can do to improve your online sales. Some of these things relate to improving your conversion rate, and some of them are to increase your traffic through natural SEO and online marketing. The effect of each factor varies from website to website. Different types of customers respond to different things differently.

1. Keep it simple

The principle of Occam's razor should be applied to every step of your website. If people have one extra button to click or one extra form field to fill in, then this will erode your conversion rates. Some sites benefit from greater simplicity, for example, if you are selling just one product you don't need a multi-page ecom system with discount codes, customer registration, or shopping basket page. A simple one-page site with the product on it, a quantity field, information on returns and a bit old PayPal button will do the job for you.

2. Focus your landing pages

If you are using email marketing, PPC (pay per click) or offline marketing you need to create a landing page that is specific to that ad. For example, if you put an advert in a magazine, you should put in a unique URL that relates to the magazine - e.g. mydomain.com/magazinename - then make the landing page have the same copy as the advert, if possible put the logo of the magazine on the page and any products that appear in the ad. If you can put on a one-click buy button for these products that would be even better.

3. Your home page is the most important page of the site

Forget the shopping basket, shipping information or even product pages. If you want to maximise your click throughs, the home page is where you should concentrate most of your efforts. 90% of your web visitors will see this page first so it is essential that you put your best converting products on the front, and any products that are unique to your website. The homepage is like the shop front of a physical store. When you walk past a shop, you will see that they do a lot of work on getting the shop window looking as enticing as possible and having it looking fresh by regularly updating its shopfront.

4. Make your website load as quickly as possible

A slow website will bounce visitors like a bouncy castle, so you need to make sure that all pages load up in 3 seconds or less. Even if this means taking off that massive flash intro that you were so proud of. Another reason for having a fast loading site is that now Google uses site loading speed as part of its ranking algorithm.

5. Show your credentials

People are wary of buying things from websites that they have not used before or that their friends have not used before, so the more you can do to convince people that you are an honest and

reputable etailer, the better. If possible, have a physical address and landline phone number on your contact page. Include reviews and testimonials from real people (even if some of them are bad, it's better than not having any). Include an 'about us' or 'company history' type page. DotComGiftShop sent me a great marketing email yesterday. At the bottom is a picture of the two ladies who run the website and a bit of information about the company and its ethos. This creates empathy with the brand and improves buyer confidence.

6. Get a freephone/toll free number

Not quite as important now as it used to be since a lot of people use their mobiles which are not free on 0800 / 1-800 numbers. Still, it's worth doing as it can make the difference between a sale and an abandoned shopping cart.

7. Check your website is free of spelling errors

A recent survey suggested that spelling errors can reduce your conversion rates by 50%. So there's no excuse not to regularly check through your website to check for spelling errors.